

International Studies in  
Sociology and Social  
Anthropology

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The Vocation of  
Reason

*Studies in Critical Theory  
and Social Science in the  
Age of Max Weber*

H. T. Wilson

*Edited and with a Foreword by Thomas M. Kemple*

Brill

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## THE VOCATION OF REASON

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES  
IN  
SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

EDITED BY

Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo,  
Rubin Patterson and Masamichi Sasaki

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and Social Science  
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BY

H.T. WILSON

EDITED AND WITH A FOREWORD BY

THOMAS M. KEMPLE



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A science of the *human* . . . asks about the *quality of human beings* reared under particular economic and social conditions.

—Max Weber, “The National State and Economic Policy”  
(Freiburg Inaugural Address, 1895)

Yet time presses, and ‘we must work while it is still day.’ What must be won now for the autonomous individual who belongs to the great masses is nothing other than the ‘inalienable’ spheres of freedom and individuality—that is, in the course of the next few generations, and *only owing to* the economic and intellectual ‘revolution,’ the much despised ‘anarchy of production’ and equally despised ‘subjectivism,’ for as long as they remain unbroken. Once the world has become economically ‘full’ and intellectually ‘sated,’ *perhaps* these spheres will never be conquered for the individual, at least as far as our weak eyes can penetrate the impenetrable mists of the future of human history.

—Max Weber, “On the Situation of Constitutional  
Democracy in Russia” (1906)

‘Mind you, the devil is old; so grow old to understand him.’ This does not mean age in the sense of a birth certificate, but rather . . . that one must observe the devil’s ways through to the end in order to see his power and his limitations.

—Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation” (1917/1919);  
(cf. “Politics as a Vocation” (1919))

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Author's Introduction: *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology* 8, 1971: 183–88; *History of European Ideas* 16 (3) 1992: 545–50; *Journal of Classical Sociology* 2 (1) 2002: 93–106.

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Chapter 7: *Dialectical Anthropology* 12 1988: 285–305.

Chapter 8: *Methodology and Science* 15 (3) 1982: 167–200.

Chapter 9: *International University of Japan Annual Review, 1987–88*, Tokyo: IUJ Press, 1988: 1–42.

Chapter 10: *Bulletin of the Institute of Middle Eastern Studies* 6 1992: 527–47, and *Time and Society* 8 (1) 1999: 161–81.

The quotations printed on page v were taken from *Gesammelte Politische Schriften*, edited by Johannes Winkelmann, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1988), pp. 13 and 65, and *Max Weber Gesamausgabe I/17*, edited by Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Wolfgang Schluchter (J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1992, pages 105 and 249, respectively. Translations in Max Weber, *Political Writings*, edited by Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pages 15 and 71, and from Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited and translated by Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1946), pages 152 and 127, respectively. The translations have been modified.

Different times and circumstances call for different translations, both from one language to another, and even from within one language. Now, and increasingly, as numerous scholars have pointed out, the purpose is less to bring (for example) German, and German language social science scholarship to English speaking readers for the first time in a stylistically fluid English literary form than it is to do so in a way that better balances this objective with greater fidelity to the German original. Although some earlier versions of the chapters in the present volume partook of older English translations of several of Max Weber's seminal works, most quoted passages have been revised in line with new translations or the editor's expertise, and a shared belief by both author and editor that translations of Max Weber in particular must move with the times and circumstances in an attempt to achieve a better balance between these two objectives.

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For Our Graduate Students

## EDITOR'S FOREWORD

### THE AGE OF WEBER

by Thomas M. Kemple

What exactly was Max Weber's 'epoch' anyway? Did it end with world War I? The rise of the Third Reich? World War II? Or is it perhaps still with us, specifically those features that Weber drew to the attention of intellectuals during his lifetime with a sense of urgency which it is simply neurotic for individuals to reduce to neurosis?

—H. T. Wilson, "Author's Introduction"

Almost twenty years have passed since I first encountered the lively teaching of H. T. Wilson in a graduate seminar in Social and Political Thought at York University in Toronto. Speaking without notes in a small crowded room without windows, he led us through a maze of difficult texts by the first generation of scholars from the Institute of Social Research, also known as the Frankfurt School of Critical Social Theory. Our first lesson, to which we often returned, was on the difference between "traditional theory" on the one hand, which attempts to grasp reality in a piecemeal fashion and without leaving a remainder, and "critical theory" on the other, which strives to glimpse the whole in the process of becoming. He invited us to consider how elements of critical and traditional theory mingle in various ways in the work of both classical and contemporary thinkers. The meaning of these cryptic remarks that first day then unfolded for us in weekly meetings that ultimately taught us to see the history of theory as a point of access into the history of social, political and cultural life, both as it is known by others and as it might otherwise be thought about by us.

The ironic moral of the many stories I heard in those seminars seemed to be that today we still live in "the age of Max Weber" to the extent that scientific de-enchantment and technological rationalization continue to characterize our world. As in Weber's day, these phenomena are sustained by the spirit of capitalist democracy and

its bureaucratic disciplines, which are increasingly underwritten by the technocratic ethos of the social sciences themselves. Many of the features which distinguish social, intellectual, and cultural life at the beginning of the twenty-first century can already be discerned from the dispatches Weber sent to us in his most influential and best-known writings from the first two decades of the twentieth century. To the degree that his work in the sociology and history of Western capitalism and bureaucracy, science and politics, and even literature, music, and the visual arts exceeds the ordinary boundaries of social scientific research conducted today, it constitutes a model for contemporary theoretical and empirical research. In particular, his writings provide us with many of the analytical tools we need to examine how the norms of instrumental and calculative rationality colonize the fields of work and politics, as well as the sciences and the arts, and to explain why the global expansion of occidental capitalism meets with local resistance from some cultural traditions and finds a secure foothold in others. Our task then is not so much how to read Weber as having anticipated or explicitly identified these tendencies, which in any case are hardly captured in lists such as the one given here. Rather, it is to consider *how Weber reads us*, how his insight—and his ambivalence—provide a mirror of our predicament and a window into the limits and possibilities of our times.

This is the question posed in various ways by Wilson in the studies collected here, which have taken shape in a number of different contexts and in response to various provocations over the past thirty five years, but which have been revised to varying degrees for the present work to account for recent developments in the metamorphosis of occidental reason. The opening lines of Wilson's first book, *The American Ideology* (1977), announce this central theme through the problematic of the history of the social sciences in the twentieth century:

In the thirty-year period that separates us from the Second World War a number of significant intellectual developments have taken place. America has become a world leader across a vast range of professional, scientific and academic fields, thanks in no small part to the European migration after 1925. Sociology, so singularly indebted to these emigrés, has now consigned most of this work to the dustbin of history where all such 'classical' contributions eventually come to reside. But never mind; this is the way sociology goes about convincing itself that it really is a science after all. Max Weber was very much to the point when he remarked that in science past accomplishments which

have been superseded by subsequent research can remain of interest only as a means of training or a 'gratification' (Wilson, 1977: 1).

I shall return to the question of how reading a "classic" like Weber can be a source of training and education, or of gratification and fulfilment. For the moment, I wish to contrast the state of affairs described above to the current renaissance of interest in so-called "classical sociology" which has been stimulated in large part by an explosion of interdisciplinary inquiry into Weber's extraordinary life and work. Through a careful analysis of his published writing, some of it accessible only recently and much of it still unavailable in English translation, and of his unpublished work, including lecture notes, letters, and other personal documents, many of which are being edited for the massive *Gesamtausgabe*, only about half of which has appeared in print, this emerging body of scholarship paints a portrait of Weber as a reader and a writer with a contradictory and compelling conception of our modernity (Hennis, 2000; Mommsen, 1984; Scaff, 1989; Schluchter, 1996; Turner, 2000; Whimster, 1999). By either reevaluating standard readings of Weber or excavating neglected writings in the Weberian corpus, this research has shown that Weber had a much broader and subtler conception of the tasks of the sociological imagination than we have previously been willing to grant him, or even to consider for ourselves. Nevertheless, the understandable concern with *getting Weber right* after decades of distorted and selective interpretation, translation, and publication may run the risk of advancing the goal of scholarly precision at the cost of assessing Weber's ambiguous place in the critical self-understanding of our age. As Wilson shows us, a sustained *ambivalence to Weber's ambivalence*—whether personal or political, psychological or sociological—is an essential resource for cultivating the modern vocation of critical reason.

In contrast to the belated recognition of forgotten or overlooked figures in the history of the social sciences, Weber continues to be recognized, along with Marx and Durkheim, as a "founding father." Yet like many popular and respected "classical" works, Weber's are more often reverentially referred to and ritually cited than they are carefully read, accurately interpreted, or intelligently criticized. The fact that he was the only author to appear more than once in a survey of the twentieth century's ten "most important sociological books" conducted in 1998 by the World Sociology Congress is perhaps evidence of how his works have in a sense been "canonized." The



monumental posthumous work, *Economy and Society*, ranked first, while his famous essay, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, came in fifth (International Sociological Association, 1998). Apart from the question of why Weber in particular has been honoured in this way, and the problem of how these specific texts should be understood as important from either a scholarly or symbolic perspective, even their status as “books” is open to debate: while *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* appeared only as a two-part journal article in Weber’s lifetime, and was later revised by him for inclusion in his collected essays, *Economy and Society* was transmitted posthumously only as a mass of unpublished notes, manuscripts, and printer’s proofs compiled over a ten year period and in various states of completion (Chalcraft, 1994; Baier et al., 2000). In the course of exposing problems in the transmission, reception, and translation of Weber’s texts, recent scholarship has also helped us to refine the biographical portrait of Weber as a man of his times who nevertheless has something to say to (and about) our own. Tortured by neurosis and by the conflicting missions of class and country, nation-building and cosmopolitan consciousness, Weber is thus portrayed as projecting an image of our own *Zeitgeist*, including its political and economic struggles, its intellectual ethos and anxieties, and its melancholy mood of resignation and pessimism (Baehr, 2002: 183–204; Roth, 2001; Ghosh, 1994; Hinkle, 1986). This biographical, hermeneutic and reconstructive project is likewise taken up in Wilson’s attempts to close the gap between a more accurate understanding of Weber’s writings on the one hand, and our sense of his contemporary importance as a social scientist and critic of the spirit of the times on the other.

Thus in general terms a major concern of the present work is to *decanonize the classics*, that is, to unthink them as timeless and placeless monuments that deserve our unreflective respect and instead to recreate them as situated and dated resources for the reflexive analysis and critique of our own era. In particular, it is not simply a matter of addressing Weber’s writings as having stood the test of time, but also of considering them as a marker by which our own time or epoch can be measured (Baehr, 2002: 80). The unity of the two parts of this collection can be understood first in light of how they address Weber’s overriding concern with the “vocation of reason” in the modern world with respect to the contradictory ethos of bureaucratic capitalism which has been fostered in large part by

social scientific conceptions of power and knowledge. Part I traces the historical and conceptual shift from traditional to critical social theory not only by recovering the Marxian analytic within the Weber-inspired struggle of the Frankfurt School with Anglo-American sociology and philosophy of science, but also through a direct reconsideration of the respective corpuses of Weber and Marx themselves. Part II continues this narrative by examining how the project of “negative” social theorizing achieved by critical theory can be expanded into the reflexive praxis of reconstructive research practices. From Part I to Part II, the *narrative structure* of Weber’s work provides a model for recognizing the vanishing mediation of older modes of rationality as they give way to either technical and functional rationalization or potentially innovative forms of critical and emancipatory reason (cf. Jameson, 1988). At the same time, Weber’s *casuistic method* also provides a model in each chapter for situated moral and political reflection through case by case theoretical analyses which are distinct and relatively autonomous from one another (cf. Green, 1988). Together this narrative structure and casuistic method which derive from Weber’s canonical texts constitute a unique set of approaches for advancing the contemporary critique and reconstruction of the social sciences.

I want to conclude these prefatory comments by addressing two distinctive features which will immediately strike any reader of Wilson’s work: its novelty and its difficulty. In *Tradition and Innovation*, he addresses these issues in a general way as the perennial problems of occidental reason: “To the extent that innovation is a phenomenon whose comprehension is dependent upon our own vested interest in rationality as the cultural problematic of modern Western civilization, it too operates as a code word for the inexplicable” (Wilson, 1984: 126; cf. Chapters 2 and 8). As Wilson argues with reference to the complementarity and tension between the work of Max Weber and Ludwig Wittgenstein, an increasingly one-dimensional society strives to reduce the radical effects of innovation either to episodes of social Machiavellianism, for example, where criminals become culture heroes, or to engineered products of techno-scientific ingenuity, where inventors strive to make the achievement of already well defined cultural goals more efficient. Where Weber tended to despair that the rationalizing auspices of modern science and technology were actually demystifying the world, Wittgenstein tried to transcend modern knowledge “by showing its limits from inside its authoritative

auspices as a tradition and a culture” (ibid.: 149; cf. Chapter 3). Arguing that memory, perception, and language could *never* be fully understood “because these were the means or tools which were required even to address problems of understanding” (ibid.: 126), Wittgenstein’s persistent interrogation of the ordinary certainties taken for granted in the language games of reason provide a caveat and antidote to Weberian de-enchantment and Frankfurt School pessimism. In other words, for Wilson, both analytical/empirical inquiry and critical/dialectical reflection begin from the common sense and pretheoretical experience of the everyday lifeworld, from which they continue to draw even as they problematize the codes of rationality which make alternative forms of thought and action, including theoretical invention and innovation, appear as “deviations,” “nonsense,” or “inexplicable.”

Throughout his life, Weber struggled to find a productive balance—which ultimately became tortured and tragic for him—between the rigours of scholarly research, the political “demands of the day,” and even the ecstasies of aesthetic expression. By examining how these tensions are experienced in the age of Weber, the studies collected here contribute to the growing body of scholarship in classical sociology that addresses Weber as *a social and cultural theorist of modernity*, and which thereby considers his work as essential for redefining the terms of academic and public discourse in the 21st century. Just as importantly, they explore the extent to which Weber’s life and work can stand as a model or “ideal type” against which to measure the contested and ambiguous intellectual heritage of the social sciences. We are therefore in much the same position with respect to Weber as Nietzsche was in arguing that “with Schopenhauer’s help all of us can educate ourselves *against* our age—since we have the advantage of truly *knowing* this age through him” (Nietzsche, 1995 [1874]: 195–96). But even Nietzsche immediately felt it necessary to wonder whether this is really an advantage after all: “In any event, a few centuries from now it may no longer be at all possible. I find the thought amusing that some day soon human beings will be fed up with reading, and with writers as well, that some day the scholar will come to his senses, write his testament, and ordain that his corpse be burned along with his books, especially his own writings” (ibid.). As already hinted at in the passage from *The American Ideology* cited above, this ironic sentiment is shared

to some extent by many readers of Weber, if not in some way by Weber himself (cf. Hennis, 2000: 103).

What then does it mean to live in an age of de-enchantment or rationalization, that is, in the eponymous age of Weber? Is it not just as likely that we are experiencing “the age of Durkheim,” where social solidarity and professional ethics might be prescribed as the cure for post-modern anomie, or the “age of Marx,” where ongoing class struggles and widespread alienation become global even as they sink deeper into our political unconscious? Perhaps an age can only be defined when we begin to perceive its end, determine its date of death, or decipher the signs of its passing. An epoch is not endowed with a proper name simply because a great individual has lived through it and earns the right to be identified with it, but when this name itself connotes the signs of the times, and so reveals that what has disappeared is not an origin or an end but a fulfilment:

In contrast with these preconditions which scientific work shares with art [namely, inner devotion to the task] science has a fate that profoundly distinguishes it from artistic work. Scientific work is harnessed to the course of *progress*; where in the realm of art there is no progress in the same sense . . . A work of art which is a genuine ‘fulfilment’ is never surpassed; it will never be antiquated. Individuals may differ in appreciating the personal significance of works of art, but no one will ever be able to say of such a work that it is ‘outdated’ by another work which is also a ‘fulfilment.’ In science, each of us knows that what we have accomplished will be antiquated in ten, twenty, fifty years. That is the fate to which science is subjected; it is the very *meaning* of scientific work, to which it is devoted in a quite specific sense, as compared with other spheres of culture for which in general the same holds. Every scientific ‘fulfilment’ raises new ‘questions’; it *wants* to be ‘surpassed’ and outdated (Weber [1917/1919] 1946: 137–38; translation modified).

There is enough of both the artist and the scientist in Marx, Durkheim, and Weber that each found enduring ways to dramatize our own predicament while inviting—or even requiring—us to improve upon their understanding of it. The studies collected here do not just surpass and outdate the body of work which is their point of departure and guiding thread. They are not simply a measure of how well or how poorly our predecessors have “aged.” Most importantly, they are themselves the fulfilment of a vocation which calls for its own response in an act of critique and reconstruction.

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## AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

### THE AMBIVALENCE OF REASON: MAX WEBER'S ANALYSIS OF WESTERN MODERNITY

There are at least three reasons for the recent resurgence of interest in Max Weber's work, and probably many more. First, Weber, not really a postmodernist in any sense of the term, nevertheless provides a perfect foil for those sympathetic to this strain of thinking. This is implicit in his pessimistic rationalization and de-enchantment of the world thesis, which posits a "negative trajectory" for Western civilization and its institutions (Bendix, 1960). The absence of a theory of change in his work, as opposed to either the "progress" of formal rationality or the routinization, rationalization or traditionalization of charisma and institutions, lends a not-unintended air of automaticity or determinism to his understanding of these large-scale processes (Parsons, 1937). At the same time, it also lends credence to the view that we are increasingly beyond (or post-) capitalism, socialism, ideology and history, to name but a few, which is to say, by implication if not directly, that we are (allegedly) beyond (or post-) Marx, Weber's invariably present protagonist (see Chapter 5).

A second reason concerns the sheer quantity and nature, scope and scale of Weber's theoretical, empirical and practical researches. These studies touch on virtually all areas that involve economics, history, social sciences, religion, methodology and technique, politics and law, and less directly on music, anthropology, classical studies, natural sciences and practical concerns bearing on agriculture, trade and commerce (Lazarsfeld and Oberschall, 1965; Swedberg, 1998). Weber was a polymath by any reckoning, which has made it not only relatively easy, but necessary and usually fruitful, to investigate some particular area of his researches and not others, in pursuit of the validation of a position on a specific matter or controversy. Weber uniquely manages to combine this status as a polymath at a point well after the modern division of academic labor was underway with that of a "classical" scholar in these fields, one who was at one and the same time thoroughly original and a master synthesist. In addition, Weber not only participated in many commissions of inquiry

into practical problems and attempted to address or settle disputes in many of the academic and professional fields mentioned above. He also was instrumental in creating significant research traditions and even whole areas of study through his prodigious efforts (Schluchter, 1981; 1989; 1996). Raymond Aron gets it so right in *German Sociology* (1964 [1937]) when he puts Max Weber in a category of his own beyond both the formal and systematic sociology so prominent in Germany between 1890 and 1930.

A third reason is that over the last 20–30 years, there has been an increasing concern quite independent of postmodernism to re-evaluate the contribution of modern Western civilization, in the form of its specific institutions and the institutional matrix itself (Loewith, 1970; Wilson, 1984, 2002). In this re-evaluation, Weber's prodigious studies in so many fields, combined with his theoretical contributions to method, epistemology, religion, comparative studies and our understanding of medieval and modern institutions looms large. While some of this interest indicates concern for the fate of the individual in a national state, supranational and global order, it is also inspired by neo-conservative<sup>1</sup> criticisms of government, bureaucracy and the ubiquity of legal formalism. In the latter case, it is the all-embracing commitment to laws, rules and regulations as the essence of the normative political, economic and social agenda under neo-Keynesian policies that often inspires these criticisms.

### I. *Law, modernity and rationality in Weber*

Three recent books address virtually all these themes, as their titles and subtitles only partly indicate. In this and the following section

---

<sup>1</sup> Even though “neo-liberalism” is the correct term, throughout the present volume the choice has been made to follow incorrect American practice and use the term “neo-conservatism” instead. First, not only was conservatism in all its forms anti-individualist, anti-industrialist and anti-capitalist. In addition, liberalism functioned historically, particularly in the guise of political economy, but in other ways as well (e.g. utilitarianism), as a major ideological legitimator of capitalism. American preference for neo-conservatism makes it possible for Americans to recast what are plainly socialist and social-democratic policies and practices since at least the first administration of Franklin Roosevelt as “liberal” or “more liberal” policies and practices. This allows them to avoid any reference to or acknowledgment of their reliance on socialism or social democracy at all, the latter ideologies being uniquely endemic, so it is claimed, only to “European class societies,” in clear contrast to the United States in particular (cf. Wilson, 1999: 18–19 and supra, 2002, 1977).

of this introduction, I intend to balance a (re)citation of the contents and ideas of each book, and thoughts emerging directly from these contents and ideas, with an opportunity to think and reflect on my own in the present volume. In this sense, I shall to some extent treat discussion of these texts as an occasion to theorize precisely because of the opportunity their scrutiny has provided me with to rethink the vocation of critical reason in reconstructing the social sciences.

The title and subtitle of Cary Boucock's *In the Grip of Freedom: Law and Modernity in Max Weber* belie the fact that his major concern is with the peculiar nature of Western rationalism and the role it plays in Weber's analysis of key institutions and practices, particularly formal legal rationality. His focus on the "specific and peculiar rationalism of Western culture" is directed to "the formal rationality of modern economic and political arrangements" manifested most prominently in "capitalism," with its "instrumental calculus of profit," and "bureaucracy," with its "methodical observance of rules." Of particular interest for me is his innovative discussion of "Weber's existential epistemology" as it works itself out in a necessarily post-religious, secular and positivist analysis of values, from which there arises a normative space of choice and consent for Weber. Boucock makes a persuasive case that for Weber the space of choice and consent not only arises from this analysis of values but presupposes it. For the thoughtful reader this is supremely remindful of Weber's seminal and definitive remark in *Economy and Society*. Any effort, Weber states, to determine and delimit what is to be called "formal" must acknowledge that "in this context the concept 'substantive' is itself in a certain sense 'formal,' that is, it is an 'abstract, generic concept'" (Weber, 1978: 86; cf. Chapters 1, 5 below). The obvious question, apart from Weber's sleight of hand, evident in his reliance on different understandings of the concept "formal," is why the reverse is instead not true. Why isn't the concept "formal" in a certain sense "substantive"?

It is as a consequence of this conceptual bias and pre-eminence of the generically and specifically formal in determining and delimiting rationality that the contest posed to its "progress" by the individual as a willing and acting rather than merely behaving "person" approaches a zero-sum game for Weber (cf. Arendt, 1958: 40–46). In legal terms, this implies that any challenge to "occupancy of the field" by formal rationality and the generically and specifically formal in all its many institutional manifestations by this individual is



ultimately futile. The notable exception to this, and then only temporarily, is the acting and willing of the charismatic leader, who became for Weber a greater evil than even the subordination of a new fellaheen to ubiquitous rationalization because this leader preached an ethic of ultimate ends rather than one of responsibility (Weber, 1946, 1958, 1978). The implication is that only large congeries of individuals acting and willing rather than just behaving might make possible the constitutional and representative framework that would restrain and constructively direct such charisma (see Chapter 10).

To be sure, this subordination to the rationalization process, though preferable to the charismatic irrationality that is only ever possible with the assistance of some legitimizing "myth of authority," remains a lesser evil for Weber (MacIver, 1947). Assisted by his significant reformulation of Weber's formal/substantive distinction into one that instead contrasts functional to substantial rationality, Karl Mannheim would address himself later on to the difficulties inherent in Weber's lukewarm endorsement of an ethic of responsibility. Mannheim was particularly concerned to flesh out the implications of this ethic for the relation between substantially rational citizenship and democratic participation and functionally rational planning in *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* and in subsequent texts. Mannheim's debt to Weber, for both his conceptual framework and his problem focus, is particularly evident in this study. Boucock reminds us, without making it his real business to do so, how important was the task that Weber laid down to his successors when, near the end of his life, he contrasted these two ethics and their implications for what Mannheim would later call "fundamental democratization" (Weber, 1946 [1919]; Mannheim, 1940: 40–49).

Boucock captures nicely the problems posed by both the increasingly objective process of formal rationality in Weber's analysis and the increasingly formal analytical techniques for studying this process in the following observation: "The formal rationalization of modern social arrangements represents a modality of control and mastery involving the objectification and depersonalization of political and economic structures of power and authority" (Boucock, 2000: 39). What is especially valuable here is that from the outset Boucock is concerned to address the *different* formally rational properties of capitalism and bureaucracy (among others). He does this in order to show how they interpenetrate and become interdependent, producing over time modalities that are *complementary to* rather than mirror

replicas of one another. It is the institutional relations between capitalism and bureaucracy, for example, that are, or should be, of continuing interest because they (and others) address the potential and actual "range of variation" possible between real, rather than "ideal typical," systems and regimes. This in turn points to the necessary complexity lying beneath where the notions of formal rationality and rationalization are unpacked to reveal that which is specifically "most worthy of being known" (Loewith, 1970; Schluchter, 1981).

These concerns are most clearly in evidence, however, in Boucock's major institutional focus—the relation between law, legality and formal rationality and rationalization. Here the emphasis is quite correctly placed on the potential or actual space for freedom under conditions of increasingly "rational(ized) domination," understood as the lesser evil when compared to uncontrolled and excessively spirited (charismatic) decisionism. It is in the care taken to expose the deep texture of interrelations and interdependencies between the various forms and manifestations of legal rationality that Boucock is at his analytical best, making clear in the process their tie to rational(ized) domination. Standing behind the proceedings, even more than elsewhere in the text, is Weber himself, asking how any form of domination could be "rational", what it would mean for human freedom if it could, and implying that if it could then how could you possibly call such rationality reason? In this vein, Boucock not only contrasts rational and irrational bases and sources of law in Weber, but the rational and irrational nature of law in its proper application even (or especially) under norms of formal rationality (Weber, 1954; Kronman, 1983).

The formal analysis of laws and legal systems is always prejudiced in favor of the positivistic nature of the legal norms at stake, seen as goals to be achieved "objectively" and instrumentally through calculation. The contrast here is to values that resist reduction to this status, primarily but not only because they relate to or address principle(s), and the principled action that should, but is less and less likely, to follow from them today, Weber implies. Instrumental action, oriented to goals rather than values, is much easier to reduce to ideal typical status in legal rules because the person so acting "fits" the analytical engine being employed to explain, anticipate and "rationalize" his/her actions much better. This suggests that for Weber, the auspices of formal legal rationality in particular constitute a far more specific, and actually as well as potentially effective, modality

of control of the range of variation in acceptable human conduct than we might think, one with the most serious implications for individual freedom. The extent to which Boucock's analysis of these auspices relies on the types of human action found in the initial exposition of "Basic Sociological Terms" in Weber's *Economy and Society, Volume I*, is evident throughout (Weber, 1978: 3–26).

How much tension is tolerable, for example, between reliance on these types for effective disciplined observation and comparison, and the prescriptive bias implicit in their use given the degree to which "actual action" cannot help but deviate in a substantive direction away from the formal ideal? It is quite clear that the answer given by Weber in this same section is one that was unpersuasive for Weber himself no less than for so many others. Having said this, Boucock is thoroughly on the mark when he draws our attention to the fact that for Weber formal legal rationalism, however unavoidable its problematic characteristics, originally arose in order to *enable* individuals rather than to subject them to rationalization processes that were not contemplated at the time. "Weber's conception of formal legal rationality is rooted in liberal presuppositions about individualism, intentionality and the separation of fact and value; formal legal rationality is *conceptually* congruent with individual autonomy" (Boucock, 2000: 65, emphasis added). The problem would then lie in the nature, scope and limits of what constituted "legitimate" expressions of individualism, and the extent to which its range could not help but be severely restricted in both form and content, thus remaining relatively exclusive and less "available" to citizens (Durkheim, 1952; Wilson, 1984).

In light of my own concern in this collection with the *political* problem of legal-rationalization, the following excerpt is worth quoting at length:

This pattern is symptomatic of the contradiction between the 'square' of a formally rational judicial decision-making process and the 'circle' of determining the legal meaning of various individual rights and freedoms: squaring the circle in this case would involve finding rational, legally correct solutions to issues of social and economic policy without reference to extrajuristic values. As Weber's model of modern legal rationality would suggest, the task is impossible precisely because solutions to problems of competing ethical standards must be posited: they are inherently political. The rise of judicial forms of power . . . represents the 'inappropriate' legalization of the value-setting function of the political, legislative arm of the state by judicial forms of decision-

making, and hence [constitutes] a de-politicization of political processes by legal rationalization (Boucock, 2000: 133).

Quite apart from the fact that I agree fully with Boucock's "inappropriate forum" argument here, his utilization of the Weberian conceptual framework, particularly the distinction between formal and substantive rationality, is throughout superb, and deserving of careful attention by readers for this reason, among others. This is not only a seminal dichotomy in Weber that performs a critical background function off and on throughout the essays to follow. It is one that also relates Weber in more specific ways to Marx, Durkheim, Mannheim, Wittgenstein, Adorno and the Frankfurt School and Arendt, among others. This is especially evident in the contrast between: "functional rationality" and "sense of function" discussed in Chapter 4, exchange and use value in Chapter 5 and the priority of temporal to spatial considerations in Chapter 10.

## *II. Weber as sociologist of occidental capitalism and anthropologist of western civilization*

Richard Swedberg's *Max Weber and the Idea of an Economic Sociology* is an impressive study of Max Weber as the founder of the idea, and to some extent the discipline, of economic sociology, and thus intersects with the concerns of Boucock as well as my own, especially regarding the fundamental importance of Weber's focus on law and legality to his economic sociology (Swedberg, 1998: 82–107). Swedberg is persistently and consistently engaged in making a case for the central role of an economic sociology in Weber's analysis of modern Western civilization. He notes that Weber's concern as early in his career as 1895 was to develop an economic science that would provide "a practical and efficient type of analysis," which for Weber would necessarily involve "a social dimension," albeit not a sociology per se. Only later on did Weber "set out to lay a solid conceptual foundation for sociology" which would integrate social with interest-driven concerns, as the following extended remark by Swedberg suggests:

One particularly suggestive quality of Weber's economic sociology is the way that he conceptualized economic action and attempted to introduce a social dimension into the analysis of economic behavior. According to Weber, all the cultural sciences (not only sociology, in

other words) analyze phenomena that are constituted through the meaning that people invest in them. This applies to economic theory as to history and psychology. What sets sociology apart and makes it into a science of its own is consequently something other than meaning per se. Sociology focuses more precisely on the way that people's actions are oriented to the behavior of others . . . When applied to economic phenomena, sociology looks at behavior that is driven mainly by material interests and also oriented to the behavior of others. In other words, economic social action, the basic unit in Weber's economic sociology, differs from economic action, the basic unit in economic theory, in that it is driven by material interests and directed at utility, but also takes the behavior of others into account (Swedberg, 1998: 5).

That Weber's ideal of a responsible sociology was that of a discipline guided by economic categories and individualistic concepts in its analysis of social interaction is evident in his preference for a focus on action rather than behaviour in society and on scarcity rather than bounty in nature. Some of the consequences for his thinking of his embrace of these preferences are addressed in Chapters 1, 5, 6, 7 and 9. Chapter 1 discusses Weber's commitment to a "sociology of scarcity" in the light of the reality of a bureaucratic rationalization process between capitalism and socialism. Chapter 5 shows the consequences of his view of substantive rationality as ultimately a "formal" concept in sociology's conceptual arsenal for theorizing in a way that does not acquiesce (as he has no choice but to do) in the priority of formal rationality. Chapter 6 confirms the inherently political character of bureaucratic rationalization once it has morphed into what Weber called "a closed body of office holders" under technocratic norms of allegedly objective knowledge. Chapters 7 and 9 point to the modernization process as a whole, including modern secular bureaucracy, as a societal totality the main contours and preferences of which are prefigured in, as well as expressed by, sociology as a formally rationalistic discipline.

Like Swedberg, Wilhelm Hennis is centrally preoccupied with the role that capitalism plays in virtually necessitating a sociology that is uniquely economic in nature, but not absent a social dimension in consequence. He sees the rudiments of a Weberian anthropology, "a science of man," implicit in Weber's early concern to study the effects of capitalism on "the quality of the human beings bred by these social and economic conditions of existence." Hennis's *Max Weber's Science of Man* is intended, as the subtitle indicates, as "New

Studies for a Biography of the Work.” For Hennis, the goal of unearthing Weber’s science of man, understood as an “anthropology,” is very much to the point, as he makes clear in the following excerpt from Weber’s Freiburg Inaugural Lecture of 1895:

Economics has sometimes treated the technical economic problem of the production of commodities as the prime standard of value, while at other times it has regarded the problem of their distribution, of ‘social justice,’ as the standard; occasionally the one has been naively identified with the other (Weber 1994 [1895], quoted in Hennis, 2000: 3).

Weber goes on to state that “an alternative perspective” in the form of “a science of man” lies implicit in economics, one that “investigates above all the quality of the human beings bred by these economic and social conditions of existence” (ibid.).

From this, Hennis surmises that Weber should be read anew through different lenses, something all the more necessary in light of the (alleged) fact that to date “Weber has made little impact upon the modern social sciences” (ibid.: 6). To the question: “Is there a Weberian Anthropology?,” Hennis answers no if what is meant is a “systematically conceived” contribution, but states that: “This does not however prevent us from arguing that his ‘problematic’ is ‘anthropological’ in character.” For Hennis, *Verstehen* in particular, but other concepts no less central to Weberian analysis, provide evidence that Weber saw himself engaged in carrying out a research programme, one where sociology provided the method, generically speaking, but anthropology the overall orientation and spirit of the inquiry (ibid.: 13). I shall return to this claim again in what follows.

Hennis’ additional emphasis on biography and the biographical is also very much to the point, as long as this focus does not lead to attempts to explain through what I shall call “reduction without remainder,” *which it does not in this study* (Mitzman, 1970). In effect, “objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder” (Adorno, 1973: 5). While one can clearly justify seeing certain biographical facts through the lenses of Marxism, psychoanalysis or sociology of knowledge, for example, the exercise should never be used to annihilate the “objective content” that still remains after the procedure has been completed, as I shall argue in the following section of this introduction. These reductive processes must be undertaken in full recognition that the explanations they provide are not only necessarily incomplete but also severely problematic if applied in

zero-sum, binary fashion solely to challenge or negate the value of the truth claims being made.

This is especially necessary when, for example, one's economic class or social status group, upbringing and conflicts with one's parents or the configuration of one's "interests" leads the biographer to discount or devalue the subject's statements, observations, concepts and theories. Indeed, following on the observations of Jaspers (1964) and Antoni (1962), among others, I would argue that it is precisely these connections that make of Weber in particular a man uniquely of his age. For me, Weber's class position, upbringing and conflicts with parents and interests *increase the likelihood* that his statements, observations, concepts and theories have truth-value as knowledge claims. I think, however, that Hennis would agree that saying this does not mean that Weber is not also a man of our age; the statements are only incompatible in a zero-sum, binary frame of reference that fails to recognize multiple levels and senses of division and distinction. Indeed, this agreement is apparent from the start in the reasons for his persistent, albeit revived, interest in Weber. His view of Weber as a man of our time *as well* is based on Weber's attempt to reconcile the two goals of the discipline of economics cited in his Inaugural Address. It suggests that he be read as the progenitor of a science of man, literally the father of a family that was stillborn, and (unfortunately) remains so today.

In this endeavor, *Verstehen*, value freedom and the power of judgment can be seen as Weber's way of turning one aspect of his personality to the task of studying the values, practices and institutions of modern Western civilization *as if it were an alien culture*. This orientation is evident in his "Author's Introduction" (the "Preliminary Remark") to *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* and in parts of his "vocation" address on "science," among many other places (Weber, 1958, 1946) As such, it addresses critically the limits of the dichotomy between culture and civilization so central to his brother's work (Alfred Weber, 1947). It is as if Weber's preoccupation with questions like: "Why this apparent line of development?, Why this institutional outcome? and Why these relations between institutions?" necessitate *Verstehen* and value freedom, albeit in the light of efforts to acknowledge one's values to the extent possible, because only through such "discipline" can "his own" culture be studied as if it were "other" to him. While it is true that sociologists may use these protocols in small-scale empirical studies, they do not normally do

so when the canvass gets broader and more complex. In contrast, anthropologists are normally required to confine their undisciplined and *ad hominem* remarks to field notes, as Malinowski did in his study of the Trobriand Islanders and elsewhere (Malinowski, 1948, 1967).

Hennis' discussion of Weber's failure as a teacher and educator suggests the following reasons for this failure: Weber's "brittle pedagogic eros," the "impenetrability of his scholarship," his intolerance of "personality and self importance," his "exceptional failure as a political theorist" concerned to defend "plebiscitary and charismatic democracy" and his critical pronouncements on the restrictions inherent in academic practices (Hennis, 2000: 101–103). Yet at least some of these reasons may in fact explain why he *is* so central a figure today, along with those suggested at the outset. Throughout the book, Hennis brings to light intellectual connections with and commentary about Weber that are not generally found in the Weber reading canon, at least not in North America. Examples include: Weber's interest in "characterology;" the impact of spiritualism and James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*; charisma as a more available basis than we thought for "inner transformation" (Shils, 1965; also see Chapter 10 below); the pedagogic background and events leading up to the *Methodenstreit* (cf. Cahnman, 1964); and the influence on Weber of Friedrich Albert Lange.

Hennis' appreciation of Weber's ambiguous legacy can also be found in an earlier work titled *Max Weber's Central Question* (republished in 2000). Both texts underscore the transience of fame, fashion and notoriety, in academic and intellectual circles no less than in other areas of contemporary life. While Weber has variously been in and out of fashion, it is clear to me that the generation-based divisions used to break up the period since his death in 1920 mean almost nothing when seen against the backdrop of his continuing presence. This presence is a function of the persistence of his work, and the fact that it is truly a world-historical, cross-cultural and epochal achievement. Just read what Weber has to say about "capitalism" in *Economy and Society* and elsewhere, for example, as Hennis makes clear, and the assumption that his analysis must be outdated will immediately fade away (cf. Wilson, 2002). Weber has been there all the time waiting for us to discover and rediscover him with the help of writers like Hennis, confirming the need in this case to (re)address his work in light of his commitment to an anthropology, a science of the human. It is really quite surprising how many



substantive and methodological aspects of Weber's work take on a new coherence, sense and unity once a commitment to this new frame of reference is acknowledged.

Together these three recent studies and the corollary references cited commend themselves as an introduction to any collection like this that attempts to address the relation between rationality, capitalism and economic and social sciences as intersecting concerns and preoccupations in Weber's life as well as in his work. The issue of rationality, although discussed mainly with reference to Boucock's study so far, still constitutes something of an intellectual fulcrum in any analysis of the work of Max Weber. This is true for the very important reason that rationality constitutes both the standard and the problematic for him, and does so for both the analysis of reality and the way that we try to go about studying it in a disciplined and theoretically responsible way (Wilson, 1973). No one made it the fulcrum to the extent that Weber did, and no one to date has come anywhere near Weber's success in doing so, regardless of how "popular" and "fashionable" Weber may or may not have been over the past century or more.

The most important vehicle whereby Weber achieved this result was the distinction between formal and substantive rationality (Weber, 1978). After all, it was formal rationality that became both the material and the analytical touchstone and substantive rationality the residual both as standard and as problematic for him, however skeptical and guarded was his endorsement of Western institutions exhibiting it, as I argue in Chapters 1 and 5. Whether we are talking about formally rational capital accounting practices, formally rational bureaucracy, formally rational defenses of rights or Weber's telling observation that in the final analysis the concept "substantive" is itself a "formal" analytical concept in sociology rather than the reverse, the point is clear. Weber's attempts to address the limits and insufficiencies of formal rationality in the sphere of individualism and freedom benefits from Boucock's overall analysis and case study of the failure of the "constitutionalization" of rights in Canada, especially in light of its recent consequences for responsible political governance (cf. Wilson, 1989; Mandel, 1994). Weber also benefits from the care and detail with which Swedberg addresses economic action, economic rationality, economic sociology and the idea of formal rationality as the basis of a method of social and economic research as

central concerns of Weber. Finally, Weber benefits from Hennis' efforts to explain the intended if not actual role played by Weber's reconciliation of formal rationality and "culture" in his analysis of the problems of capitalism. The same is also true for the role of, and emphasis upon, new biographical facts in suggesting a grander "anthropological" vision, one that sees the project of an economic sociology as a prolegomenon to or basis for a "science of the human."

### III. *Rationality, biography and ambivalence in "the Age of Weber"*

As Hennis's work convincingly suggests, another way of displaying this complex interrelationship between rationality, capitalism and economic and social science in Weber's work would require us to embed it in aspects of Weber's biography. Having said this, biography can only really be helpful in introducing the work of a great thinker if family and less immediate contextual variables are *not* employed in order to "explain" the work by "reducing" it solely or mainly to the facts of biography, as already noted. Instead, the purpose should be to address the range of variation culturally available at the particular time, place and circumstance of the person's life in order to see what factors may have been responsible (or more responsible) for forming his values, attitudes and assessment of events. It is only by doing this that a limited focus on biography and related events and circumstances can help show us why one's thoughts, values and assessments make sense while pointing to a remainder that always constitutes the objective content of the overall form of life. A key element in the way any complex thinker conceptualizes the relation between observation, thought and practice at any particular time, place and circumstance is *ambivalence*, a subtlety in the demand for determinations that both marks and bows to the limits of objective content.

The ambivalence over scholarly and political matters for which Max Weber is so well known is nowhere more clearly in evidence than in his thinking about nationalism and nationality, and its relation to his political values in Wilhelmine Germany. On the one hand, there is Weber the supporter of the German power state, charisma as the essence of innovative leadership and change, and the need for reorganization of the Junker estates to control the influx

and settlement of Slavic and Polish workers. On the other, however, there is Weber the supporter of qualified constitutional democracy, an ethic of responsibility rather than ultimate ends, bureaucracy as the only alternative to dilettantism in the field of administration, and a meritocratic commitment that allowed of no discrimination in admissions to university and to academic and other careers (Weber, 1994; 1946).

The remainder of this introduction will address the impact on Weber of a complex amalgam of forces and values generated by the conflict between his class position, his political ideology, his conception of nationality and nationalism and the fact of his German background, citizenship, and familial upbringing during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The structure of Weber's ambivalence thus arises out of the interplay between his membership in the bourgeoisie, his liberalism, however specific to Germany aspects of it may have been, his conception of nationhood in the age of the decline of the imperial power-state, and his Germanness in these circumstances (Marianne Weber, 1988 [1926]). Out of the tension between class position and political ideology Weber produces a unique conception of individualism, out of the tension between political ideology and nationality a unique form of corporatism, out of the tension between nationality and German background, upbringing, and citizenship a sanction for a form of authoritarianism at best only narrowly "rational," out of the tension between being both German and bourgeois a substantial defense of capitalism, out of the tension between his bourgeois class position and nationalism a unique and somewhat contrary analysis of the limits of market capitalism, and out of the tension between being both German and liberal a positive (Kantian) conception of the duties and responsibilities of citizenship.

As it turns out, the most well defined tension for our purposes which these conflicts and ambivalences give rise to is the tension in Weber between practice and theory which I have reformulated as the tension between experience, its disciplined observation, and reflection and analysis. This provides us with the best basis for understanding why Weber was unable to achieve a resolution of these competing and conflicting forces in his personality and his life.

While acknowledging Weber's psychological and intellectual complexity, this is barely a necessary condition for understanding his

ambivalence and his failure to resolve it. More specific factors and properties of these conflicts and tensions must be brought to light and discussed in light of the fact that on its own such complexity is a feature of many highly intellectual personalities not characterized by a similar ambivalence.

I intend to introduce these issues by focussing on the line of argument first developed in a much older work than those discussed above, a work that is now largely forgotten, though notorious in its day, namely, Arthur Mitzman's psychoanalytic study of Weber, *The Iron Cage: An Historical Interpretation of Max Weber* (1970). Then I want to suggest another, more appropriate, understanding of the biographical material cited. My point in doing this is to criticize any and all analytic approaches and processes which derive their *raison d'être* from attempts to reduce a person's actions, thoughts, values, work etc. to background and upbringing. My concern here is with all such forms, whether they are alleged to be inspired by Freud, Marx, or Mannheim. Thus I am no less concerned about class, power and other "locational" bases of reductionism than about oedipus (and electra) complexes, toilet training, "seduction," or unresolved feelings of guilt and remorse toward a parent or relative.

To begin with the latter form of reductionism, we should note that the subtitle of Mitzman's book is indeed misleading, for it is not an "historical" interpretation of Max Weber at all; it is a *psychoanalytic* interpretation. Mitzman's purpose is, in his own words, to unearth "the psycho-social conditions in which the ideology of German imperialism developed around the turn of the century" and to indicate the extent of the "suffocation of Weber's generation of late liberals in the institutions created by its parents" (Mitzman, 1970: 7). Weber's family upbringing and his relations with his mother and father are, we learn, "typical" of late 19th century "European bourgeois intellectuals." Of central significance to Mitzman's analysis is the concept of "cultural superego" which, according to the author, is "indispensable to the methodical application of depth psychology to historical problems." Mitzman's employment of the term comports with its use by both the Freudian revisionists and by Marcuse, Brown, and Erickson. It is necessary to any explanation of how the values of a given social system (Bismarckian and Wilhelmine Germany) are passed on to later generations through the family acting as a central institutional aegis. Because the cultural superego of Weber's

time was "rigid," an "overstructured cosmos of values and institutions," Mitzman argues that it came to constitute a "permanent threat to his autonomy" (ibid.: 4).

As long as the bourgeoisie lacked the political power that their economic ascendancy seemed to demand, the allegedly normal hostility which sons feel toward their fathers could be deflected into "conscious hostility or open struggle against the traditional powers." It was only after the period 1860–1875 that such a sublimation came to constitute a transference. To attack the politicians was to attack one's father, for the bourgeoisie were by this time effectively "in the driver's seat." Thus it was the very success of their fathers in the pursuit of power which effectively consigned their children "to a status never before imposed on the sons of the third estate: that of epigones" (ibid.: 8–10). Now a Marxian analysis of this situation (as well as a Weberian one), would raise the question of what it means to have "made it" when even the political power which comes with an achieved economic position was attained by playing the rules of the game of constitutional liberalism. This achieved economic status, in other words, does not carry with it the social status that is *ascribed* on the basis of criteria not related to achievement or the performance principle of industrial capitalism. The bourgeoisie never get this status as it turns out; the organizational cosmos of functional rationality they have created annihilates it in the name of progress.

Among other early commentators on Weber, Mitzman draws on H. Stuart Hughes's intellectual history of the period, *Consciousness and Society*, and appears to have been inspired by Hughes's discussion of Freud and Weber, especially the following remark: "We are left with the paradoxical suspicion that the most probing social theory of our time (Weber's) was the indirect sequel of an unresolved neurosis of a classic Freudian type" (Hughes, 1958: 298) Further on Hughes even suggests that Weber might have confirmed Freud's argument for a "death instinct" even as Freud was "publishing his speculations"—in the year of Weber's death in 1920 (ibid.: 329). This then is a psychoanalytic autopsy of a man the author never knew, one which is nowhere near so tenuous, *given this framework for analysis*, as Freud's studies of Moses and Leonardo or the essays on Luther by Fromm and Erickson perhaps, but nevertheless controversial in the sense in which Freud and Bullitt's study of Woodrow Wilson is controversial. Because the traces were still relatively fresh, especially Weber's personal correspondence and the testimony of a scant few

still alive who knew him personally, this alone hardly constitutes a basis for criticizing Mitzman's thesis, however.

Having said this, what does it mean to discover that the Weberian vision "was developed under agonizing personal pressures, themselves exerted by the dilemmas of family, social milieu, and historical position" (Mitzman, 1970: 3)? It means, first of all, that a particular theoretical and conceptual framework has to be imposed on the materials being analysed in order to render them "meaningful" in line with the author's objective, which is to argue that Weber's ideas were valid only for his "epoch" *because* of their connection with a personal biography characterized by a "generational conflict" which "did indeed underlie Weber's scholarly and political perceptions" (ibid.: 12). Such an approach allegedly gives us the reasons which "explain" the presence of certain ideas in his work, particularly those associated with his pessimistic rationalization thesis, the law of increasing rationalization. Having assured us that the animus of his research is "in no way antiquarian or *narrowly* pathographical," Mitzman goes on to argue in effect that Weber's "scholarly and political perceptions" are to be understood as an *unsuccessful* attempt to resolve neuroses which necessitated "a journey through a most personal hell" ending with "some kind of Nietzschean transvaluation of values" (ibid.: 7, 10, emphasis mine).

The question which remains unanswered is whether this sort of psychoanalytic "reduction" of ideas and actions to biography actually constitutes a valid confrontation of the thought of Max Weber, or anybody else for that matter. Hughes, for example, in the excerpt cited, was quite willing to acknowledge Weber's work to be "the most probing social theory of *our* time" *regardless of its connection with personal biography*. This is evident in his later references to the prescience of Weberian prognoses, however pessimistic. On the other hand, on the basis of his discoveries, Mitzman is willing to accept Weber's vision as relevant only for his epoch. But to say of a particular vision that it can be "explained" by reference to the individual's biographical situation (family, society, culture, etc.) is not to permit it to have any intellectual significance and relevance at all, whether for the person's epoch or otherwise. The only meaning it has for those who accept such a reduction as a valid explanation is that now they "understand" how such ideas arose given a biographical situation allegedly "typical" of a particular epoch. But what exactly was Max Weber's "epoch" anyway? Did it end with World War I?

The rise of the Third Reich (what Mitzman is *really* trying to explain)? World War II? Or is it perhaps still with us, specifically those features which Weber drew to the attention of intellectuals during his lifetime with a sense of urgency which it is simply neurotic for anyone to reduce to neurosis. And why did Freud transcend his "epoch" (albeit often with "revisions") but not Weber? Or did he?

By contrast, Weber's careful distinction between behaviour and action or conduct stresses the *meaning of action to the actor* as against the neutral, distant and professionally sophisticated observer. Indeed, at one point he refers to this concern as an *opportunity* to go beyond the constraints imposed upon the physicist and chemist by the nature of their subject matter (Weber, 1978: 7–8). Far from the actor being the dope that Freudian theory makes him out to be, it is the scientific observer who is likely to be misinformed if he superimposes on the action of situated individuals the meaning their actions would have for him were he in their place. By Freud's own admission the meaningfulness of a "rational" explanation which yet relies on factors below the surface depends upon its distance from the individual given the alleged impossibility of putting oneself in another's position (Freud, 1958: 32).

Sheldon Wolin has taken the matter further, suggesting that we reverse Mitzman's perspective altogether. For him, psychoanalysis is a central coping mechanism which a civilization devoted to technical progress as its standard of value depends upon to adjust individuals into a rationalized order by reducing their anger and frustration to substantial irrationality—a "personal problem" or "hang-up" (Wolin, 1960: 318). Interestingly, this assessment is probably the very one that Weber himself would give were he here to provide it. In the final analysis, Mitzman's claims rest on the unsubstantiated claim that our options are greater in number and our values more fluid than was the case for Max Weber's generation of bourgeois intellectuals. But what about contemporary analyses of the situation that reach conclusions similar to Weber's? Are such views also a product of an individual's upbringing that should be discredited beyond the very narrow confines cited? Is every pessimistic vision the result of unresolved neuroses? And what about the "cultural superego" of our times, assuming that one exists? Does it encourage optimism, pessimism or what?

There are far too many people today whose response to the fact of "rationalization" (technical and organizational rationality) takes

the form of withdrawal, a full-scale retreat from the individual common sense rationality which built the contemporary technological order. Rationalization has indeed transcended individual reasonableness; it degrades common sense rationality at the same time that it encourages the sort of retreatism through adjustment embodied in certain psychoanalytic approaches. It is simply irresponsible to reduce the very real complaints of many students, intellectuals, industrial and agricultural workers, the poor and permanently unemployed, the old and the beaten as well as executives, professionals, and housewives trapped in one-way careers to personal problems explainable in terms of biography. Any reconciliation of optimism and Freudian psychoanalysis needs a more careful examination with respect to its own roots. When you have all the answers it may not simply mean that you haven't asked all the questions. You probably aren't asking the right ones.

#### IV. *Nationalist ideology and political philosophy in the "Age of Weber"*

In critiquing such reductionism, I am not going to the opposite extreme by claiming that the information that such studies provide is irrelevant or unreliable. Rather, I want to attack the view that such reductionism is sufficient, or nearly so, for elucidating the sense of a thinker's thought and work by providing us with deep knowledge about what it all "really" means. My reasons for critique in this case go far beyond scepticism as it is normally formulated in and understood by scientific communities, and relate instead to: (a) the way that creativity can be seen to arise directly out of neurosis given the unfinished state of the social formation and its essential nature; (b) the fact that Weber's purchase on the problem as he sees it is *objectively* valuable precisely because, as he himself and Jaspers (1989) and Antoni (1962) well knew, he captured and displayed in his own personality and bearing a microcosm of the times in which he lived.

The objectivity of this capture and display was not, however, restricted in its different aspects to the (male) children of the newly empowered bourgeoisie, even if these individuals became its principal bearers in the period that lasted from 1890 to 1930. Indeed, the ambivalences and value conflicts of these individuals and their children and successors continued to play a central role in the development



of Germany through the Weimar period, the ascendancy of Hitler and the Third Reich, the Postwar occupation, and more recent events right down to the reunification of Germany. For me, it is not too much to say of Max Weber that he constitutes—to use his own social-scientific terminology—a definitive type case. Weber is “ideal typical” not simply in a colloquial sense but in the precise scientific sense that he intended because he accentuated in and through his own personality, bearing and work dominant properties and characteristics of the period under consideration that remained largely unresolved for vast numbers of people in Germany and elsewhere, not just leaders and scholars.

The “complex amalgam of forces” to which I referred earlier is not incompatible with Mitzman’s claim that Weber’s vision “was developed under agonizing personal pressures, themselves exerted by the dilemmas of family, social milieu, and historical position.” My point is that such an acknowledgment, far from leading to the claim that Weber is too uniquely pessimistic for his work to be taken seriously as a whole today, has to be seen as a brilliant, conceptually precise capture and display of the problem which is accurate precisely because it did (and may still) embody, in a formally structured way, the ambivalences and conflicts of bourgeois people who are non-German as well as German, and Germans who are both within and outside the already ubiquitous middle class. Just attempting to estimate how many persons throughout Europe from 1890 to today have been or are “middle class” makes the point unambiguously.

In focusing somewhat more specifically on the tension between nationalism and political philosophy, I am attempting to accentuate the role in Weber’s overall ambivalence of the conflict between liberalism and the *Machtstaat* policy of *Realpolitik*. In effect, I am making this conflict into an ideal-typical embodiment of the already formalized notion of Weberian ambivalence. This ambivalence is at once unique, and something that Weber had in common with many persons both inside and outside Germany. It is an essential property in any understanding of the supremely destructive effects of nationalism in all its forms. When combined with the unique historical, political, and socio-economic circumstances in which Germany found itself (all too often under its own initiative) between 1890 and 1930, it led to a situation in which class position and political philosophy on their own, expressed in the form of liberalism, individualism, and

“legality,” were incapable of constraining the combined effects of nationalism and Germanness in the circumstances.

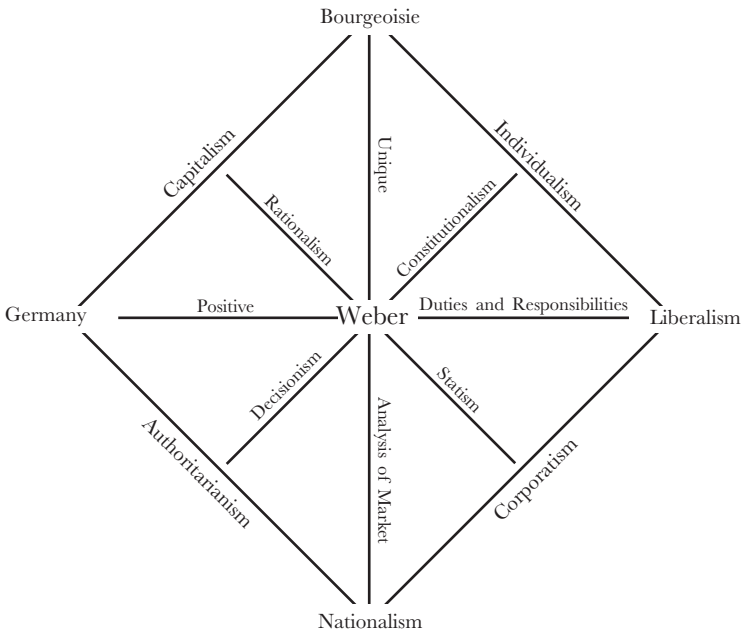
Not unlike the case of Japan in particular, much of what eventually transpired with respect to the development and deployment of Bismarck’s *Machtstaat* and view of *Realpolitik* has been attributed to the conditions of rapid industrialization in a “catch up” mode, one which occurred in the absence of a parallel development of voluntary and representative political institutions. In my opinion, the only way that the so-called Rostow thesis makes real sense is if it is combined with a focus on the presence or absence of balanced political and economic institutional development (Rostow, 1990). This combined focus, in turn, must be considered alongside a prior historical reality, pertaining uniquely to Germany, which has always constituted a supreme stumbling block to Marxist thinkers in particular. I am referring to the well documented view of a cultural and intellectual superstructure which was significantly “overdeveloped” relative to the economic-productive substructure beneath it in the period between 1820 and 1870 or 1880.

The value of the substructure/superstructure distinction—as long as it is understood to be a way of approaching reality rather than constituting a description of it—is that it allows us to disentangle not only cultural and intellectual life, but politics and the political, from the economic substructure. In doing this, it reveals one side of Weber—his decisionism—indicated most prominently by his insistence on the relative autonomy of the political from the economic, a sphere (albeit a problematic one for him) of freedom arising out of the antagonisms generated by value pluralism. The difficulty with the substructure/superstructure distinction is that it fails to capture the unique reality of Germany as a developing (and soon to be developed) country, in favour of treating it as one major site for the emergence of a form of capitalism whose ambit was increasingly worldwide in nature and scope (e.g. imperialism, colonialism). If political economy (and its Marxian and Marxist critique) was the most prominent tool for studying the latter, anthropology is the most appropriate discipline—particularly in the face of virulent nationalism—for studying the former.

Indeed, from this vantage point, anthropology is the discipline which allows—indeed requires—us to construct a radically different schema for the study of Germany during the period under investigation. Instead of focusing on a schema premised on base, hierarchy,

and superstructure, as political economy does, anthropology strongly encourages us to see national (and other) collectives in terms of a series of concentric circles. Looked at in this way, Germany can be seen to possess a series of core—and core-conflicting, core-ambivalent—values. As one moves toward the outer periphery through a successive series of ever-widening circles, one encounters values not as strongly held (intensity) or held by as many (number). The crucial question is where conflicts and ambivalences arise, how far toward the core they get, and how they are settled (informally, “legally,” violently, etc.) wherever they arise. When viewed from this perspective, Weber’s problematic, its characteristic conflicts and ambivalences, and his relation to other Germans and Europeans becomes easier to accept as the basis for a viable explanation of how and why his sociology and political philosophy came to take the form they took after 1900 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Max Weber’s Ambiguous Legacy: A Concept/Issues Schema



That Weber's value conflicts and ambivalences are best seen by reference to this tension between two schemas or models for conceptualizing collective forms is evident, I think, from the importance that the anthropological model of a unique national-state formation had for him. This was all-too-evident in his resistance to what he believed was the Marxian paradigm in the period between 1890 and 1920, but elsewhere as well. It is here more than anywhere else—with the possible exception of his early empirical studies of the Junkers and his discussion of Luther in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*—that Weber reveals his strong nationalism (Weber 1958; 1994 [1895]). It is the extent to which this nationalism was characterized by decisionism, corporatism, statism, and a restricted, limitedly democratic “constitutional state” that perhaps best helps us realize how Weber was a man of his times, and what this meant for his “anthropological” analysis of Germany as one of its very most profound modern and contemporary thinkers (Weber 1994 [1918]; 1946 [1919]).

To be sure, I do not in the least want to convey the impression that I believe I have provided here or in any of the following chapters a conceptually air tight analysis of Weber, however minuscule in power and scope these efforts are. Indeed, Weber himself counselled against this, and I am enough of a Weberian myself to “understand” why he must not be dealt with in this way, even if I wished to do so. We are left with a man who showed us the good and the bad side of “knowing better,” with value conflicts and ambivalences which, *for whatever reason*, captured and displayed the nature and essence of his time and circumstance as a German, liberal, bourgeois, and nationalist, but also as a European because of the precise—and not so precise—way he was a German of this very time and circumstance. If we are left with an unresolved portrait of Weber, that is the way he probably would wish it, this supremely accentuated intellectual type case caught between nationalism and a political philosophy which alternately embraced and repudiated it.

## V. Conclusion

I began this discussion by addressing what I believed to be three reasons in particular for the recent resurgence of interest in Max Weber's life and work. These three reasons point to: Weber's apparent,

but unintended, postmodern sentiments; his influential, if not controlling, presence in numerous scholarly disciplines, practices and disputes; and his preoccupation with examining modern Western civilization “anthropologically” as if it were an alien culture. I would now like to conclude by briefly relating these reasons both to Weberian ambivalence regarding the modern project of Western rationality and the continuing central role of ambivalence in accounting for public attitudes toward contemporary neo-conservatism. My emphasis on ambivalence in Weber has always been intended to challenge the preoccupation with pessimism that has been the stock in trade of so many students and commentators on Weber for over eighty years (Mitzman, 1970). Indeed, it is my view, reflected in many of the essays in this collection, that ambivalence is precisely what distinguishes the richness and complexity of Weber’s historical, theological, legal, methodological and social scientific work from both contemporary postmodernism and linear pessimistic narratives of the trajectory of Western development.

I would submit that this ambivalence is most directly evident in his overall view of the project of Western rationality as severely conflicted because of the incompatibility between its basic values around the so-called “problem of rationality” in general (Chapter 5). More specifically, it is also clear from his at best lukewarm endorsement of detached disciplined observation between reflection and practice as the most formally rational way for the social sciences to produce reliable knowledge (Chapter 1). Implicit in this endorsement is Weber’s realization that it is only because disciplined observation is of the essence of society itself, rather than some accidental effect, that his endorsement makes sense. As our historically and culturally specific form of collective life, rather than a synonym for such life and living, society helps produce the contours of possibility that only a combined commitment to reflection in the interests of improving both thought and practice can ever hope to overcome (Chapters 3, 7). Preference for detached and disciplined observation, with an at best truncated role for theoretical reflection, becomes simultaneously “necessary” in a formally rational sense and severely problematic given the limits of our culture-as-civilization that Weber was only too capable of both glimpsing and grasping (Chapter 9).

It is important to realize why the result of these conflicting motifs for Weber was ambivalence, rather than full-fledged determinism and despair (Chapter 8). The fact that I and many others have criticized

Weber for not sharing our confidence in the critical reflection of Western institutions that has come down to us from Marx and the Frankfurt School, among others, does not mean that he was uniformly pessimistic regarding future possibilities (Chapters 2, 3, 4). He was simply unwilling to privilege the critique of capitalism through such reflection over the commitment to working through the implications of knowing in a formally rational way the very institutional matrix that capitalism, science and law and bureaucracy was in the process of creating (Chapters 5, 6, 10). This commitment led him to treat both the collapse of value rational conduct in the transition from his action typology to his typology of “legitimate” domination on the one hand, and the view of substantive rationality as ultimately a “formal” concept for sociology on the other, as real but unfortunate rather than ideal outcomes (Chapters 1, 5). And, like Aristotle before him, Weber opts for the “real” rather than for some prescriptive ideal that he could only endorse, if at all, theoretically rather than practically (Chapter 6).

To me this attitude is more remindful than anything else of the present mood of citizens in Western capitalist democratic societies toward neo-conservatism. The failure or refusal of social intellectuals to make an effective case in plain language for the preservation and improvement of Keynesian and neo-Keynesian values, institutions and practices has permitted neo-conservatism to effectively occupy the field in virtually all of these countries (Wilson, 2002). Regardless of how determined Weber was to castigate socialism as a violation of Occidental reason, we can surmise with confidence that were he here today he would be in the forefront of a debate on neo-conservatism, one which he himself would probably have helped organize (cf. Weber, 1978: 85–86 and *supra*). Ambivalence need not mean either that no one ever decides, or that decisions are final. Ambivalence is rather the mood that results from the complex dilemma of having to reach a decision in the absence of what is believed to constitute sufficient sentiments and feelings, as well as information. Ambivalence toward neo-conservatism is a reigning mood, with precise institutional contours and aspects regarding capitalism, bureaucracy, debt, privatization, regulation and “free trade,” regularly found among citizens in Western capitalist democratic societies today, one that was anticipated fully by Max Weber over a century ago (Wilson, 2002, 2001).

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PART ONE

THE LIMITS OF 'RATIONALITY'  
FROM TRADITIONAL TO CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY

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## EDITOR'S NOTE TO PART I

The fraudulent notion of freedom given in the illusion of the individual's separateness from a societal totality in increasing control of its 'individual' moments requires us to start taking back our concepts.

—H. T. Wilson, "Functional Rationality and  
'Sense of Function'"

H. T. Wilson's career has been defined as much by the task of clarifying and formulating key concepts in the social, behavioural, and administrative sciences as by a desire to criticize and call these concepts into question. As a graduate student in the Political Science and Constitutional Law program at Rutgers University in the United States, and for more than three decades as a teacher and advisor of students in Law, Public Administration, Political Science, and Social and Political Thought at York University in Canada, he has been engaged in the critique, reconstruction and redeployment of the founding categories of these disciplines. Among the most important are the concepts of instrumental and functional rationality, which tend to embody a notion of modern progress as a fate and of Western reality as a destiny rather than as elements of our own culturally and historically specific form of life (Wilson, 1975). Such ideological distortions in turn find institutional expression in modes of calculative, formal, and economic rationality whose atomistic conception of totality and causality have established the main parameters of today's disciplinary and intellectual struggles (Wilson, 1994). Even attempts by other critical theorists to develop an alternative hermeneutic and emancipatory conception of communicative rationality largely generalize and qualify, rather than fundamentally problematize these conventions of social scientific reason (Habermas, 1984–1987).

The process of conceptual routinization in the social sciences does not find its most illuminating classical critique in the writings of Marx, who remained an outsider to the still underdeveloped science of political economy. Nor does Durkheim's work provide the most compelling example of the contradictory forces at work in the early efforts of the social sciences to secure institutional integration and

intellectual recognition. Rather, the methodological injunction to measure and contain the concepts of critical reason is most dramatically—and ambivalently—expressed in Weber's work and through the history of its reception (Chapter 1). In the opening pages of the revised version of *Economy and Society* (1918–1920), Weber makes it clear that the most efficient, convenient, or expedient (*zweckmässig*) procedure available to sociology is to interpret or understand (*verstehen*) instrumental rationality in its own terms and in its uniquely modern form as an object, standard and resource of and for analysis:

For scientific observation that proceeds by the formation of *types*, all irrational, affectually determined meaningful contexts of activity which influence action will now be researched and represented in the most visible way as 'digressions' from what is constructed as a purely purposive- or instrumental-rational course . . . Only in this way does a causal attribution of 'deviations' due to irrationalities become possible . . . *To this extent* and only on the basis of this methodical expediency is the method of 'interpretive' sociology 'rationalistic.' Naturally this procedure must not be understood as a rationalistic prejudice of sociology but as a methodological means, and thus it must not be interpreted as a belief in the actual predominance of rational factors over life. In this regard, in so far as in reality rational deliberations of purpose do or do not determine *actual* action, nothing in the least should be said (Weber, 1978 [1918–20]: 6–7, translation modified).

Weber's efforts to guide the formation of sociological types through the use of formal-rational concepts that are already available, if not "predominant," in the larger society constitutes an important first step in their appropriation by the empirical sciences of action of his day (history, sociology, and economics) and the social scientific disciplines which later built upon them. These sciences take the prevalence of instrumental, purposive, or goal-rational (*zweckrational*) norms in society as their topic or problematic while at the same time employing these very norms as their analytic framework, as a "methodological expedient" or means of causal attribution (*Zurechnung*), and as a measure against which other kinds of reason and action are accounted for as "deviations" (*Abweichungen*), "digressions" (*Ablenkungen*) or even "disturbances" (*Störungen*) (*ibid.*: 6). His disclaimer that promoting this method should not be taken as evidence of sociology's bias in favour of instrumental rationality, or as an indication of the domination of such norms in social life, only points to what social science must pass over in silence or even assume as its own unspoken presupposition rather than criticize or problematize directly.

The vocation of critical reason in scientific research is thereby either excluded as scientifically irrelevant, deferred as unfinished (sociological) business, or side-stepped as a sphere of personal beliefs or political convictions.

Against this tendency, which was only initiated in Weber's work but more fully developed by later writers from Karl Mannheim to Talcott Parsons and since, Wilson engages in the task of unthinking and reconstructing the regulative ideas and methodological conventions of social scientific inquiry, the core of which is the concept of the atomized disembodied individual that such inquiry assumes as both its object of analysis and methodological standpoint of disciplined observation. The critique of both methodological and ideological individualism involves redefining or even renaming the dominant "key-words" of these disciplines, that is, those pivotal terms which serve as "significant binding words in certain activities and interpretations," and which are also "significant indicative words in certain forms of thought" (Williams, 1983: 15). An alternative vocabulary designating such counter-concepts as "technique" and "sense of function" (Chapters 3 and 4), or "use value" and "substantive rationality" (Chapter 5), assists critical thought in unlocking the closed logics of operationalism and instrumentalism, formalism and empiricism which prevail in both the social sciences and the professional institutions that sustain capitalist civil society. Rather than playing by the rules of the language games of various academic schools, taking up a position in today's theory wars, or attempting a virtuoso synthesis or reconstruction of competing intellectual paradigms (cf. Habermas, 1984–1987; Alexander, 1982–1983), Wilson's more modest approach involves showing how these concepts have been—or might be—put to work in research practice. Disciplinary allegiances and disputes within the academic division of labour are not treated naively here as ideological or political acts of resistance in their own right, but rather symptomatically as topics for methodological reflection and critical analysis (cf. Bourdieu, 2000: 2).

Wilson is among the first and only commentators on the first generation of the Frankfurt School to demonstrate that what separates critical theorists from Weber and his Anglo-American successors is neither their "culturalist" interpretation of the modern rationalist spirit nor their supposedly "theoreticist" rejection of value-free empirical investigation into the significance of industrial capitalism. On the contrary, in spite of the widely reported antipathy expressed by

Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse to the “positivist” style of research dominating the American universities which provided a haven for them after the rise of the Third Reich, their work at least from the 1940s on is remarkable for its increasing reliance on empirical research methods and the theoretical insights they yield (Chapters 2 and 3). As Wilson shows in his illuminating discussion of the exemplary encounter between Karl Popper and Adorno and their respective supporters at the German Sociological Meetings in 1961, Weber’s ambivalent commitment to the formalizing auspices of empirical sciences of action such as sociology provides a common point of reference for both “critical rationalists” and critical theorists alike. One could also point out that much of what passes today for cultural studies had already been pioneered in the work of both Weber and first-generation critical theorists, not only with respect to the selection of topics of analysis, such as popular music, best-selling fiction, newspaper columns, commercial advertising, counter-cultural social and political movements, and new media, but also in their guiding theoretical framework and methodological principles, such as the emphasis on levels of cultural production, structures of economic organization, and stages of historical development (Held, 1980; Jay, 1973).

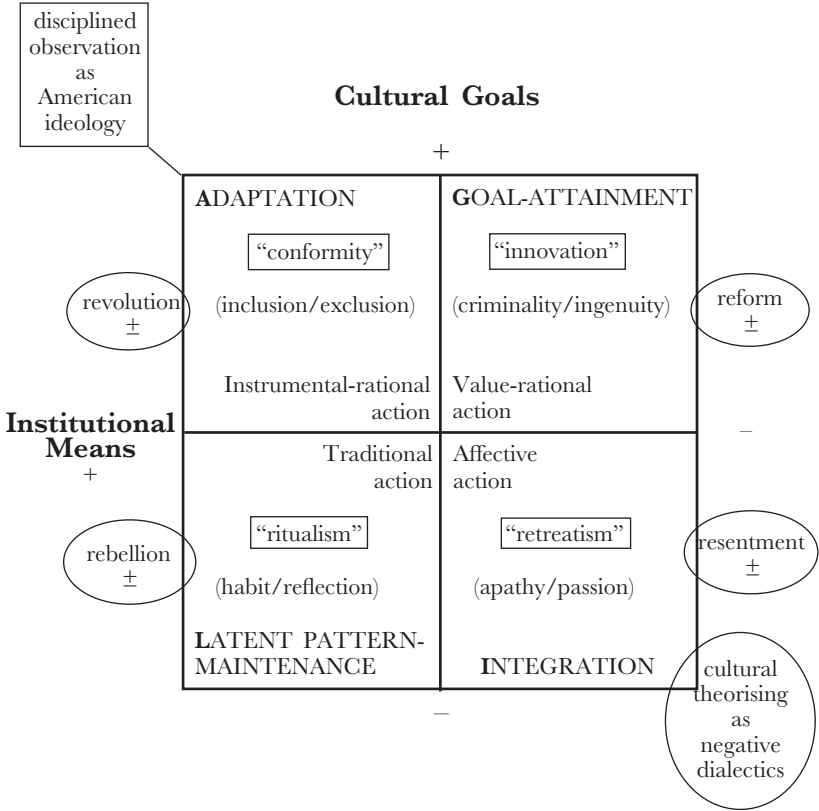
A crucial aspect of Weber’s ambiguous legacy that these chapters recount is epitomized in the encounter—alternating between antagonism and cooperation, influence and indifference—between critical theory and empirical sociology in North America. This relationship can be understood not just as a conflict between concepts, theories or schools of thought, but above all as “ways of seeing” or “view-points” on the world that are also ways of thinking about and reflecting on social life, in the etymological sense of “theoria.” In the same decades that the early critical theorists were developing a conception of negative dialectics as a holistic critique of the affirmative, one-dimensional character of American as well as fascist and state-socialist culture and society, American sociologists were drawing on many of the same European traditions of social thought to construct descriptive and analytical models of modern social order and disorder. Each of these research programs took Weber’s conceptual scheme of social action as a point of departure, as succinctly expressed in the quotation from Weber which Talcott Parsons used as the epigraph to his monumental *Structure of Social Action*: “Every thoughtful reflection [*denkende Besinnung*] about the ultimate elements of mean-

ingful human conduct is initially bound to the categories 'end' and 'means'" (Weber 1949 [1904]: 52, cited in Parsons, 1949 [1937]: xiii; translation modified). Indeed, the focus of both early critical theorists and American sociologists was on how purposive, means-end, or instrumental rationality (*Zweckrationalität*) in some sense both intensifies and supersedes the foundations of classical industrial capitalism which were established in the 18th and 19th centuries and examined by Marx and Weber, but which also were brought to their consummation in the economic crises and world wars of the 20th century.

Figure I depicts my attempt to display the convergence and divergence of approaches to these issues by American social science and Frankfurt critical theory in terms of how the intersection of socially legitimate means and culturally prescribed ends defines the functional prerequisites of conformity and rebellion in modern social life. The *conceptual core* of this schema is what I take to be the common theoretical source of both traditions, namely, Weber's fourfold typology of social action which takes instrumental-rational action (defined by the strategic choice of means given ends) as its primary point of reference and analytic standard of comparison against which "deviating" modes of action are recognized and assessed: that is, value-rational action (which fixes on the goal as a right or a duty, even when that involves the use of illegitimate means), affective action (to the extent that individual feelings and social sentiments motivate how actors perceive or misperceive means and ends), and traditional action (according to whether means and goals are matters of habit, reflection or time-honoured custom). As with Weber, the *empirical objective* of both first-generation critical theorists and the early structural-functionalists was to explain the cultural significance and structural parameters of the advancement of industrial and finance capitalism, especially in its most advanced Anglo-American forms. The arrangement of this figure as a kind of "window" here is intended to highlight the role of *disciplined observation*, understood as a founding methodological convention by Weber's American successors and as the primary standpoint of sociological theory in assuming a neutral point of view and distanced position apart from the society it studies. As Wilson argues, precisely this convention is problematised by critical theorists in so far as it constrains the task of reflecting critically on the relationship between the thinker and the society of which he or she is a part.

Robert K. Merton's celebrated typology of individual adaptation to and deviance from the norms of the American social structure,

Figure I: The Sociological Window



+/- = acceptance/rejection of goals or means

± = renunciation and substitution of goals or means; ambivalence, frustration, anxiety

(Based on Adorno, 1973; Marcuse, 1964; Merton, 1944 [1938]; Parsons, 1961; Weber, 1978 [1918–20])



which is still a staple of undergraduate theory courses, can be understood as an extension of Weber's scheme of social action. Here this typology is depicted as a grid of alternating patterns of normalizing inclusion versus exclusion ("conformity" in Merton's words), opportunistic criminality versus ingenuity ("innovation"), routinized habit versus reflection ("ritualism"), and apathetic versus passionate withdrawal ("retreatism"). Depending on the pressures individuals, groups or classes face in accepting the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities as legitimate, they tend to engage in deviant modes of behaviour which may nevertheless be socially approved of in light of culturally prescribed aims and ambitions. Thus, along the vertical axis people are located according to the quantity or total volume of social, cultural and economic capital they have access to, while along the horizontal axis they are situated in terms of the composition or ratio of the forms of capital they control or have acquired (cf. Bourdieu, 1998: 5). Talcott Parsons's notorious four-function schema of social control—the so-called AGIL or LIGA system—further generalizes and formalizes the alternatives implied in Merton's typology by outlining how the basic external functions of environmental adaptation and social goal-attainment, addressed respectively by the economic and political institutions, ideally meet the internal needs of maintaining latent value-patterns and social integration, addressed primarily by the educational and legal institutions (Parsons, 1961). Failure to fulfill these functions adequately, or to accumulate sufficient stocks of capital, can result in a crisis of anomie or class conflict for the social system, that is, in what Merton describes as a strain between the prescribed or culturally defined ends and legitimate or available resources, or what Parsons discusses in terms of the functional de-differentiation of subsystem exchanges.

The domination of instrumental norms in capitalist society and the functional integration of social dissent provides the point of departure for both first and second generation critical theorists. Like their counterparts in empirical and structural-functional sociology, they attempt to explain the apparent structural stability and ideological disavowal of the modern class structure in terms of the inordinate emphasis placed on the success-goals of money and prestige at the expense of providing the socially sanctioned means of work and education to achieve them (Chapter 4). To use a Marxian idiom, the de-traditionalizing and revolutionary potential of the educated bourgeoisie in early capitalism has been largely exhausted while the

critical energies and interests of the underclasses are either channeled toward the norms of the established society or confined to localized protest and ineffectual rebellion (cf. Chapter 7). As Merton notes in his remarkable analysis of the ideological unconscious of the American Dream, a combination of psychological and sociological sanctions enforces the one-dimensional foreclosure of every expression of political dissent and cultural discontent:

Thus the culture enjoins the acceptance of three cultural axioms: First, all should strive for the same lofty goals since these are open to all; second, present seeming failure is but a way-station to ultimate success; and third, genuine failure consists only in the lessening or withdrawal of ambition . . . In sociological paraphrase, these axioms represent, first, the deflection of criticism of the social structure onto one's self among those so situated in the society that they do not have full and equal access to opportunity; second, the preservation of a structure of social power by having individuals in the lower social strata identify themselves, not with their compeers, but with those at the top (whom they will ultimately join); and third, providing pressures for conformity with the cultural dictates of unslackened ambition by the threat of less than full membership in the society for those who fail to conform (Merton, 1949 [1938]: 139; cf. Marcuse, 1964).

In contrast to Parsons and Merton, the principal concern of Adorno and Marcuse was to recover the negative dialectics inherent in but suppressed by the ideology of the American class system through a mode of critical theorising that would not suppress its own anger at the status quo and eagerness for change, or in other words, its commitment to judgment or speculation *cum ira et studio*. Their aim was not just to trace how this system effectively silences or absorbs critical discussion and alternative thought, but also how it accommodates the expression of negative thinking by translating it into its own universe of discourse.

As Merton himself acknowledged in his construction of the residual category of "rebellion" (1949 [1938]: 157), the redefinition and replacement of the social system's goals and means—through a transvaluation of values or a structural revolution mobilized around effective alternatives (or in other words, the rejection of the prevailing goals and means and their replacement by new ones)—are reduced to passive "ressentiment" (secret longing for what one cannot have), diffuse "rebellion" (opposition without overall transformation), and piecemeal "reform" (partial improvements or superficial shifts in priorities). Although these moments of negation tend to be repelled as an

uncivilized threat or contained as an incomprehensible remainder, they are nevertheless inspired by an image of the alternatives, by the remembrance of what once was or by the hope of what may yet be. Where disciplined observation settles for the description or analysis of things as they are or as they must be if social order is to be maintained, critical theorizing begins with the conception of a false totality whose networks of surveillance and stabilizing mechanisms can and must be overcome. The "sociological window" thus becomes a mirror for provoking thoughtful reflection (*denkende Besinnung*) on our own responsibility before the history and society from which we cannot be separated.

Besides examining the old and new world encounters of critical and traditional theory from the 1930s to the 1980s, Wilson also develops his analysis of capitalist modernity "backward," so to speak, by extending his critical history of the instrumental and technical norms of rational capitalism identified by Weber toward a critique of the capitalist mechanisms of exploitation identified by Marx (Chapter 5). Here he focusses on the evaluative underpinnings of critical theory, already explored through the counter-concepts of "technique" and "sense of function," by examining how Weber's concept of "substantive rationality" can be radicalized through a consideration of the troublesome place of "use value" in Marx's theoretical scheme. In *Marx's Critical/Dialectical Procedure*, Wilson further develops this insight by noting that the concept of *surplus value* constitutes a kind of "significant other" to the egalitarian logic of classical political economy, that is, it addresses modernity's "other rationality," its alienating reality as well as its possible alternative. In capitalist society, the formal, instrumental and functional rationality of exchange value dominates, conceals, and distorts the material basis of this society in the production and consumption of use values, and above all, *the use value of labour itself*, the human power to work and desire beyond the culturally and biologically determined threshold of "need."

Through the categorical screen of political economy, this human potential for creative excess and surplus production is perceived as a standing reserve (*Bestand*) to exploit, or treated as a residual social madness or an economic absurdity (*Verrücktheit*) which must be suppressed (cf. Baudrillard, 1975; Marx, 1976: 76; Kemple, 1995: 68–71; Wolff, 1988: 61–82). By contrast, Marx began to work out the ideological and analytical implications of this formal reduction by articulating the incongruent counter-concept of surplus value as

the solution to the substantive problem of value posed by the conceptual scheme of political economy itself:

Thus, it is an anomaly (i.e. the way 'labour' is one-dimensionalized as a factor of production) in relation to a central tenet of the body of knowledge called political economy itself (i.e. the labour theory of value), for instance, which produces a *motive* or *desire* to look beneath political economy's description to see what is really going on. Is the labour theory of value functioning doctrinally and ideologically to legitimize a reality whose operative values and actions are seriously at variance with it? The desire to excavate, to adduce or retroduce 'behind' it, as it were, arises out of the anomalous role of what is perceived/observed *in the light of the theory itself* (Wilson, 1991: 121).

Marx thus reformulates the classical labour theory of value as a labour theory of surplus value and a value theory of surplus labour by exposing the empirical and political basis of the formal freedom of capitalist work processes (Weber) and the industrial division of labour (Durkheim). Marx's legacy for critical theorising thus consists in providing an explanatory and evaluative model that reveals the essence of capitalism as historically contingent, and our knowledge of its systemic properties as epistemologically incomplete (Wilson, 1994). Only by coming to terms with this legacy can we begin to counter the prevailing image of the modern individual's separateness from, or even olympian opposition to, an overwhelming social totality that ultimately cripples critical thinking and disorients political action.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### READING MAX WEBER: CRITICAL THEORY AND THE LIMITS OF SOCIOLOGY

Max Weber is often cited as an enigmatic figure because of the tension between scholarship and politics that his entire adult life allegedly manifested. Others prefer a psychoanalytic reduction, concerned as they are with discrediting his pessimistic version of the future of western civilization. But few have been interested in bringing to light the clear tension in his scholarly work between (traditional) sociological theory and (critical) social theorizing. In what follows, I offer an interpretation of Weber's work based on just such a distinction. That Weber refused to "leave his post" and speak to the first principles which the western project presumes, when these principles were not his own, had serious consequences for him. In effect, one of Weber's greatest accomplishments is precisely the way he speaks to the limits of sociology while staying true to those limits.

For all the scholarly effort that has been devoted to exploring his life and work, Max Weber remains very much an enigma. To some extent a confirmation of the phenomenon of "creative neurosis," he often conveys the impression through his work of someone who withholds from us as much as he tells us about society and economy (Hughes, 1958; Mitzman, 1970; Green, 1974: 54–56; and the Introduction to this volume). Perhaps it is unfair of Macrae to suggest that the formal structure of Weber's sociology is a device with which to re-enchant the de-enchanted world which emerges so clearly from his analysis of modern Western civilization (Macrae, 1974). Yet the very rationality prefigured in Weber's sociological formalism often appears to speak to the limits it claims to find outside itself by showing the consequences of its narrow notion of "legitimate" possibility understood as a constraint. The fact that a definite narrative structure has been shown to characterize his work only serves to underscore Weber's ambivalent status. Weber was *both* committed to sociology *and* determined to display the limits of the norms of rationality of which sociology is an exemplar by employing it to show the substantive irrationality of these very norms (Jameson, 1973).

One of the more perceptive analyses of Weber is that of Eric Voegelin. Voegelin sees Weber as the student of society who drives the methodological movement in the social sciences to "the end of its immanent logic" by encapsulating *Wertfreiheit* within value-relevance (Voegelin, 1952: 13–23). The effect of such an undertaking, which follows from Kant and the German liberal tradition, is to place science (*Wissenschaft*) as a vocation in a dependent relation to the political realm. This is something to which Herbert Marcuse drew later attention in the context of a bitter attack on Weber (Marcuse, 1968 [1964]; cf. Habermas, 1971). This perhaps explains in part Weber's commitment to an ethic of responsibility as against one of ultimate ends. The "demonic disorder" Weber observed in Wilhelmine politics was by his own admission not something which science could remedy at all. Indeed, it may be more accurate to say that for Weber science is "a fraction, the most significant fraction," of that very process of rationalization and de-enchantment which makes responsible politics ultimately futile and calls forth charisma and an ethic of ultimate ends as its sole alternative (Weber, 1946 [1917/19 and 1919]).

### I. *Sociological theory versus critical theorising*

In what follows I offer an interpretation of Weber's work that seeks to explain aspects of his dilemma by reference to the distinction between sociological theory and social theorizing. Instead of focussing on Weber's frustrations as a political actor, however significant they may have been (Dronberger, 1971; cf. Mayer, 1943; Mommsen, 1984), I stress the conflict within him which militated against the sort of reflection that *should* have proceeded quite naturally out of the nominalism and conceptual individualism he interposed between daily life and its appropriation by empirical sociology but did not. To this end, I shall make reference to a number of dichotomies and distinctions that provide the basis for a narrative structure in his work. The distinction, rarely acknowledged, between sociological theory as an activity carried out *within* sociology's division of labour, and social theorizing as a form of reflection directed to the *critical* analysis of industrial (civil) society is fundamental to anyone interested in resisting the popular view of theory as a potentially useful instrument for data accumulation alone.



One of the clearest statements on the matter was formulated over sixty-five years ago by Max Horkheimer as the difference between traditional and critical theory (Horkheimer, 1974 [1937]). Horkheimer and his colleagues in the Frankfurt School understood by theory an act of partial reflection whose core was both dialectical and negative (Adorno, 1973; Marcuse, 1964, 1968 [1937]; O'Neill, 1972: 226–230). If Hegel provided the example of an absolute reflection, which was thereafter applied to a theory of law and the state in the light of history, Marx and Engels sought to support Hegel's method by turning it on society and economy directly (Marx and Engels, 1953; Hegel, 1929; Rosen, 1974; Lenin, 1963). Commitment to dialectics means, among other things, the refusal to accept any position which argues that the concept can absorb the object, or implies that it has done so. "The name of dialectics says no more, to begin with, than that objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder" (Adorno, 1973: 5). This principle of nonidentity cannot overcome the problem of identity by relying on contradiction alone, however, for identity is a feature of thought inherent in its very structure. It is philosophy's failure to realize itself in the world that suggests the need to ruthlessly criticize the false identities it achieves through language. This is the task critical theory sets for itself as a form of *social* theorizing committed to the negative, to the nonidentity of reality and that which is empirically available in the world (Marcuse, 1964: 123–143).

Thus to address the inability of the concept to absorb its object is to speak to *both* practice and theoretical reflection, as opposed to the disciplined observation of practice to which sociological theory is subordinated. Sociology, as a more disciplined version of daily life, cannot speak to it authentically because its object, however unacknowledged, is society itself (Knight, 1959). Instead of reason constituting the analytic object and Society the problematic, sociology's mission requires that these roles be reversed.<sup>1</sup> The implications for

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<sup>1</sup> My practice of capitalizing Society in the present volume in some places, and not doing so in others, is intended in the first case to underscore the *peculiarly* dialectical aspect of the phenomena addressed by the concept, the fact that this aspect is *essential*, rather than only necessary to its full understanding. Not doing so, however, does not imply that this tension is no longer essential, but rather that it remains only *necessary for my purposes in these particular instances*. The dialectical aspect, whether essential or only necessary, expresses the tension between: Society as a culturally

theory and theorizing must be clear wherever the scientific model of knowledge as an appropriated and accumulated means holds sway. At the same time that reflection is contrasted to theories as hypotheses in this notion of theorizing, it remains a *partial* reflection because it is jointly committed to speaking *to* first principles while being opposed to the static dichotomy between being and becoming. To say that critical theory refuses to endorse reflection for its own sake is only to point to the promise of human possibility found in the world as it is, thus to see being in and through becoming rather than comprehending them as realms unalterably opposed to one another (Adorno, 1973: 61–131).

Critical theory abjures both sociological theory as such and that total reflection whose analytic method exhausts itself either in explaining the rational basis of existing thought and action or in speaking to the difference between being and becoming as synonymous with the static contrast between truth and appearance. Critical theory believes that reflection must be *for* something, and that the possibility of that something can be understood only by reference to the world as it is (Marcuse, 1964: 203–257). Only by identifying goodness solely with truth is it possible for reflection to abjure possibility in the name of a notion of being unapproachable through becoming. This places critical theory squarely between positivism and a total reflection. It simultaneously refuses to accept a correspondence theory of social knowledge as self-sufficient while subjecting to critical scrutiny any form of reflection which sees no (or is unconcerned with the) possibility of being in becoming, or defines it in such a way that it means truth rather than goodness. In both instances, critical theory denies the effective or explicit subordination to Society as the object.<sup>2</sup>

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and historically unique and specific form of collective life and living; and society as a synonym for collective life and living that, however, also necessarily possesses unique and specific properties and features (cf. Wilson, 1978, 1977).

<sup>2</sup> In both positivism and a total reflection, identity is valued and realized, albeit in different ways: positivism allows the concept to absorb the object, while a total reflection eschews objects altogether, arguing that it alone is able to speak to its grounds without making reference to them. Note that in both cases contradiction becomes exclusively a problem of thought and thinking distended from social structure, whose resolution requires a turning inward away from Society (see Wilson, 1994).

One of the more significant consequences of critical theory's refusal to entertain seriously the conceptual dichotomies that fuel advanced industrial societies (i.e. man-nature, subject-object, ends-means, value-fact, policy-administration) is to turn controversies like the *Methodenstreit* into family squabbles carried on *within* the authoritative auspices of science, capitalism, and bureaucracy as reciprocal modes of "rational" domination. This characterises Weber's well-known middle position between Menger and Schmoller (Cahnman, 1964), later given currency in Popper's dispute with logical positivism regarding the proper approach of sociology as a social technology. Weber and Popper move beyond the neo-Kantians when they argue for *combining* an individualizing method with a generalizing objective, rather than opting for either an exclusively idiographic or an exclusively nomothetic approach to the study of social, economic, and political institutions (Weber, 1978: 4–24; Popper, 1957: 130–152; Hayek, 1955: 11–102). That this dispute masks more fundamental points on which the disputants necessarily agree about knowledge and knowing, theory and practice, only serves to underscore the consequences of the social technological approach. In contrast to a more nomothetic orientation, it makes *explicit* the limits that a straightforward generalizing approach leaves implicit; thus it underscores the "humble task" of the social sciences (Hayek, 1955: 74). The idea of theory as the *object* rather than strictly a tool or instrument whose promise depends on its reduction and decomposition into testable, falsifiable hypotheses is something Weber would oppose little less than Popper, a point developed in many of the following chapters.

I take critical theory as my point of departure in what follows because I believe that this focus provides a useful basis for rendering certain key features of Weber's work comprehensible in the light of his commitment to a positivism qualified by pessimism and resignation.<sup>3</sup> My concern is with Weber's failure to complete the logic of his thinking, as revealed in his discussion of sociology, rationality and domination, and their interrelation. It is *because* society is sociology's object but not really Weber's that he cannot speak *to* first

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<sup>3</sup> My reading of Weber is purposely informed not only by a commitment to critical over traditional theory, but to the possibility this might well have provided for Weber himself had he confronted the work of Marx more authentically than he did (Giddens, 1970; Ashcraft, 1972; Wilson, 1994; and Chapter 5 below).

principles, but instead speaks from unstated and unacknowledged premises. Weber is caught between sociological theory and social theorizing, in the sense that he acknowledges neither society (Durkheim) nor rationality (Marx) as his object. This indecisiveness on the "value" question, I shall argue, is fundamental rather than tangential to comprehending his work.

## II. *The ideal type of Society*

The dilemma posed for the sociologist with a vision is nowhere drawn in bolder relief than in the case of Weber. Weber's dilemma derives from his determination to be a sociologist even though he dreads the further development of that very society which makes sociology possible and gives it its mission. Weber exemplifies the problem of the observer who eschews both daily life and theorizing in favour of a *disciplined* observation whose bias is forwarded as neutrality given relevance. The ideal is suppressed in favour of a false concreteness that the sociologist may criticize uncritically, but must accept as a fate. It is Durkheim, rather than Weber, however, who reveals the unacknowledged object of sociology to be the completion of society itself. He does this in his treatment of sociology as a "moral science" concerned with solidarity. Its job is to treat value neutrality as a means, but not given a prior value relevance whose admitted presence guarantees a neutral result. In Durkheim's science of solidarity *society* is the acknowledged object because the purpose of value-neutrality and discipline is to separate those facts conducive to solidarity from those inimical to it and work in support of the former and against the latter (Durkheim, 1952).

Consider the following excerpt from Weber where he makes his position as a sociologist "doing his damned duty" clear.

For scientific observation that proceeds by the formation of *types*, all irrational, affectually determined meaningful contexts of activity which influence action will now be researched and represented in the most visible way as 'digressions' from what is constructed as a purely purposive- or instrumental-rational course . . . Only in this way does a causal attribution of 'deviations' due to irrationalities become possible . . . *To this extent* and only on the basis of this methodical expediency is the method of 'interpretive' sociology 'rationalistic.' Naturally this procedure must not be understood as a rationalistic prejudice of sociology but as a methodological means, and thus it must not be interpreted as a belief in the actual predominance of rational factors

over life. In this regard, in so far as in reality rational deliberations of purpose do or do not determine *actual* action, nothing in the least should be said (Weber, 1978 [1918–20]: 6–7, translation modified).

The “convenience” or “expediency” (*Zweckmäßigkeit*) with which reliance on ideal types provides sociology constitutes the methodological cornerstone of its reproduction of society for Weber. The ideal type, neither a description nor a utopian possibility, yet posits how a phenomenon *should* appear and function were it rational in the sense of being in line with its *telos*.

To thus define the rational in each case by reference to the social function of an observed phenomenon is to establish an uncritical standard of performance for it. Sociology embraces society in the very real sense that it adopts as its own (“for reasons of methodological expediency”) the norms of instrumental and functional rationality that are given in an object or phenomenon whose very meaning is only discernible by reference to its function in a given social order. The perfect functional rationality embodied in Weber’s dominant ideal types (capitalism, bureaucracy, legal-rational authority) is Durkheimian organic solidarity, a conflict-free stasis allegedly beyond structural contradiction (Durkheim, 1952: 396–409, 39–46; and Chapter 4 below). Weber first establishes the object of sociology, then tells us that it functions solely as a “device” whose purpose is to facilitate inquiry and establish a contrast between the real and the formally rational. So far then Weber seems to be letting society alone, speaking of a convenient intellectual technique whose utilization is not supposed to be related in any necessary way either to a rationalistic bias or to a belief in the “actual predominance of rational elements” in social action.

Elsewhere, Weber refers to the ideal type as a *utopia* that has been arrived at by the analytical accentuation of certain elements of reality (Weber, 1949 [1904]: 90). Although it may also be a utopia in a substantive sense, the type is alleged to be mainly *formal* because it is both abstract and logical rather than normative. Weber’s problem lies in the direction toward which sociology necessarily strains in these recurrent acts of methodological convenience—total formal rationality *given* the substantive ideal of a perfect system of market capitalism. On the one hand, Weber states that the positing of what for some would be a substantive ideal ought to mean nothing; it operates as a heuristic device for clarifying and assisting sociological understanding. It has tremendous research value, according to Weber,

since, although it is not itself to be construed as a hypothesis, "it offers guidance to the construction of hypotheses." Similarly with its empirical status: though not a description of reality "it aims to give unambiguous means of expression to such a description." It is, then, a *means* of explicating past or present through comparison and contrast (ibid.: 90).

Weber argues that the ideal type can remain abstract and formal, as opposed to normative and substantive, even though it is formed by a one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, and more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete individual* phenomena. These latter are thus formed into a unified *analytical* construct by organizing those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a coherent conceptual whole. To be sure, one can use the method to construct types other than those most central to the development of advanced societies (e.g. traditional authority, the medieval city, prebendal administration, Confucianism, etc.). Having said this, however, the sociological standard of the type remains in all cases a set of formally rational, instrumental norms foreign to their original development and status in the collective under examination (Martindale, 1959). Society, understood as civil or industrial society, stands as the unacknowledged object of sociology even while this discipline goes about its historical and institutional researches into other times and places. This is because the rational reconstruction necessary for creating conceptual types effectively reconstructs the collective or event itself by reference to a notion of society understood as a formally rational organization of action. Society thus functions as sociology's "standard." Even in its exotic researches then, sociology (as Weber was well aware) shows that it alone knows *how* it is part and parcel of the society whose auspices make it possible, sanctionable, and "legitimate" (Blum, 1974: 208; and Chapter 7 below).

As noted above, Weber's piecemeal approach seeks to combine an individualizing method with a generalizing objective. He "abstracts" historically unique configurations made up of acts, events, and institutions, and following the appropriate accentuation, labels them either generalizing (sociological) or individualizing (historical) types. The choice of what the sociologist studies is governed by value-relevance; the choice of the method is ultimately governed by value-freedom (Weber, 1949 [1917]: 21-27). Ideal types allegedly assume this value-freedom because of their heuristic concern to construct a formal

whole that would be real except for the necessary gap between the positing of a *telos* and the means to its realization and “actual action” in the world. Weber also argues, however, that sociology is concerned with the *practical significance* of what it studies, thus that value-freedom serves this objective, or ought to (ibid.: 43). But how can Weber “know” that this value-free attitude serves the *interest* of significance? More to the point, how can he evaluate any research as significant or insignificant in the absence of an object, a *telos* that it should be serving? To use Weber’s own vocabulary, there is no way that objectives can really be objective, except in the sense in which alleged externality to the “discipline” is invoked to justify the value-freedom of the method *given relevance*. But this “given” is exactly the problem. Acknowledging it to exist and leaving it at that covers over a far more important need for acknowledgement that Weber will labour mightily against—the acknowledgement that sociology and society, under the sway of bureaucratization and rationalization, belong together.

### III. *The substantively rational actor as vanishing mediator*

It is clear from *Economy and Society* that Weber’s problem is one he wants us to make more problematic by becoming accomplices in the reproduction of a world he cannot stand. He wants us to assist him in bringing into being a world whose allegedly fateful character leads us to “works” rather than to either opposition or quietism. Sociological reproduction (“works”) becomes a trained incapacity we voluntarily legislate for ourselves as free labour “doing our damned duty,” choosing our post and staying in it “in spite of all” under the auspices of first principles whose examination can be safely, even prudently, ignored or left to others as “givens.” For Weber the division of labour that makes sociology a sanctionable and legitimate enterprise, by permitting this forgetfulness, or rather by insisting on it, saves him from having to come to terms with their ultimate significance for *him* as an intendedly rational actor.

But this is at best a mixed blessing for Weber. He simply does not believe in the world that he (and others) are to help bring into being and sustain. This is evident in the dismal paragraphs which conclude *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, where the alternatives of either charisma or rationalization are cited pessimistically

and where, even though the latter is considered more likely in the long run, its very collective character as a "dead mechanism" practically guarantees, and may even necessitate, the emergence of new leaders and heroes (Weber, 1958: 180–183). This lack of conviction is also apparent in his well-known address "Science as a Vocation," where nothing emerges more clearly from his thinking than the supremely *contradictory* character of science. On the one hand, science as method and institution produces useful knowledge of the world by dint of its fortuitous combination of conceptualization and experimentation. On the other, however, science is the key element banishing mystery from the world, the vital centre of the process of rationalization which takes the dignity of life and death from us as the price for making everything knowable (appropriable) "in principle" (Weber, 1946 [1917/1919]). Conspicuous by its absence in Weber's work is an ideal type for the substantively rational person, or even of substantively rational action in general, in contrast to instrumental rationalization (Loewith, 1970: 107–108). The absorption of this person into sociology understood as a formal and empirical discipline speaks once again to the issue of sociology's peculiar "functional interdependence" with the rationalization process that it can only hope to criticize uncritically, if at all.

How do we demonstrate this conflict in Weber? By showing that his commitment to the false concreteness of disciplined observation is less than total. Here it is necessary to cite Diesing's tripartite distinction between types of reason and rationality: reason as creativity, reason as rule application, and reason as calculability (Diesing, 1962: 241–245). While certainly not paralleled in any specific sense by the distinction already cited between theorizing, disciplined observation, and daily life as rational activities, considerable overlap does exist. After all, Weber is determined to work *from* unacknowledged first principles as a disciplined observer applying rules rather than speaking to what makes them "legitimate" and sanctionable as such. In consequence, he is compelled to take the false concreteness of calculability as his *sociological* standard even though it violates his "personal" standard as a subject encircled by the "fate of the West" (Loewith, 1970: 109–110). This personal standard, Weber claims, is a "value" which is interesting when trying to figure out the other person's point of view, but useless as it stands save as a fact for sociology to appropriate in its effort to "understand" the objects of its inquiry. In a world where everything not appropriated as a fact *must*



be a value, values escape the charge of abstractness only by making themselves sociologically available as the object's subjectivity.

Having acceded to sociology's judgement of personal standards as subjective values and biases to be kept "outside" its work (except as data) through the empty protocol of value-relevance, Weber could conceivably have gone on and done sociology. He could have opted for the law laid down by the social division of labour which sociology must show in all its ramifications in order to establish and "rationalize" its activity as legitimate. But Weber cannot rest content with the limits that sociology, even a historically grounded institutional sociology, has set for him by telling him the questions he must *not* ask or take seriously. The academic division of labour, as it existed during the time he thought and wrote, provided him no surcease from the impossible task he set for himself.

Weber was committed to combining an individualizing method, with all its substantive implications, with a generalizing objective. Effort and "discipline," that term so central to Weber's writing and to his life, are indispensable to anyone who wants to accumulate generalisations responsible to the doctrine of "adequacy on the level of meaning" while demonstrating the failure of this very accomplishment by putting true "motivational" understanding forever beyond sociology's grasp (Weber, 1978: 11; Blum, 1974: 218–221). But requiring an understanding of the behaviour of actors in terms of what it means *to them*, what they *intend* by it, is not just a way of challenging sociology by showing its limits as a creature of society with a mission. It is also a way in which Weber asserts the "rights" of subjects as objects in sociological inquiry. Weber often appears to be speaking to sociology itself here. The price it must pay for binding him to its notion of the concrete as that which is observed in a disciplined fashion in the world is that it must give primacy to his "concrete" individuals, even if this primacy is ultimately formal rather than substantive in character. Acquiescence to the doctrine of correspondence in the first case is abjured by showing, as a *subject*, sociology's limited grasp of the "real" correspondents themselves.

Yet Weber goes further than this, manifesting his dilemma all the more by trying to take account of the trouble humanity poses for the rational grounds of sociology itself. The gap between the actor's understanding of his action and that of the sociologist, formulated as the distinction between conduct and observed behaviour, is developed further, first in his discussion of types of human action, and

thereafter in his contrast between substantive and formal rationality. Weber's typology of action underscores the unique character of "value-rational" or principled (*wertrational*) action. It is not to be confused either with a strictly instrumental or purposive (*zweckrational*) orientation or with affective and emotive behaviour: it stands on its own (Weber, 1978: 24–26). Here the typical actor, though preoccupied with realizing absolute values like "honour," often in the midst of resistance and apathy, responds rationally to the situation at hand and stays at his post. Weber's reference to the captain who goes down with his ship to illustrate this kind of action is more than a coincidence, an example chosen neutrally and disinterestedly. It is both a lament and a statement having great biographical significance.

Weber, speaking sociologically, admits that absolute values themselves are ultimately non-rational, and even that the action these absolute value commitments call forth shares the same fate. Whether we are dealing with "duty, honour, the pursuit of beauty, a religious call, personal loyalty, or the importance of some 'cause' no matter in what it consists," it is the actor's *diminishing* consideration of consequences which renders his action non-rational, sociologically speaking. Weber wants sociology to recognize the existence of a realm of "values" which is more than simply a territory for future data accumulation. The kinds of actions representative of this realm are *neither* rational nor irrational, argues Weber. But then there is the spread of the rationalization process itself: it demands that all forms of action not in accordance with its formally rational, instrumental norms be declared *irrational*. This holds not only for *wertrational* action, but also for *zweckrational* action not directed to goals in accordance with formally rational norms.

The implications for principled action must be clear: because it can no longer stand on its own in society, sociology must not keep up a pretense that it can. Weber's vaunted distinction between facts and values comes back to haunt him here, since strict adherence to this dichotomy, in accordance with the demands of rationalization, leaves him no choice but to consign *wertrational* conduct to the irrational rather than the non-rational. As we shall see, recognition of the futility of resistance to these trends *as a sociologist* only emerges from his discussion of the relation between formal and substantive rationality. Weber will only follow the law and the rules if he can tell us about the difficulties this rational discipline raises, if he can both show us limits and try to persuade us (and himself) that they

are really “opportunities” (Weber, 1978: 14–15, 19–20). The distinction between goal or purposive and value rational action thus provides a foothold in Weber’s sociology for the actor (Weber) who both stands against the process and aids and abets it in the way he goes about doing so.

The distinction between formal and substantive rationality is important because it is here that we see Weber’s sociological resting place as a frustrated theorist. Principled action, originally formulated as a “type” which is *substantively*, rather than only formally ideal, is virtually absorbed into Weber’s formal sociology given his inability or unwillingness to speak to the first principles which make him *substantively* rather than formally (sociologically) rational. Weber ultimately cannot reproduce *himself* as a sensible theoretic actor showing the value of his form of life. To do so would require him to overcome the false concreteness of disciplined observation and embrace *the totality as concrete* and the empirical as that which is abstracted out of it, and this he cannot do (Kosik, 1969). It would require him to stop defining all conceptions of reason, apart from those characterized by calculability, as “deviations” from a “conceptually pure type” of rational action. The “methodological convenience” of this approach to which Weber refers is problematic for him because it conflicts with a personal standard which he reduces to subjectivity *and value* in order to hide in his “substantively” rational person. This substantively rational person is the David which Weber reproduces to stand against the Goliath of the conceptually pure type in perfect tune with society and the rationalization process.

The victory of Goliath in Weber’s work is all-too-evident from the way he treats his own standards. Sociologically speaking they are “subjective” and therefore presumably *narrow* by comparison with more neutral postures that follow from value-relevance rather than demanding its acknowledgment. In a substantive (rather than a formal) sense, however, it is precisely values and informed subjectivity which are “broader” in scope than a narrow sociological perspective. The formal demands of disciplined observation require him to acknowledge that this more informed subjectivity can, in the final analysis, constitute only a “deviation” from the conceptually pure type whose generalization is a formally rational order (Weber, 1978: 20–22). Here we honour the sociological vision of “objectivity” given admitted relevance once again, for Weber insists that this requirement in no way reveals a “rationalistic bias,” or even the belief in

the increasing predominance of reason in society. I would argue that a rationalistic bias is indeed revealed, but would accept Weber's bias against it as something that is more than simply a value. On the one hand, Weber "knows" that the Western rationality of which sociology is necessarily a formal exemplar is substantively irrational.<sup>4</sup> On the other, this can only be a value, as Weber makes clear in a statement that must be considered definitive:

There is no possibility here of deciding upon, but only of determining and delimiting [*Feststellung und Begrenzung*] what is to be called 'formal.' In this context the concept 'substantive [*materiale*]' is itself in a certain sense 'formal;' that is, it is an abstract, *generic* concept (Weber, 1978: 86, translation modified).

#### IV. *The sociological ideal of capitalism*

It is significant that this claim is made while Weber is attempting to point out the type of rationality found in capitalist accounting procedures and practices, also discussed in Chapter 5 below. At first glance, these practices appear little more than an instance of the "correctness" against which one measures the deviations present in the exercise of substantive rationality. Weber furthers this impression, to be sure, when he uses sociology in order to indict socialism and communism as violations of Occidental reason (Weber, 1978: 85–86, 93, 104). His own substantive rationality is clearly in evidence when he makes material the formal notion of deviation present in sociology's "methodological convenience." Socialism and communism "deviate" from the conceptually pure type of rational action because they emphasize factors other than calculability, utility maximization, and comparative advantage. Already capitalism is more than one topic among many for Weber; it is even more than one of the central institutions of Western civilization.

Indeed, capitalism for Max Weber is a model of *both formal and substantive rationality*. The initial bargain, though important, is ulti-

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<sup>4</sup> Marcuse concludes "Industrialization and Capitalism in the Work of Max Weber" by suggesting that Weber's summary statement on Western rationality might well have been: "And this you call reason?" (Marcuse, 1968 [1964]: 226). Marcuse is probably speaking to Weber's studies in the sociology of religion where he suggests that every radical rationalization creates irrationalities with the certainty of a fate.

mately unsatisfactory, however, for Weber's concrete "individuals" cannot compensate him for his subordination to the empirical notion of concreteness required by sociology as disciplined observation. This becomes apparent once we realize that Weber wants a *capitalistic* sociology rather than one that fights socialism and communism from a less well-defined perspective, but knows he cannot have it. He cannot have it because, although capitalism is the key "motive force" underwriting the rational mode of life and its development as the rationalization process, it is not, he argues, the leading institution *per se* for realizing rationalization as a culmination and a fate.<sup>5</sup> For Weber, capitalism is relatively contradiction-free, in rather explicit contrast to bureaucracy, with its commitment to "rational domination." When he allows bureaucracy to absorb the charge of irrationality and absurdity as an exemplar of rationalization on its own, he effectively preserves capitalism as a lost opportunity, an unrealized ideal in his work.

Thus Weber "knows" that sociology as a creature of the rationalization process can only show that it knows its auspices by replicating them in its own structure and operation. Marcuse is therefore correct to find in Weber's nonpolitical characterization of the rationalization process and its major institutional supports—technology and organization—a politicized form of economic domination coterminous with "social" rationality (Marcuse, 1968 [1964]: 226). The relationship between capitalism and bureaucracy is the key to understanding how for Weber a bureaucratic sociology is *neither* capitalistic nor socialistic or communistic. It is rather the creature of an impersonal process that sociology can only describe as "rational." First, there is the emphasis on the "free market" and "free labour" in Weber's definition: it reveals a commitment to a formal model of the system that refuses to entertain fully its fundamental contradictions. Weber agrees with recent neo-Keynesian thinking when he

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<sup>5</sup> A *capitalistic* sociology is not only one that strains toward capital accounting and the "free market" as both a substantive and formal ideal. It is also a sociology of *scarcity*, in the sense that scarcity is given in its *raison d'être* and continuing motivation, and not just as a possible external topic, e.g. "the Third World," "underdevelopment," "poverty." Again Weber is forced back to *economics* in order to accommodate his forlorn hopes for sociology (Weber, 1949 [1904]: 63–72). Weber (1978: 89–94) uses the economic rationality of the free market to resist recognition of sociology's *bureaucratic* auspices "beyond" scarcity.

banishes capitalism *because* its very operation eclipses the free market, supply and demand, entrepreneurship, etc., on which its "formal" definition depended (Galbraith, 1967: chap. 5; cf. Giddens 1973; Wilson, 1977).

There is some indication that capitalism in its early stages supersedes these stages by *adherence* to its initial ground rules rather than by any "deviation" from them, but Weber treats this as the eclipse of capitalism itself. The paradoxical character of capitalism's development becomes almost a tragedy in Weber's hands however, since the gain in rationality realized by the extension of the norms of production (and administration) outward is at best controversial and at worst an illusion. Speaking of cartel arrangements, for instance, Weber prefigures some key points found in contemporary debate and discussion. Thus, "... the formation of cartel agreements, no matter how rational their basis in relation to the market situation may be, immediately diminishes the stimulus to accurate calculation on the basis of capital accounting, because calculation declines in the absence of an enforced objective need for it" (Weber, 1978: 106, cf. 88-89).

Formal and substantive rationality, though "always in principle in conflict," maintain themselves as such within sociology's formal auspices. In this sense, then, sociology is being true to the society which makes it increasingly possible as disciplined observation by treating substantive rationality as formally unreasonable or irrational *by definition*. Substantive rationality is not simply 'not' rational; it is irrational. These "values," to be sure, are not allowed to become more than sociologically significant as data for Weber, as the following statement makes clear:

The complete indifference of even the formally most perfect rationality of capital accounting towards all *substantive* postulates, an indifference which is absolute if the market is perfectly free, is based on the principal *limitation*, inherent in its very structure, of the rationality of monetary economic calculation. It is, after all, of a purely *formal* character. Formal and substantive rationality, no matter by what value-standard the latter is measured, are always *in principle* separate things, regardless of whether in many (and under certain very artificial assumptions, even in all) cases they may coincide empirically. For the formal rationality of money accounting in itself does not imply anything about the actual distribution of goods. This must always be the concern of a special discussion (Weber 1978: 108; translation modified).

Having already drawn attention to his Janus-faced use of the "formal" and formalization in sociological research, here we want to use

Weber's analysis of capitalism to show what sociological theory can do when working at its very best, and to thereby demonstrate the limits given in such an enterprise. When considering the definitions of capitalism to follow, I draw particular attention to their relative empirical availability as "data." To repeat, in a world where everything not appropriated as a fact must be a value, values escape the charge of abstractness only by making themselves sociologically available as the object's subjectivity.

Weber's technique begins by endorsing the representative character of types as formalizations that simplify a complex reality that can never "really" be conceptually appropriated. When he formulates definitions, he speaks of a type which represents a contemporary phenomena while being faithful to the limits of its technique, then samples history for evidence of progressively less accurate approximations to that which is being represented most faithfully.<sup>6</sup> There is no doubt that Weber is continually concerned to use sociology to show its limits through his work, since he insists on its viability as a scientific enterprise whose practitioners must act responsibly and honourably while demonstrating what it cannot accomplish and what stands beyond it, albeit as "values." Typification is central to this effort because it constitutes both an opportunity and a limit when it helps sociology accomplish what it alone can do. Graspability and appropriation remain central to sociology's view of knowing, while its disappointing results require as much discipline and "tolerance" as the effort which produced them. Sociology ultimately reveals itself as the essence of the problematic—society—rather than its proper analytic—Reason. All sociology can do when faced with rationality as possibility is to invoke its own evidentiary rules and boundaries and declare it a value rather than a fact.

Weber's technique of type formulation contrasts economic speculation with "rational" economic action in order to point to what makes Western capitalism unique by carefully distinguishing features usually lumped together by practitioners and scholars alike. Weber

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<sup>6</sup> Thus Weber works *backward* from modern science, capitalism, and bureaucracy as ideal types to earlier activities and institutions which gradually lose enough factor-specificity to fall under these terms only in the loosest sense: e.g. Greek "science," Phoenician "capitalism," and Roman "bureaucracy." This is more often a practice for Weber with his "generalizing" (bureaucracy) than with his "individualizing" (Protestantism, science, capitalism) ideal types.

has in mind Sombart's effort to link the Jews and capitalism here, since it is speculative trading and "pariah" capitalism, not rational industrial organization, which has been the hallmark of their "economic" activity in the West. Weber virtually explodes this presumed association, with all that it has been used to imply, when he contrasts the more general human tendency to pursue gain in a speculative manner throughout history with a relatively specific method of economic gain based on organized rational calculation. To be sure, speculation in general has always been oriented to political contingencies, with currency and credit subordinated to spoils, booty, forced labour, and colonial exploitation. However, Weber cites "capitalism" as a unique type of long-term speculation. It is characterized by: (1) continuous trading on a market (2) between enterprises gauging profit on the basis of capital accounting practices where this profit (3) is viewed as gain over the long-term (4) is supported by the sale of securities, speculative transactions in standardized commodities and (5) requires a continuous administration of political bodies (Weber, 1978: 90-91, 114, 154-55, 164).

On the other hand, it is clear that Weber often employs the method of ideal typification as an "opportunity" to extend the use of the term "capitalism" in particular well beyond agreed upon requirements of factor specificity, as for example where he states that modern Western capitalism is not, after all, the only kind. Indeed, Weber lists six types of "capitalism" in *Economy and Society*, only two of which are peculiar to the modern West. The rest, politically based and oriented modes of profit making, have been variously characteristic of people all over the world and for millennia. These include the extension of credit, the financing of wars and revolutions, and continuous domination in the form of forced labour and taxation. Whatever Weber's reason for extending his terms outward and backward in this fashion, the net effect of this procedure is to anchor "capitalism" as a modern Western phenomenon in past collective experiences while at the same time stressing uniqueness. In any case, the capitalism with which I am concerned is uniquely characterized by capital accounting practices and exchange on the "market," along with speculation in standardized commodities and securities, and the financing of new enterprises (which would include science-based technologies in late capitalism) and of permanent political and administrative structures (parties, bureaucracies, and sustained state intervention in later phases) (ibid.: 144-45; cf. Shils, 1948).



Although Weber's motive in granting himself this license as the architect of the ideal type in its application to comparative institutional and historical sociology is indeed important, it should not obscure his picture of what a pure type of market economy operating with maximum formal rationality would look like. Its key features would include the following: (1) open and unrestricted struggle between autonomous economic groups in the marketplace; (2) a money economy in which prices, capital costs, and wages are dependent upon this struggle; (3) the total absence of all monopolies, whether established politically (mercantilism) or as the result of voluntary concentrations; (4) formally free labour and open contractual relations between entrepreneurs and labourers; (5) absolute expropriation of the workers from the means of production; (6) individual ownership of enterprises (Weber, 1978: 165–66).

Keeping in mind the unique capacity of capitalism, so defined, to provide for its own “eclipse” through adherence to its ground rules, one cannot help but wonder whether anything more than a very remote approximation to this “ideal” ever existed, even in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In addition, of course, there is the question of what this ideal type in particular meant to Weber. Mommsen, for example, argues that it functions strictly as a *formal* ideal in Weber's work, not a substantive one (Mommsen, 1984: 47–71; cf. Dronberger, 1971: 293–316). Weber, he claims, “had no intention whatsoever of singing the praises of capitalism, let alone capitalism in its most ‘formally rationalized’ versions.” However, I feel that it is precisely the contrast between the ideal and its actual development into a mature *system*, coupled with the fact that this takes place *in the presence of* significant deviations from the norm, that explains why the pure type of market economy would be a *substantive*, as well as a *formal*, ideal for Weber.<sup>7</sup> His view that the historical universe as such is meaningless, and from the point of view of observers, even chaotic, supports this position further. Pure capitalism would constitute the *substantive* ideal of the very open society which Weber's liberalism and negative individualism compelled him

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<sup>7</sup> In spite of this “capitalist ideal,” Weber still views capitalist *reality* in terms of the unavoidable conflict between formally rational capital accounting practices and an orientation to profit which eventually compromises these practices in the absence of an “objective need” for them (Weber, 1978: 92–93; cf. Wilson, 1984: 158–80).

to defend against what he interpreted as Marxian materialism and determinism.

Elsewhere Weber approaches the social contradiction which he otherwise refuses to acknowledge in his use of sociological formalization when he refers to capitalism as the expropriation of "formally free" labour where this labour is systematically excluded from ownership and control of the means of production. What for Marx is a datum for theorizing—the expropriation of free labour embodied in the separation of workers from the means of production and from the product—becomes for Weber a faithful rendering of the past and present state of things to the best of sociology's ability.

The fact that the maximum of *formal* rationality in capital accounting is possible only where the workers are subjected to domination by entrepreneurs, is a further specific element of *substantive* irrationality in the modern economic order . . . A further economic reason for this expropriation is that free labour and the complete appropriation of the means of production create the most favourable conditions for discipline (Weber, 1978: 138).

On the one hand, he treats the capitalist concern for *producing* rather than simply trading commodities, and the "free" labour on which it is based, as a social manifestation of legal rules that are essentially unquestioned. Instead of Marx's willingness to treat law and the state as *both* a higher form than feudalism *and* a basis for exploitation, Weber eschews such contradiction, treating exploitation as such as essentially a feature of a *pre-capitalistic* form of speculation (Weber, 1978: 137–40). Weber's sociological formalism often appears to adhere to the legal formalism he tends to objectify rather than treat as historical and therefore problematic, something which occasioned the charge of an "orgy of formalism" from Marcuse (1968 [1964]). And yet Weber's reference to *long-term* concerns as unique to Western capitalism's view of profit maximization and comparative advantage indicates his refusal to embrace without qualification more surface definitions of capitalism, as do later theorists of capitalism and its alleged supersession (Bell, 1973; Galbraith, 1967; cf. Wilson, 1977: 122–44).

To be sure, Weber's ultimate loyalty to capitalism cannot be ignored or fundamentally disputed insofar as it provides a permanent standard for economic action which, however unique, even a revolution cannot overcome. Indeed, the "irony" of capitalism lies in the way bureaucracy negates it for Weber. If he cannot have his

ideal, neither can his enemies have theirs. No capitalism, no socialism! This is an entirely different claim from one that implies that speculation in general, with its dependence upon political contingencies, is almost given in the nature of human beings. For Weber, only rationalization as a fate environs the capitalism that propels itself forward to its ultimate end in a dead mechanism, not socialism as possibility. Weber argues that socialism requires even more of that leading institution of rationalization—bureaucracy—than capitalism does. At the same time, capitalism has features apart from its ever-increasing dependence on bureaucracy (along with the corporate legal form and state intervention) which would also have to be retained in any socialist economy and society. Regardless of what we may think of Weber's pessimism and "realism" regarding human possibility, this aspect of his critique of state socialism as a "violation of occidental reason," as well as that which derives from his argument regarding the applicability of bureaucracy to all advanced societies, remains significant and compelling today. For entirely different reasons then, even Marx would agree with Weber that without capitalism there can be no socialism.

Though Weber never fell prey to the belief that human beings could ever "really" overcome scarcity under capitalism, he did aid and abet this view by refusing to utilize his sociological analysis of capitalism as a vehicle for dialectical theorising and critical reflection (Weber, 1949 [1904]: 63–64). Instead, Weber (who maintained an academic post in economics throughout his career) ultimately takes economics as his model for sociology. Here it is not its original definition as a moral science seeking to rank-order ends given scarce means (Smith) that he has in mind, but instead its modern form as a technical science concerned with the efficient utilization of means *given* ends. For Weber, the realization that "what is called the technological development of modern times has been largely oriented economically to profit-making" is only underscored by the subsidiary role played by "the games and cogitations of impractical ideologists, other-worldly interests and all sorts of fantasies, by preoccupation with artistic problems, and by various other non-economic motives." Thus, he argues:

None the less the main emphasis at all times, especially the present, has lain in the economic determination of technological development. Had not rational calculation formed the basis of economic activity, had there not been certain very particular conditions in its economic

background, [economically] rational technology could never have come into existence (Weber, 1978: 67).

Weber's vaunted distinction between economic, economically relevant, and economically conditioned phenomena only obscures the degree to which he accepts economics as a technical science standing outside capitalism, a neutral tool seeking to comprehend its inner workings through disciplined observation (Weber, 1949: 37–38, 43–46, 64–66).

#### V. *The bureaucratic rationalization of sociology*

No concept in the Weberian arsenal is intended to be more all-inclusive, more comprehensive, in its ability to explain social and historical events than "rationalization." There is little doubt that it constitutes the central concept in his effort to formulate a theory of Western development. Though the product in a certain sense of scientific specialization and technical differentiation, it means something for him quite at variance with the Enlightenment vision. Far from culminating in a "feast of reason," this process increasingly challenges the liberal tendency to equate it with reason at all (Freund, 1968: 21–22; Weber, 1946 [1917/19]). Loewith argues that rationalization is the key to Weber's interpretation of the bourgeois-capitalist world in the sense that it defines the institutional and relational field in society "most worthy of being known" (Loewith, 1970: 106–07). Weber subordinates sociology to the task of comprehending the world that makes it possible by requiring it to focus on "the characteristic uniqueness of the reality in which we move". He then formulates a sanctuary for the object as subject by requiring sociology to seek after "understanding" at the same time that it seeks after lawfulness. Weber thus demands scholarly and scientific rigour in sociology in order to show the *limits* of the enterprise rather than the "opportunities" it provides. It is as if the only way to put disciplined observation in its place is to carry its own logic through to its end-point in the irrational and absurd (cf. Voegelin).

Weber's use of the term "rationalization" sometimes treats it as intellectualization, sometimes as a striving for perfection through the search for the one best way. Calculability and predictability are the objectives of the rational mode of life and discipline is its primary vehicle. Capitalism for Weber is only slightly less subordinated to

this mode of life than is technique and technology. At the same time, capitalism is the key “motive force” standing behind (though not the key institution for realizing) rationalization as a culmination and a fate. Though it constitutes a key exemplar of this rational mode, it possesses no contradictions as such for Weber. Bureaucracy, on the other hand, is the institutional prototype for the emerging rationalized society. It is therefore to be clearly contrasted to capitalism because of the contradictions that it embodies in its commitment to “rational domination.” It is also to be contrasted to capitalism because of the clear irrationality and absurdity given in its status as a model for the rational society. While admitting that bureaucracy is an agent of capitalism which both completes and negates it, Weber nevertheless allows bureaucracy to absorb the charge of irrationality and absurdity on its own (Freund, 1968: 18–19).

For Weber the sociological polarities of reason and domination always condition his treatment of bureaucracy and bureaucratization. It is only by reference to the three “legitimate” forms of domination that we are able to comprehend what it is about the “solution”—rationalization—that makes it so problematic.<sup>8</sup> How is it possible for any kind of domination to be rational at all?, Weber seems to ask. Yet it is not just a cover (“rationalization”) for a more arbitrary, though less obvious, kind of domination masked as legality and lawfulness. To say that bureaucracy stands as the principal institutional embodiment of legal-rational domination is to take issue with its claim to objective status at the same time that this possibility is never challenged theoretically, but solely in terms of what such a world *will* look like in the future. Weber allows Western institutions to complete, but not to surpass themselves when he appropriates their joint outcome as inevitable bad facticity.

Bureaucracy functions as the institutional mediator of the rationalization process between the overly “concrete” analysis of technology and division of labour on the one hand, and the highly “abstract” and “value-laden” view of rationalization as the fate of

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<sup>8</sup> Most significant for Weber’s concept of rationalization is its increasing role vis-a-vis tradition. Weber is clear that there are two routes to the development of a rationalized, bureaucratized, society: constitutionalism or legal-rationalism per se and the routinization of charisma in an “anti-authoritarian direction” (Weber, 1978: 246–66).

the West (cf. Weber, 1978: 217–26, 1946 [1910–1914]: 196–24, with Weber, 1978: 63–113, 114–206). Weber challenges both the height and depth metaphors of hierarchy and excavation in his refusal to endorse either practice or reflection as activities in the world in favour of an ecological metaphor. This metaphor views rationalization as a fate that increasingly surrounds us *because* we are subjects and some of us have no choice but to “know” it. But what authorization does Weber have for his reverse linear vision of Western development as the unwinding of a mainspring? Only his fidelity to rationalization as a *process* visible through bureaucratization which appropriates everything other to it in the name of the “rational mode of life.” It does this most importantly by indicting all those who resist it as the problematic irrationality still found in daily life. Thus does the human condition itself come to constitute society’s problematic subject (object) matter, an externality to be appropriated for its own protection.

In effect, a dialectic emerges in the ongoing activities of bureaucracy, not only between hierarchy, discipline, and seniority on the one hand, and specialization, knowledge, and competence on the other, but also between the individual and bureaucracy/society itself. No matter how hard Weber strains to collapse this particular “generalizing type” inside his sociology as a representation of that complexity capable of appropriation in the mind alone, it constantly emerges as a reification whose alienated object status possesses the “authority” to treat the individual as a subject (object) whose biases are what make him truly human. This means that the arbiter of reason in society necessarily becomes something quite different from individuals, whether on their own or in groups. Weber challenges the ecological notion of rationality as that which is the more closely approximated the greater the constituency of believers it can point to as its own. But he does so only by employing the same metaphor to his own pessimistic conclusions, which is to say that he shows sociology’s limits by bringing it to them unflinchingly. That he stops short of critical reflection and follows the law only underscores the incompleteness given in sociology’s commitment to the concrete individual fact and the abstract whole as actually and potentially graspable and appropriatable.

Bureaucracy thus provides an “opportunity” for the sociologist to get to know rationalization relatively first hand. Studies of technique and the organization of work and labour by themselves promise lit-

tle; what is crucial is the way in which the concerns of efficiency and the need for authority and discipline are reconciled. Similarly, rationalization as a fate is even less likely to qualify as sociology, since it compels us to ask questions about concreteness and mastery themselves, as later work on bureaucratic organization has suggested (Crozier, 1964; Perrow, 1972). Indeed, it is probably best to stand aside when the alleged source of “rationalization” in the *individual* is used to demonstrate its limited utility as a concept which mainly identifies subjects as fully human, because non-rational, beings. This ecological metaphor in Weber, rather than constituting simply a reversal of Enlightenment eschatology, is essential to understanding the nature of his sociological work. It is employed in a way that allows sociology to embrace the idea of theorising even while demonstrating its essential incompleteness.<sup>9</sup>

Thus rationalization really lacks any anchorage at all in the vaunted world of intending actors (other than theorists), except to the extent that sociologists can typify these observed behaviours and formulate rational institutions (like the “corporate group” or “organization” [*Verband*]) out of them (Weber, 1978: 48–53). The resulting graspable wholes—bureaucracies—are the meeting place of sociology and rationalization as a fate in Weber’s work. Bureaucracy is the central concept: it exemplifies a method of organizing appropriate to sociology as well as to the world of work and labour as undisciplined observation (Wolin, 1960; Wilson, 1973; Wilson, 1989; Wilson, 1992). The “generalization” of sociological attitudes outward to encompass vast majorities in daily life who now feel at home as disciplined observers in a collective where the stranger is the norm promises to underwrite sociology’s presumption regarding the “reasonableness” of Society itself. As Weber suggests, rationalization as a fate is most truly realized when sociology itself can be carried on as a form of “actual action” in daily life, one which “goes on in a state of inarticulated half-consciousness or actual unconsciousness of its subjective meaning”:

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<sup>9</sup> By referring to the essential “incompleteness” of his researches, Weber is always performing this forced reduction on himself, with consequences. Ideal types allow him a temporary respite, which stricter adherence to his constructivist theory of action requires him to compromise, by taking his own notion of “limit” given in the type “seriously” in a *substantive* sense.

The actor is more likely to 'be aware' of it in a vague sense than he is to 'know' what he is doing or be explicitly self-conscious about it. In most cases, his action is governed by impulse or habit. Only occasionally and, in the uniform action of large numbers often only in the case of a few individuals, is the subjective meaning of the action, whether rational or irrational, brought clearly into consciousness (Weber 1978: 21–22).

What makes bureaucracy so important, and Weber so crucial an exponent of it, is precisely the part it plays as a prototype for the development of a mature capitalist society. This society is one where rationalization has extended rationality norms from science and from work and labour contexts outward and inward into primary settings formerly subordinated to tradition and custom. The contradictory character of bureaucracy as an ideal (not an ideal type) is reconciled in the notion of rational domination which is so central to technocratic and meritocratic ideology nowadays (Wilson, 1977: 200–230; cf. Giddens, 1973; Chapter 6 below). Weber catches the essence of this as the central problematic of modern Western civilization when he uses sociology to evidence the limits of the very system of rationality that interprets bureaucracy as an unqualified "success." Bureaucracy is an ideal only for those exponents of rationalization, including "disciplined" observers, who treat its failure to fully realize its prescriptions and goals as the only problem.

Sociology (as Weber well knew) assists capitalism in the very specific sense that it redefines huge populations as bureaucratic employees and consumers and shows them the necessity and value of disciplined observation and the "rehearsal in imagination" as the essence of responsible civic behaviour. What kind of anchorage, then, can Weber get when he speaks of bureaucracy's development as one very much tied up with "the capitalistic system"? Here we discover that though both "have arisen from totally different historical sources . . . capitalism is the most rational economic basis for bureaucratic administration and enables it to develop in the most rational form." This is importantly tied to *modern* bureaucracy's dependence on a money economy to sustain the fiscal needs given in a salaried, disciplined, and *continuous* administration first of political bodies then of economic activities. After all, Weber argues, capitalism and bureaucracy fundamentally have in common a joint commitment to the objective discharge of "business" *sine ira et studio* (Weber, 1978: 220–226). Rather than lean toward responsibility when he brings capitalism



and bureaucracy together like this, Weber shows their common commitment to “objectivity” in order to demonstrate what rational domination really means when it generates a world in which responsibility is no longer meaningful or relevant at all. This leads him to notice how the collapse of a form of domination based on “status honour” does not, as bourgeois ideology originally promised, generate a natural order based on “legitimate” (and continually legitimated) authority. Thus:

Bureaucratization offers above all *the optimum possibility* for carrying through the principle of specializing administrative functions according to purely objective considerations. Individual performances are allocated to functionaries who have specialized training, and who by constant practice learn more and more. The ‘objective’ discharge of business primarily means a discharge of business according to *calculable rules* and ‘without regard for person.’ ‘Without regard for person’ is also the watchword of the market and, in general, of all pursuits of naked economic interests. A consistent execution of bureaucratic domination means the levelling of ‘status honours.’ Hence, if the principle of the free market is not at the same time restricted, it means the universal domination of the ‘class situation’ (Weber, 1946 [1910–14]: 215; emphasis added).

To claim that bureaucracy realizes its highest level of rationality under a capitalist free-market system is a way to make *it* responsible instead of capitalism. Capitalism makes possible this “most rational” development, but the disappearance of capitalism, now defined by reference to the free market, leads to substantial compromises of its objectivity and “formal” rationality. This presupposes for the moment, of course, that capitalism’s explanation of market relations—without regard for persons—can be taken seriously. Weber states that the realization *of the ideal* creates the “universal domination of the class situation,” which is to say that bureaucracy in socialist and “mixed” economies compromises this class situation in favour of *less* formally rational activities and enterprises (Weber, 1978: 85, 104–05, 202–206).<sup>10</sup> Since substantive rationality is contained within Weber’s

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<sup>10</sup> Presumably it is the very need of such economies for more bureaucracy that provides evidence of bureaucracy’s *inefficiency and ineffectiveness* in the face of constraints on the formal ideal of unfettered capital accounting. However, Weber equates formal rationality itself, as ideally embodied in capitalism, with the “class situation”.

sociology as a "formal concept," we do not learn whether socialism gains in substantive rationality because it loses in formal calculability. All Weber will tell us, apart from generally negative comments, is that "any type of socialism would have simply to take bureaucracy over and increase its importance." The only option would be "reversion in every field" in which bureaucracy has already been stated to be indispensable as the only alternative to "dilettantism" in the field of administration (Weber, 1978: 223–24).<sup>11</sup>

When Weber shows the hopelessness of socialism by reference to sociology's "formal" concept of substantive rationality, he is preserving the integrity of capitalism by default. Though capitalism, as he defines it, has been superseded, it maintains itself as an unrealized ideal in his *substantive* work. To be sure, its very operation terminates it as a possibility in the real world, but this being the case, socialism must be denied as a viable alternative to it. Weber is forced to settle for a bureaucratic society (and sociology) which exemplifies the process of rationalization and gives this process some status as an historical and social phenomenon rather than simply a personal vision, value, or view. Rationalization thus becomes, among many other things, a "compromise" between his ideal and that of his opponents. Weber eschews both practice and reflection in favour of an ecological metaphor fuelled by a disciplined observation that claims to "see" rationalization as a fate. He can only dispute this claim to increasing rationality in society by allowing this process of development to complete itself in a dead mechanism as inevitable bad facticity.<sup>12</sup>

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He then suggests that the decline of the formal reason of capitalism as a consequence of its dependence on bureaucracy and the growth of civil society *compromises* this situation as a consequence of bureaucracy's "leveling of economic and social differences" (Weber, 1946: 224).

<sup>11</sup> Weber also mentions the element of "social justice and equality" in "socialistic and communistic standards" (Weber, 1978: 85–86). As a "value," socialism's "deviation" from formal rationality, however adulterated by rationalization as the completion and negation of capitalism, makes it *more* respectable (Wilson, 1977: 29–50).

<sup>12</sup> Rationalization as Weber understands it, far from gaining in strength from the externality it appropriates in its spread outward from the market and the firm, spends itself in a "dead mechanism" as the price of the "coverage" it attains. This is implied in his use of the figure of the "stahlhartes Gehäuse" at the end of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, the "steel-hard casing" of a hollowed out system destined to exhaust its internal and external resources.

VI. *Towards a theoretical critique*

Weber criticizes the “rational mode of life,” but not theoretically. As a sociologist he accepts science’s version of its own capabilities and progressive development, which is to say he challenges neither the notion of possibility it sanctions nor the claim that it alone is capable of surpassing itself. Indeed, he restricts the scientific conception even more when he construes (as did Popper later) a further limit as an “opportunity” for sociology to do what no one else wants to do but what seems nevertheless to need doing. In the event, its job is to chart the course of rationalization as a phenomenon for which bureaucracy (and technology) provide the semblance of a process rather than simply a vision, value, or view. In adopting the ecological and developmental metaphors, mediated only by an emphasis in his basic concepts on intended action by his concrete sociological individual, he accepts the limit cited but in the process demonstrates how little an opportunity it is.<sup>13</sup> Weber suggests the ultimate irrationality of Western development as both a possible and a completed project but does not show it in the name of reason; such an effort would be *ultra vires* for the responsible sociologist, who above all else, must not leave his post. The conflicts embedded in Weber’s work must continue to be a major topic of concern for social theorists, particularly those concerned with the relation between capitalism, bureaucracy, the legal “individual,” and sociology itself.

This chapter has considered aspects of Weber’s analysis of modern Western civilization from the perspective of critical theory. I have premised my argument on the conviction that you can only show the value of someone’s work by showing its significant limits. This was not done as an exercise in spitefulness: any such conclusion simply demonstrates a failure to understand what is at stake in critique. To treat someone’s work critically is to accord that work the only distinction that really matters. In Weber’s case I have argued that, whatever his “good reasons” may have been for staying at his sociological post, they have (to use his own distinction) substantive rather than just formal, implications (Wilson, 1977). I have also tried

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<sup>13</sup> One could argue that Weber demonstrates *not* rationalization but the supreme alienation which sociology is not really authorized to record at all (see Israel, 1971).

to show how these substantive implications themselves establish limit in his work through his work.

In this sense, I have attempted an analytic reading, but one subordinate to the notion of a partial reflection I discussed at the outset. The first principles that Weber refuses to examine, or even acknowledge, are necessarily beyond the scope of the sociological enterprise from which he will not turn away. By calling all that lies "outside" the realm of disciplined observation "values," and allowing their admission only as data, Weber used sociology to show the limited rationality of the process which made *it* possible, but not that of his ideal (capitalism) or the ideal of those he opposed (socialism). Asked why he continued doing sociological work in the face of the unhappiness it brought him, Weber is reputed to have said: "I want to see how much I can stand". This remark testifies further to the serious conflicts that plagued him in his efforts to clarify and "understand" the relation between rationality and domination while confined within the auspices of sociology with "the certainty of a fate."

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## CHAPTER TWO

### CRITICAL THEORY IN AMERICA, 1938–1978: A CASE OF INTELLECTUAL INNOVATION AND ITS RECEPTION

In this chapter, I attempt to present a summary of some of the major research and scholarly themes and concerns of those members of the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research who arrived as political refugees in the United States between the late 1930s and the early 1940s. In order to address these themes and concerns, I have selected two reference points—the theory of innovation and reception theory. Not only are these reference points useful for highlighting the precise nature of the contribution that the so-called “critical theory” of this institute (later called the “Frankfurt School”) made to Western political and social thought. They also allow us to grasp better how and why, over time, it was critical theory’s very conceptual, methodological and topical innovativeness, along with “objective events,” that conspired to impede its absorption into the American intellectual and social theoretical mainstream (Jay, 1973; Held, 1980; Wilson, 1977: 189–99).

In effect, both the Institute’s reception in the late 1940s and Habermas’ later “turn” away from critical theory in the late 1960s in response to the student protest movement in Europe helped pave the way for the combined impact of post-structuralism and neo-conservatism in the late 1970s. I deal with the unexpected interdependence between these two ideologies, the one intellectual and cultural, the other political and social, in the following chapter and elsewhere (Wilson, 2002, 2001). Suffice it to say that this combination proved lethal to the continued acceptance, and eventual integration, of the critical theory as a potential contributor to American social and political theory and philosophy, albeit in concert with the events cited. Framing the discussion in this way allows me to advance a thesis about the American “career” of this particular body of ideas and intellectual practices. For it accepts “objective events” for the part that they played, while acknowledging the role of both its intellectual and political reception and subsequent internal shifts of the magnitude of those carried out by Habermas since the late 1960s, allegedly in response to these very events (Jay, 1973: 219–252).

Barnett has defined innovation, in contrast to invention, as “any thought, behaviour, or thing that is new because it is qualitatively different from existing forms” (Barnett, 1953: 7). The reference to qualitative difference points to the fact that innovation constitutes a reorganization, and consequent recombination and reconfiguration, of already existing elements, be they mental or material, so that a new and different pattern or structure results. Reflection makes clear that the basis of critical theory’s innovativeness was constituted precisely by its fortuitous combination of Kant, Hegel, Marx, Freud, and Weber, along with its shift away from capitalism toward science, technology, and culture. In this sense it was, and still remains, a unique recombination or reconfiguration of already existing elements, one that was indeed generative of a new pattern or structure for viewing “advanced industrial societies.” These societies were far more complex than a label like “capitalist” could ever hope to capture on its own, however central a more advanced form of capitalism than Marx could have observed remained to their analysis.

In common with all other innovations, whether in thought, behaviour, or the material world, the critical theory of society first takes shape as “an idea or a constellation of ideas,” but differs because it is restricted to “a mental organization” which is never, and never can be, given “overt and tangible expression” (cf. Wilson, 1984). While Barnett cites this fact as an apparent limitation, critical theorists cited such a view as evidence of the very American “anti-intellectualism” that egregiously misunderstood the proper role of theory in research and scholarly work (Hofstadter, 1962). Indeed, they argued that this alleged limitation in fact constituted a strength for the critical theory in its competition with what it referred to, by contrast, as more “traditional” forms of social, political and philosophical theorizing (Horkheimer, 1972; Marcuse, 1968 [1937]: 134–158). While this clearly made sense when seen from their perspective as newly arrived European intellectuals, it was never able to dispel American suspicions that to some extent compromised acceptance of their form of thinking beyond its initial reception.

Thus it was the very uniqueness and innovativeness of the critical theory, in particular its Hegelian and Marxian commitment to theorizing as a concretely holistic activity, that led them to eschew the American expectation (if not demand) that theory ideally should issue in practical improvements. As such, the imperatives of either intervention in or control over practical reality could only serve



effectively to “traditionalize” the critical theory, determined as it was to resist the blandishments of elites and other power holders anxious to “use” theory to realize political, economic, or social objectives. For this reason alone, and particularly in light of the new lease on life that its practitioners had been vouchsafed, one could claim with merit that its very innovativeness threatened, rather than simply impeded, its reception in America. Nevertheless, it remains a measure of its early and substantial impact that both Karl Popper and Friedrich Hayek could wrongly claim critical theory to be a throwback to “pre-modern” forms of thought, rather than a “post-postmodern” adaptation of Kant, Hegel, Marx, Freud, and Weber, among others (Popper, 1957; Hayek, 1955).

### I. *“Empirical research” and the initial post-war reception*

Apart from the inherent differences between critical and traditional forms of theorizing already cited, indicative of the contrast between a Hegelian-Marxian and a Cartesian intellectual legacy respectively, a series of unique problems arose out of the obligation to conduct “empirical research” that went with the positions critical theorists had accepted. After all, refugee status for political and genocidal reasons, while readily acknowledged as a central requirement of all signatories to the relevant international covenants today, did not exist then. These intellectuals and their families, almost all Jewish, were in flight from Germany and other countries either occupied, or soon to be occupied, by the Third Reich. Still, they needed not only financial promises of support, but more specifically a job that no American could do but one that the authorities could be persuaded needed doing. It was no easy task to finalize the required arrangements, even given the influence of Jewish and other refugee organizations in the United States, aided by earlier arrivals from Europe (Lazarsfeld, 1968).

Faced with these demands and expectations, some clearly reacted to the situation better than others. Horkheimer and Pollock, always the statesmen, and Marcuse, imbued with a fervent hatred of Naziism, responded to what was required in different, but nonetheless constructive ways. The same appears to be true for other critical theorists, with the sole, if significant, exception of Adorno, who was chided by Lazarsfeld in particular for his refusal to be thankful for

his deliverance and to conform and adjust to what was available and required in the circumstances (*ibid.*; Jay, 1973: 222–24). As an earlier arrival from Austria who was not a critical theorist at all, Lazarsfeld had been persuaded by Horkheimer to give the Institute support and assistance, and especially to find work for Adorno. Adorno's refusal to accommodate to American mores and culture included his insistence on continuing to speak and write in the German language. This was based on the intellectually correct, but clearly politically incorrect, view that Hitler could not be allowed to appropriate an entire language and culture (Adorno, 1968: 338–70).

Apart from this extreme case, however, there was a far more subtle process of "subversion" that many or most critical theorists called upon to carry out empirical research engaged in following their arrival in the United States. Before looking at some of these studies more specifically, it is necessary to note the "spin" they felt obliged to put on any and all work of this sort. In effect, the signature of the critical theory in its inherent differences with traditional forms of theorizing was never very far from the surface in any of the studies that they directed or participated in. It was as if they were determined, particularly in the face of the central role that Americans even then gave to empirical social research, to respond to these work requirements by using the occasion as an opportunity to show the superiority of the critical theory (Adorno, 1968; Jay, 1973: 240). Adorno, among others, was steadfast in his view that the kind of small-scale research studies then (and since) so popular in the United States served dominant classes and elites. For him the very fact that they eschewed an analysis of the concrete whole or totality in favour of "reformism" proved to be definitive (Adorno, 1969; 1976; Frankfurt Institute, 1972).

Critical theorists were not alone in their suspicion, if not outright condemnation, of the "monopoly power" that empirical studies had in the United States, if the prominent example of C. Wright Mills has relevance in this context. Mills almost parodied the combination of what he called "abstracted empiricism" and "grand theory," near synonyms for empirical research and traditional theory in the lexicon of critical theory, in his widely read *The Sociological Imagination* (1959). The two chapters dealing specifically with these developments in American sociology were aimed at Robert Merton's "theories of the middle range," but particularly at Talcott Parsons' "social systems theory." In the latter case, Mills' criticism constituted little less

than a send up of Parsons' grammatical and syntactical obfuscations. Loren Baritz performed a not dissimilar service in his *The Servants of Power*, a criticism of the human relations movement in industrial sociology and organization theory. Among other things, he showed how empirical techniques of social research were being used to reduce structural problems inherent in the system as a whole to the "irrational" complaints of individual workers based solely on personal and family difficulties (Baritz, 1960).

Herbert Marcuse took both of these authors very seriously, and more than complemented Adorno in his criticisms of these practices, particularly in *One-Dimensional Man*, but also in his justifiably well known essay on Karl Popper in *Studies in Critical Philosophy* (Marcuse, 1964, 1973; cf. Popper, 1976). To be sure, much or most of this work turned out to be a prelude to the most significant critical event of all, which took place at the German Sociological Association's annual meetings in 1961. This took the form of a clash between Karl Popper and two of his best known German supporters, and Theodor Adorno and an as yet unreconstructed Jürgen Habermas, and was published, albeit with substantial additions by Adorno, as *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*. Adorno and Horkheimer had long since returned to West Germany, while Marcuse had chosen to remain in the United States, where he continued to exercise considerable influence over university students in ways rarely available to the (then) more elitist German system of higher education. It was his absence from the 1961 meetings that necessitated separate publication of his essay on Popper.<sup>1</sup>

Marcuse's reception as a critical theorist, postponed as a consequence of his wartime work for the United States' Office of Strategic Services (the predecessor of the CIA), far from hurting him, redounded to his distinct benefit. He was not a participant in any of the research

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<sup>1</sup> I return to this crucial episode in the history of critical theory in the following chapter. On the sources of the "positivist dispute" and Adorno's role in it, see the introduction by David Frisby, but especially the long "Introduction" added by Adorno after the meetings for the first (German) edition. Marcuse did, however, return three years later for the centenary of Max Weber's birth to present "Industrialization and Capitalism in the Work of Max Weber," reproduced in *Max Weber and Sociology Today* (Stammer, 1971) and, in slightly revised form in Marcuse's *Negations* (1968 [1964]: 201–26). For a parallel, but less well-known confrontation between Popper and critical theory, see Herbert Marcuse and Karl Popper, *Revolution or Reform?* (1976).

studies that served, quite unintentionally, to test the absorptive and integrative powers of the American intellectual and university cultures. It was clear that he had adjusted far better to "American conditions" than Horkheimer, Pollock, but especially Adorno, a fact evident from his determination to seek a university position as quickly as possible after the war (Jay, 1973: 284). Adorno and Horkheimer had perhaps always intended to return to Germany, but neither had wanted to pursue careers in the American university system either, and this deprived them of the kind of security that intellectual emigres almost everywhere have when compared to others. Most ironically of all, Marcuse ended up as a philosophical guru of the American student protest movement, while Adorno in particular was considered a traitor to the West German student movement, and ultimately succumbed to the stresses and pressures he experienced at Frankfurt.<sup>2</sup> Note finally that it was precisely this occasion that led Habermas to turn away from critical theory in favour of "radical reformism" and a "critical social science" and the circle is complete (Habermas, 1971: 31-49).

## II. *Studies in anti-semitism, prejudice, and the "authoritarian personality"*

In what follows, I want to focus briefly on some issues that I hope the prior discussion of the differences between critical and traditional theory on the matter of the status of empirical research has helped frame for the reader. These matters arose out of the *quid pro quo* that required Adorno and Horkheimer to carry out, or at least participate actively in, empirical research studies on topics not of their own choice. In addition to encouraging Adorno in particular to put his own spin on this work, this probably soured their initiation into American university and academic life in ways not experienced by Marcuse. After all, he had arrived on the academic scene years later

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<sup>2</sup> For Marcuse, this "guru" status at first rested almost exclusively on *One Dimensional Man*, a highly accessible study considering the philosophical ballast it carried. Otherwise, his influence would have been confined to students and colleagues at or near Brandeis University and the University of California at La Jolla (the two major academic institutions where he taught and lectured), as well as those who heard him on one or another lecture circuit. In Adorno's case, he viewed the West German student protest movement's commitment to revolutionary praxis as not only inappropriate but a kind of immanent false consciousness.

after the war had ended, with a record of exemplary service to the OSS behind him, when the atmosphere in American higher education, and society as a whole, was quite different. Marcuse quickly gained the prerogatives that all tenured professors at relatively high-ranking American universities had by the early 1950s, and was able to pursue important work on the Soviet Union (1958), Freud (1955), and American society and culture (1964) relatively undisturbed until well into the 1960s.

This contrasts strikingly with the fate of Adorno, Horkheimer and Pollock, whose decision to associate themselves with universities and research and funding bodies only tentatively and at an earlier date made them far more vulnerable to the wartime concerns of the moment given their less secure status as refugee academic intellectuals. As noted, they were expected to show thanks for their deliverance by doing whatever they could to fight Fascism and Naziism, and this led to considerable difficulties for them.<sup>3</sup> I have already pointed out that neither the topics nor the methods of research were their own, so they felt obliged to subvert them in order to state their own concerns and overall agenda whenever the occasion presented itself. Most importantly, America had had a surprisingly powerful Nazi movement in the 1930s, with clear undertones of support in the South and elsewhere for the anti-semitism it promoted. It is therefore not surprising that Jewish organizations, particularly those responsible for bringing refugee intellectuals to the United States, would wish to fund research into the causes of anti-semitism and its relation to prejudice, authoritarianism, and totalitarianism.

Concurrent or substantially overlapping with these research obligations were the studies of broadcasting and mass media that occupied most of Adorno's energies between his arrival in 1938 and his departure for Los Angeles with Horkheimer in 1941 (Jay, 1973: chapters 6, 7). While here too there was concern, even disdain, for the idiocies of empirical research, well captured in Adorno's merciless memoir "Scientific Experiences of a European Scholar in America" (and also the occasion for Lazarsfeld's retort about ingratitude), at

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<sup>3</sup> Pachter (1969) puts the situation of Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse in a larger perspective. Note, however, that Horkheimer, Pollock and Adorno were not technically exiles at all, but fully intended to return to (West) Germany as soon as possible after World War II.

least one could offer conclusions not incompatible with critical theory (Adorno, 1968; Laszarsfeld, 1968; Jay, 1973: 240). But more important by far was the distinct discomfort that most members of the Frankfurt Institute felt about participating in research studies directly concerned with anti-semitism. This may seem strange, if not incredible, but it has to be noted that Adorno, Horkheimer, Pollock, Neumann and Kirchheimer, among others, though Jewish by birth and parentage, considered themselves to be thoroughly secular and integrated into European culture. They actually resented being lumped together with practicing Jews and with other refugees, and resisted doing focussed research as the moment seemed to demand, in favour of broader themes, even if empirical research was a central feature of this work as well (Jay, 1973: 32–34).<sup>4</sup>

On the other side of the matter was the fact that these studies, though inspired mainly by the conduct and policies of the Third Reich, were to be carried out in the United States. What made this research so central an issue from the standpoint of the reception, acceptance, absorption and integration of critical theorists into American society was precisely the fact that they had no choice but to “discover” anti-semitism everywhere they looked because of course it was there to be discovered. Even labour unions and their members were exposed in these studies, with the result that an unintended imbalance in emphasis crept into them.<sup>5</sup> Americans in elite positions, many of them as, if not more, responsible for the successful immigration of these individuals than Jewish relief and refugee agencies, and in any case those often responsible for final decisions, were upset to be presented with such research. Without necessarily denying the validity of these studies, they believed their findings to constitute a far less dangerous truth about their own society than

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<sup>4</sup> Of the first generation, only Paul Massing and August Wittfogel, active members for only a brief period, were not Jewish, while Adorno's father was Jewish but not his mother. Jurgen Habermas, founder and leader of the second generation, comes from a Pietist Protestant background. Note, however, Jay's remark about Habermas' claim of a “striking resemblance between certain strains in the Jewish cultural tradition and in that of German Idealism, whose roots have often been seen in Protestant Pietism” (Jay, 1973: 34).

<sup>5</sup> Empirical studies, with their microcosmic focus, were both easier to do, with the limitations cited (of which critical theorists were fully aware), while creating a source of continuous embarrassment, when carried out on these and related topics. See especially *Anti-Semitism within American Labor: A Report to the Jewish Labor Committee*, 4 volumes (1945), in the Friedrich Pollock collection.

about the society that had largely inspired them, one with which they were now engaged in a fight to the death.

A preference for addressing these problems in a more comprehensive form thus not only took the spotlight off studies that could not escape criticism even if they only wished to argue, with Sinclair Lewis, that it could, after all, happen here, but better satisfied both Institute members' personal concerns and those of the critical theory in the process (Lewis, 1935). The more general studies of prejudice in American society, though less focussed on anti-semitism and meeting some of these personal and intellectual concerns and needs, also elicited accusations of ingratitude from elites and other decision makers. It is no coincidence that the decision to move away from these concerns in order to address problems that were later conceptualized in terms of the "authoritarian personality" captured Adorno's interest. The empirical aspect was still clearly in the ascendant, as evidenced not only by the research plan itself, but by the composition of the research group right up to three of the four author/editors (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, Sanford, 1950).<sup>6</sup> The difficulties with this focus from the standpoint of reception, while fewer and less serious, were still present, and the onset of the "cold war" did little to moderate or ameliorate them while the data were being collected and coded.

One could argue, with some irony, that the major value of *The Authoritarian Personality* as a completed work lay in its sophisticated (for then) inventory of empirical methodology and investigative procedures, beginning with the scaling techniques employed to isolate and define authoritarianism in the well-known "f [ascism] scale" approach.<sup>7</sup> The difficulty lay in the fact that authoritarianism is not only not necessarily incompatible with representative democracy and the rule of law, but may be absolutely required of at least some

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<sup>6</sup> However great was Adorno's flexible genius in matters pertaining to social theory and social science research, it is noteworthy that its standing as "a classic of social science" is directly related to the fact that the three other author/editors were in no formal or intellectual way associated with the Institute (Jay, 1973: 224).

<sup>7</sup> To be sure, the research instrument, such as it was, was significantly improved over the period during which the data were being collected. It also benefitted enormously from earlier empirical work carried out by Adorno in particular, either alone or in concert with empiricists and those trained in traditional theory, on anti-semitism, prejudice, radio listening habits, popular music and television. See Jay's bibliography of Adorno's writings for an inventory (1973: 356–57).

citizens some of the time (Shils, 1954; Bramson, 1961: 122). If the problem with the prejudice studies was their facile presumption that the presence of prejudice automatically meant the corollary presence of discrimination whenever the occasion presented itself, the difficulty with citing authoritarianism as problematic in and of itself was the failure to distinguish reference points.<sup>8</sup> On the basis of what values did a given man or woman generate a high score on the f scale? Surely, there is a world of difference between a high authoritarianism score that is referenced to traditional family or religious values, and one that is referenced to the belief in a "Herrenvolk" and an "Untermenschen."

As noted, by resisting a focus on reference points, partly for the reasons suggested, critical theorists—and Adorno most prominently—diffused the impact of their major claims and once again confused the country that inspired these studies with the one where they were carried out. Only this time it was the "cold war" and the Soviet Union that constituted the backdrop for reception rather than World War II and the Third Reich. At about this time, Washington was also experiencing the onset of anti-communist hysteria, best personified in the wild and damaging accusations of Senator McCarthy and the House "Un-American" Activities Committee. The academic and intellectual climate was, if anything, even more hostile to dissent than it had been during the war, and extended to the "blacklisting" of individuals by their colleagues. Indeed, one of the Institute's own, admittedly marginal, colleagues, Karl August Wittfogel, submitted a series of blacklists of his colleagues at the University of Chicago to Washington during this time, and even testified before a Congressional subcommittee (Jay, 1973: 284–85). Meantime, Herbert Marcuse, still politically correct, was working on what would prove to be a masterful analysis of the Soviet Union, one that anticipated fully the consequential tendency of Americans to associate Marxian, or Marx-inspired, intellectual and cultural sympathies with support for the Soviet Union and "communism" (Marcuse, 1958).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Leighton (1945) and follow-up studies of those originally interviewed in subsequent years highlight the problem of distinguishing reference points for authoritarianism. A more general research perspective on the difficulties inherent in assuming that discriminatory acts can be guaranteed to follow from the prejudicial statements of respondents is developed by Warner and De Fleur (1969: 153–69).

<sup>9</sup> In an earlier theoretical work that is still a path-breaking analysis, *Reason and*



### III. *The analysis of fascism and the problem of totalitarianism*

At this point, I need to say something about the thoroughly unsubstantiated assumption of many American social scientists that there was and is a necessary connection between authoritarianism and totalitarianism. This claim was based in the main on wartime or immediate post-war analyses by mainly British scholars, particularly Alan Bullock and Hugh Trevor-Roper, and deserves to be put in the same category as Karl Popper's near hysterical *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1945). There was an even greater irony in the fact that *The Authoritarian Personality* allowed itself to trade on the confusion between terms and concepts like anti-semitism, prejudice, authority, authoritarianism and totalitarianism when another critical theorist had explicitly refuted it. I am referring to the brilliant, one of a kind, analysis of Nazi totalitarianism provided by Franz Neumann in *Behemoth: the Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933–1944*. Here Neumann showed, among other things, how vastly dissimilar totalitarianism was to "traditional" dictatorships and tyrannies, while effectively underscoring the importance of reference points for distinguishing "good" from "bad" authoritarianism.

In addition, he showed how the one-party state elevated party over state, while contributing to the collapse of all intermediary, as well as traditional, forms of authority. This turned out to be no less true of Stalinist Russia than it was of Hitler's Third Reich. A recurrent theme in *Behemoth*, which Neumann contrasted quite deliberately to Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1968 [1651]), was what he called shapelessness, amorphousness, formlessness, alongside the tendency to rely on social and party, rather than state, enforcers of the reigning ideology, such as it was. In many respects, government had been supplanted by control through the mass media of communications, coupled with the terror induced in people by the sheer unpredictability of the regime. Neumann demonstrated that the essence of totalitarianism was a kind of total control which bore almost no relation to

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*Revolution. Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (1941a), Marcuse had made a similar point about falsely correlating Hegel's social and political theory with Naziism, as Popper would do four years later in *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1945). Marcuse pointed out in advance of this ridiculous claim on Popper's part that Hegel's works were virtually the first to be burned publicly after Hitler's ascent to power in 1933. In this sense, the Nazis clearly understood Hegel better than Popper.

the systematic use of government, even state, instruments. It relied instead on unpredictability, residential and workplace terrorism by "normal" individuals, and competition between quasi-police, military, and extermination units for power, status, and resources (Neumann, 1944; also Hilberg, 1961).<sup>10</sup>

In effect, Nazi totalitarianism, not unlike Stalinist totalitarianism, constituted in many respects an unpredictable, rarely managed, near anarchic form of society in which the people's worst fears are mobilized in order to terrorize them to irrational ends and purposes. Only in the occasionally self-contained decisions of the military leaders, and after the Wannsee Conference, when they knew the war was lost, in the terrifying efficiency of the "final solution," did instrumental reason carry the day, and even then it was clearly conditioned by other considerations.<sup>11</sup> Even German capitalists who once thought they could "use" Hitler to their own ends found themselves not only short of resources and working underground, but required increasingly to accept concentration camp and prison labour, even though there was plenty of German labour available (Speer, 1970; cf. Sereny, 1995). Cohen's characterization of this entire period as an "architecture of doom" in the motion picture documentary of that name is thoroughly compatible with Neumann's assessment in *Behemoth*. It underscores the fact that Naziism put the most modern military, industrial, and communications technology anywhere on earth in the service of ancient values and practices of war, not excluding barbaric rituals of immolation and annihilation on the battlefield no less than in the concentration camps.<sup>12</sup>

None of what has been said here should be allowed to dislodge the responsibility that German (and other) capitalists must bear for Hitler and the Third Reich, however. The issue here relates to the

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<sup>10</sup> Neumann's argument may help us make sense of Adorno's claim in "Society" (1969) that advanced industrial societies themselves were "totalitarian" in many significant respects, even if they were not in any traditional sense dictatorships. In particular, Adorno cited the role of socialization and the wide-ranging reliance upon mass media in these societies. Marcuse made the same point even earlier in the context of the claim that fascism was the highest stage of capitalism (Marcuse, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> See particularly "The Wannsee Conference," a film produced in West Germany in 1985, directed by Keinz Schirk, and dubbed with English subtitles in the United States in 1987.

<sup>12</sup> "The Architecture of Doom," a film produced in Sweden by POJ Filmproduktion AB Filminstitutet, Sandrew Film and Theater AB and Swedish Television, channel 1 Stockholm in 1991, directed by Peter Cohen.

Institute's focus on "instrumental rationality," alongside science and science-based technology, in its analysis and critique of all "advanced industrial societies" (Horkheimer, 1974, 1967; Adorno and Horkheimer, 1972; Marcuse, 1968 [1964], 1964, 1941b). Without in any way claiming that such a focus did not bear fruit or was without essential value, I think it is clear that once again the focus was misplaced, not only from the standpoint of reception but from an analytical standpoint as well. Thus there is a substantial difference between reliance upon instrumental, ends-means, rationality in the service of administering concentration camps and as a basis for organizing the war effort in a democracy which, if anything, had waited far too long to be provoked into total war.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the overly determined role assigned to science and science-based technology must be compared to the capitalist mode of production, which, amongst all combatants, turned out to be the real beneficiary of the greatest conflict in human history.<sup>14</sup>

The consequential shift from a Marxian focus on capitalism as the key analytic to science, technology, and instrumental rationality only appeared to be a better basis for acceptance of the Institute's ideas while in the United States. This only became fully apparent after the war when the emerging central role of the "military-industrial complex" (already noticed by President/General Eisenhower in his

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<sup>13</sup> Fascism and Naziism, according to both Marcuse and Adorno, effectively paved the way for capital in the sense that they prepared publics and society as a whole in *all* advanced industrial societies, democratic or otherwise, for totalitarianism. This was accomplished either directly through propaganda or indirectly through the allied response to it using media and reactive techniques of mobilization. In *Soviet Marxism* and *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse would point out how important it was that the Soviet Union provided the United States with the perfect justification for the continuation of these practices in the form of the "cold war" after 1945. Adorno's seemingly exaggerated attack on "Society" in the essay of that name, as well as in *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, can perhaps be better appreciated in the light of these observations.

<sup>14</sup> Capitals on both sides of the war effort continued to trade with one another directly, and thereafter through neutral countries, not only prior to the outbreak of hostilities (1933–39) but during World War II itself (1939–45). Switzerland and Sweden provide the most obvious examples of neutral countries that permitted such arrangements, but Portugal and Turkey (Istanbul) were also important. With respect to Sweden, the silent heroics of Eric Erickson, a Swedish oil expert and trader, originally from the United States, are significant. See particularly the American film "The Counterfeit Traitor," directed by George Seaton in 1962, starring William Holden as Erickson and Lilli Palmer as his German contact. It is considered to be a thoroughly accurate portrayal of the events, circumstances, and main characters.

final speech as outgoing president in January 1961) came to be seen as the key to containing and outlasting the Soviet Union, a claim that many Americans believe was vindicated by the events of 1990–91 (cf. Mills, 1956). Once again, it is to Marcuse that we must turn, because only in his texts do we see a sustained concern with the question of whether science, technology and instrumental rationality should be allowed to displace capitalism and the mode of production as the central analytic of the critical theory (Marcuse, 1968 [1964], 1964, 1941b). On balance, I believe that his critique of the former was based on the fact of its increasing control by the latter rather than on the view that there is something inherently oppressive about science, technology, and instrumental rationality apart from this subordination (Marcuse, 1967a, 1967b; see Chapter 3 below; Wilson, 1976). Indeed, Marcuse predicated his hopes for real liberation on our capacity to distend these activities and institutions from the monopolistic and hegemonic grip of capital precisely in order to put them in the service of real human needs (Marcuse, 1969, 1972).

#### IV. *The turn to “radical reformism” and “critical social science”*

I have implied that Habermas’ “turn” from the critical theory of the first generation toward “radical reformism” and a “critical social science” provided a “glide path” for what remained of the Institute’s analytic into post-structuralism/postmodernism and neo-conservatism, and this requires further discussion. In the first place, the conditions in which Habermas felt it necessary to make this break with the analytic of the first generation had far less to do with the United States than with West Germany and Europe. In effect, Habermas had come to his decision to break with Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse as a result of his experiencing first hand the consequences of the student protest movement in West Germany and Western Europe as a whole. He believed that a new “middle way” must be found between the (allegedly) revolutionary concerns of West German students and the conservatism of the state governments responsible for funding higher education. This middle way he termed “radical reformism,” and its academic arm “critical social science,” in order to distinguish his proposal clearly from both radicalism per se and the critical theory of the first generation (Habermas, 1971: 49).

While it is true that subsequent developments in his thought have emphasized “communicative competence” and an attempt to update Chomsky’s theories in the direction of a set of conditions for rational debate and discourse, this turn in 1969–70 constituted the basis for their eventual emergence (Held, 1980: 247–407). From a position virtually interchangeable in all major respects with Adorno’s in 1961, he had reacted to this singular event in the postwar history of West German higher education by arguing, in effect, that it justified not only a change in political strategy but in academic practice as well (Habermas, 1976; see Chapter 3 below; Wilson, 1976). The idea that one necessitated the other, while on the surface an indication of the heightened importance of Popper and Weber respectively, nevertheless showed how much he remained tied to a Marxian notion of the proper relationship between theory and practice. For one could reasonably argue that no such parallelism was required, or even a good idea, in the circumstances (see Chapter 3 below; Wilson, 1976). Thus, one could support radical reformism in politics and still remain committed to a Hegelian/Marxian analytic in the study and critique of advanced industrial societies. Indeed, this was precisely what Horkheimer, Adorno, and other critical theorists had attempted to do in the United States, with mixed results from the standpoint of their reception, but particularly their acceptance and integration into the intellectual mainstream.

The way that this turn in Habermas’ thinking, regardless of its reasons, played back on American social theorists, was of the greatest significance. It had the effect of resuscitating what now passed for the critical theory, regardless of its differences from the “negative dialectics” of Adorno, in the sense that it now seemed that both radical reformism, but especially a critical social science, constituted evidence of an earlier error on the part of the first generation (Forester, 1983, 1993). In effect, the latter two developments could be counted as progressive improvements over both Marxian politics and negative dialectics, the most contentious element of the critical theory of the first generation. But this failed to take account of the very difficulties that the first generation had drawn attention to in the United States of the 1940s, not only anti-intellectualism per se, but the bias against theoretical reflection when the subject was society, polity or economy rather than “nature” (Hofstadter, 1962; Adorno, 1968, 1976; Frankfurt Institute, 1972). The critical theory, in the unlikely guise of a Habermasian social science, jointly inspired by

Popper, Weber, and West German/European conditions, thus became respectable in America at a very high price indeed in the period from the early 1970s until its eclipse by both postmodernism and neo-conservatism ten to fifteen years later (Habermas, 1989).

In retrospect, one can define the contours of the legacy of the critical theory by crediting it in the most sincere way for its attempts to infuse American social and political thinking with the intellectual heritage of Europe, particularly Germany, at a time when these efforts went largely unappreciated or were even blocked. Even those who did acknowledge the value of and need for this unique contribution to thought in general and American thinking in particular could control neither attitudes among elite decision makers who had the fate of these refugees largely in their hands during World War II nor the course of history itself (Held, 1980: 398-400). Perhaps most importantly from the standpoint of the Institute's empirical studies in the 1940s, they could not control intellectual, cultural and public tastes and opinions either, and so succumbed to a mixed reception with little long term impact after the 1960s, and then only because of the American impact of Marcuse (as well as the revival of interest in his earlier work). There is a substantial difference between reception, initial acceptance, and long term impact through the integration of a person's or group's ideas into the mainstream of a country's intellectual culture (Barnett, 1953; Kadushin, 1973; Mills, 1956). Weber, after all, had argued that social theories could be expected to eventually come to have only historical interest in any society committed to "progress" because this was the fate of theories in the natural sciences themselves (Weber, 1958, 1946).

It is clear that in the case of the United States, critical theorists severely tested the absorptive capacities of even the most Europhilic or Euro-centred social intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s and, thanks to Marcuse, in the 1960s as well. If in the latter case we can say that Marcuse's passing in 1979 signals the end of the student radicalism of which he became unofficial guru after publication of *One-Dimensional Man*, the fate of Adorno and Horkheimer was quite different for the reasons indicated above. Time and circumstance were much crueller to them in the 1940s and early 1950s than they were to Marcuse in the 1960s. However, it must also be noted once again that not only were circumstances more propitious for Marcuse when he sought a university position in the early 1950s following wartime work with the OSS. No less significant was the fact that

Marcuse, alone of the three, committed himself to stay in America rather than return to West Germany and Europe, so events conspired to give him a far longer intellectual “lease on life” as a professor and unofficial guru (Goodwin, 1971). At the same time, Horkheimer and Adorno did revive the Frankfurt Institute on their return to West Germany in the 1950s. Perhaps they can even be said to have helped pave the way for the very student protests that simultaneously attacked, even denounced, important aspects of their theoretical position and led Habermas to his consequential turn away from the critical theory.<sup>15</sup>

Almost four decades ago Jurgen Habermas, in words I have almost committed to memory, challenged Talcott Parsons’ interpretation of Weber’s discussion of “value-freedom and objectivity” by remarking that he envied his American colleagues their political traditions “which permit such a generous and (in the best sense of the word) liberal interpretation of Max Weber.” He went on to assert, in a similar vein, that while such postures were attractive to Germans still in search of “alibis,” Weber’s political sociology “has had a different history here.” Habermas concluded by claiming that Weber’s “sketch of Caesar-like leader-democracy on the contemporary basis of a national-state imperialism” showed the true character of value freedom and objectivity as a doctrine whose effect was to strengthen ideology, rather than break its spell (Habermas, in Stammer, 1971: 66). We would make a similar claim regarding the commitment of Habermas and his compeers to radical reformism and to the development of a critical social science as a *theoretical* task. We might perhaps also turn his critique of Weber against him in order to speak to the issue of the autonomy of critical theory as a real need in a North American society threatened with the annihilation of *both* theory and practice in the name of disciplined observation and “social technology.” Failing the continued vitality of thought here in North America, we may someday also be in need of alibis ourselves. The

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<sup>15</sup> Frankfurt Institute, *Aspects of Sociology* (1972), was a text that originated as a series of broadcasts over Hessian Radio in French during 1953–54, as part of the Universite Radiophonique Internationale, Radiodiffusion Francaise. Horkheimer had already been “enticed” back to (West) Germany and Frankfurt University on July 13, 1949, and with him Adorno and the Institute, with its endowment and library. This had clearly been the conscious purpose of both the city of Frankfurt and University officials, who were anxious to “regain some of the city’s pre-Nazi intellectual eminence” (see Jay, 1973: 281–99).

necessarily ongoing nature of this controversy addresses the relevance to practice not only of those endeavours that make relevance their stated objective, but also those that abjure such efforts in the name of Reason and speak to the priority of reflection in the process.

#### V. *Totalitarian or bureaucratic capitalism?*

In conclusion I would like to return briefly to Neumann's brilliant analysis of totalitarianism, but also look at Marcuse's even less well understood claim that fascism is the highest form of capitalism (Neumann, 1944; Marcuse, 1998, 1968 [1934], 1941b). This latter claim was corroborated at the time—the late 1930s—by someone as different from Marcuse as James Burnham in *The Managerial Revolution* (1960 [1940]), published just prior to Burnham's conversion from Trotskyism to American conservatism. It is necessary to note that Marcuse did not intend that his claim should be confined to the period when it was first written. Indeed, when combined with Neumann's observations about Nazi totalitarianism, it provides us with a singular insight into the present process of capitalist controlled "globalization." Neumann had argued that totalitarianism, in contrast to traditional dictatorships, was shapeless, formless, amorphous, and committed to using established instruments of the state apparatus as little as possible in favour of social and peer terrorism and mass media for purposes of control. In fact, the only traditional state instruments that did remain, and even grew, before and during the war, were those that served capital and its interests (Speer, 1970).<sup>16</sup>

This sounds very much like the processes of downsizing, privatizing, and hollowing out and contracting out public and social bureaucracies and the services they provide that contemporary neo-conservatism is presently encouraging through its influence over democratically elected governments in order to control the process of

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<sup>16</sup> Friedrich Pollock, the most underrated thinker of the Frankfurt Institute, carried out at least four studies worthy of note regarding this point: "Die gegenwärtige Lage des Kapitalismus und die Aussichten einer planwirtschaftlichen Neuordnung [The Present Situation of Capitalism and the Prospects for a Newly Structured Planned Economy]" (1933); "Is National Socialism a New Order?" (1941); "State Capitalism: its Possibilities and Limitations" (1941); *The Economic and Social Consequences of Automation* (1957).



globalization (Teeple, 1995; Deacon, 1998; Midgley, 1997; Esping-Andersen, 1996; Shields and Evans, 1998). National state governments are indeed becoming increasingly less cohesive structures under the regimen of the incessant co-optation of public and social values and resources that capital claims it needs in order to make the transition to this allegedly higher level of integration. As a “generic” notion, then, fascism, so understood, may indeed be the highest stage of capitalism, one substantially beyond imperialism, however conceived. We may be on the verge of a capitalistically engineered global fascism, one where the representative function of non-elected institutions like public and social bureaucracy in particular is increasingly in eclipse, and not by accident or inadvertence either (Wilson, 2001, 2002).

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## CHAPTER THREE

### CRITICAL THEORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE: EPISODES IN A CHANGING PROBLEMATIC FROM ADORNO TO HABERMAS

The problem of the relation between knowledge and practice had always been a central concern of those individuals engaged since the 1920s in formulating the "critical theory of society." To some extent the result of a rethinking of Marxism as it pertained to the theory and practice of revolution in the advanced societies, particularly Germany, the critical theory of society has sought to account for these societies through the development of a critical posture which first and foremost addresses itself to Marx and Engels, but in their name. To continue to be true to Marxian concerns and commitments in the face of significantly altered social and economic conditions, not excluding the development of capitalism as a global system, it would be necessary to confront the "scientism" and "latent positivism" of Marx himself, as well as his linear and mechanistic conception of social change. Equally necessary would be the effort to reformulate the static relation between the substructural "mode of production" and the political-cultural superstructure which Marx inherited from political economy virtually intact (Wellmer, 1971).

The social sciences as interventionist, or potentially interventionist, disciplines committed to "empirical social research" figure prominently in this latter reformulation. These disciplines, after all, are not simply the neutral agents or instruments that carry out research on the relations between alleged sub- and super-structural elements at a distance from these elements. This very reformulation is in part necessitated by the degree to which the social, behavioural, and administrative/managerial "sciences" have become a *force of production* which no longer constitute a mere reflection of productive forces that determine them. The dialectical character of Society as simultaneously formed, formative, and forming can nowhere be seen in bolder relief than in the present situation of interpenetration and interdependence between corporations, bureaucracies, governments and these disciplines. Indeed, one could make a good case for the

claim that the imperatives of these disciplines are more and more a necessary condition for successful "practice" among decision-makers and policy-makers in all the advanced societies today (Wilson, 1977; Dretzel, 1972; Gorz, 1972; see Part II below).

Martin Jay's summary of the early years of the "Frankfurt School" between the time of its founding in early 1923 and the accession of Max Horkheimer to its leadership suggests how important an analysis of social conditions and possibilities in a Germany without the hope of a Marxian revolution was for them. The rethinking of Marxism referred to took its point of departure in the difference between Marxism as an interventionist strategy given certain "objective conditions" and Marxism as an *intellectually* revolutionary mode of analysis and theory applying the Hegelian dialectic directly to society and economy rather than straining it through "nature." Though Marx has usually been credited with being the first to formulate an approach to *society* which sees it as a dialectical whole, his theory of social change and his conception of relations between sub- and superstructural elements have always seemed to contradict these dialectical concerns for critical theorists. His acquiescence in that vision of the world as man and nature so central to modern natural science was understood early on to be the basis of Marx's alleged "scientism" for members of the Frankfurt School (Jay, 1974; 1973; Wellmer, 1971; O'Neill, 1981).

Any critique of "scientism" so defined which takes its point of departure in Marx *because* he was insufficiently reflexive toward science as an historical and cultural enterprise with consequential (rather than "neutral") views of the world can readily serve the dual role of a critique of the social sciences for critical theorists. This is due to their generic critique of "positivism" as a theory of knowledge premised on the concreteness of facts and the abstractness of theories whose value is to be discovered in how well they "correspond" to them. This is in clear contrast to the radically different attack on the "utopian" thinking of holists and historicists like Hegel and Marx promoted by Karl Popper and Frederick Hayek after 1940. Here there is an attempt to establish a demarcation between the natural and the social sciences premised not on their methods, which are alleged to be similar, but rather on natural science's claim to a legitimate monopoly in the right to seek after truth in its researches, and the consequent consignment of the social sciences as methodical and disciplined versions of commonsense practices to "success" criteria

realisable (or approximatable) through “piecemeal social engineering” (Popper, 1957; 1945; cf. Marx, 1971).

I shall be returning to the Popper/Hayek conception of “scientism” further on in the context of the positivist dispute which emerged from the German Sociological Meetings of 1961 (Adorno, *et al.*, 1976). For now suffice it to say that both consider the understanding of “positivism” amongst critical theorists to be irresponsibly conflated, in a way which pays insufficient attention to the significant differences which set them apart from logical positivists interpreting Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, as well as from supporters of the “unified science” movement. Popper in particular has always promoted a view of science as a responsible enterprise which polices itself through the operation of what he calls “critical rationalism” (cf. Kuhn 1970 [1969/62]; Ziman, 1968; Wilson, 1977: 75–100). This is in clear contrast to the social sciences, whose piecemeal approach must favour success through differentiation rather than truth through integration. Theory must serve applications in this latter case, since the social sciences ideally ought to grow like “tools and other instruments.” What Popper’s assessment portends for theory in the social sciences is precisely what shows critical theorists how sound their “broad” understanding of positivism really is (Popper, 1972: 262; 1957; cf. Wilson, 1992; 1989).

In effect, by *beginning* with the very false concreteness which Popper claims to have overcome in his attack on inductivism, empiricism, and the so-called “commonsense theory of knowledge,” he reveals his positivist auspices in the effort to demarcate the natural from the social sciences. Though supportive of a version of Cartesian rationalism and opposed to Baconian inductivism, Popper (like Marx before him according to critical theorists) acts as if the very scientific auspices that inform his view of the world constitute the boundary of debate and discussion. By taking the concrete particular and the abstract whole as given, he commits the same error as Max Weber did when he sought to give theory a more central role through his notion of the “ideal type” (cf. Popper, 1957: 145–46; see Chapter 1 above). The difficulty in *both* cases is to be discovered in the way theories in the social sciences are to be valued and rank-ordered. Rationalism and a commitment to the role of theory and an “individualising” method can never overcome what is necessarily presupposed in the more significant commitment to a “generalising” (thus an appropriative and accumulative) objective.

Popper's view of the social sciences, by establishing science as a distant model to be respected but not emulated, is no less committed to the concrete particular and the abstract whole than is inductivism. Similarly, the "rational theorist" as "disinterested observer" who plays such a central role in the work of both Weber and Popper does not overcome dependence on the correspondence theory of knowledge from natural science by showing the absurdity of empiricism's *tabula rasa*. Indeed, Popper's attack on inductivism and raw empiricism may best be understood in structural and developmental ways, as Wellmer has suggested. Thus, the philosophy of science (or rather philosophies sympathetic to science) favoured an epistemology premised upon empiricism and induction from the specific to the general in the early days of capitalism in order to promote "openness" in the face of residual mercantile and feudal loyalties. By contrast, today the ascendancy of advanced societies characterised by a managerial, bureaucratic, technological, and corporate capitalism calls for a philosophy of science which takes account in *its* structure of the structured character of a society in effective control of its ideologies (Wellmer, 1971: 18–25). Popper wants to show the naivete of induction and still retain a correspondence theory of knowledge. In fact, he is forced to show the absurdity of induction as an *individualised* practice by effectively endorsing *collective inductivism* in science as the essence of critical rationalism, with its commitment to falsification over verification in operation (Wilson, 1977: 77–85). In the uneasy equipoise between these postures Popper's self-characterisation as a "common-sense realist" underscores his *manifest* positivism rather than hiding it (Popper, 1972: 1–105). This chapter is in part an attempt to show how themes which became explicit for the critical theory in its confrontation with Popper and his colleagues expressed core tensions both explicit in its very beginnings and manifested in the succeeding generation.

### I. *The "Frankfurt School": traditional vs. critical theory in the 1920s and 1930s*

Since 1937, Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse had contrasted what Horkheimer called "traditional" theory to the critical theory by pointing to the dependence of traditional theory on methods and techniques for appropriating and accumulating "knowledge" found



in positivism as they defined and understood it. In clear contrast to Popper, they stressed the more basic *similarities* on matters pertaining to reality, knowledge, and the role of facts, methods, and theories which served to render virtually insignificant the alleged differences between a truth and a success orientation for the natural and social sciences respectively. It was precisely Popper's commitment to a correspondence conception of knowledge *in all cases* which later would be shown to have undercut the meaningfulness of any claims to distinctiveness based on the difference between truth through integration and success through differentiation and specialisation (Horkheimer, 1972 [1937]; 1993 [1931]; Marcuse, 1968 [1937]; Wellmer, 1971: 18–21; Wilson, 1977: 16–21, 35–38, 75–121, 234–238).

In the case of the social sciences, the piecemeal method, which Popper after 1957 claimed was the common characteristic of all responsible scholarly and scientific endeavours, was left no choice but to serve a conception of "society" which was by the standards of critical theory clearly non-critical. Commitment to a conception of knowledge from the natural sciences comprehended the responsible (rational) theorist as a neutral "observer with a problem," thereby precluding the sort of reflexivity which should have emerged out of his concurrent status as member, observer, and theorist of "society." Since critical reflexivity as such rarely (if ever) occurs in the operation of critical rationalism in the natural sciences, Popper's strictures on the "utopianism" of holists and historicists in the social sciences meant that such intellectual activity was uniformly irresponsible, a throwback to "pre-rational" (because pre-scientific) times. This left only traditional theory for disciplines required to treat society as if it were "nature," where nature was understood to *exclude* men, rather than as simultaneously a concept outside itself and a dialectical reality that includes the concept and its efforts to capture its object (Adorno, 1969: 144–153; Bauman, 1976; Wilson, 1978).

The gradual shift away from the critique of capitalism and economic organisation toward the critique of instrumental reason and "society" as a false totality was virtually given in the critical theory's analysis of traditional theory. Traditional theory was simply the necessary "other side" of the methodical empiricism carried out by Popper's (and Weber's) responsible rational theorist in the social sciences. Disciplined observation in the social sciences effectively short-circuited reflexivity because its purpose, *like both science and capitalism*, was to serve appropriative and accumulative interests in knowledge

understood as a grasping rather than a glimpsing of reality. The critical theory of society saw the relation of the social sciences to instrumental means/end rationality in a decidedly dialectical way. Not only was means/end rationality the *operative* concept of reason to be found in the proper working of the social sciences, conducted as success-oriented "technological" disciplines with an interventionist bias and the requirement of "results." This very interventionist bias and results orientation also revealed the instrumental relation of *the social sciences themselves* as disciplines and knowledge-accumulating (or producing) activities functioning as agents or "means" to ends defined outside them by authorities in economic, political, and bureaucratic organisations (Horkheimer, 1974a; 1974b).

What the social sciences, following the lead of natural science, do to "theory" is thus done to the social sciences themselves. Theory becomes the instrumental handmaiden obliged to serve data accumulation and intervention by both agreeing to and assisting in its structural decomposition into testable, falsifiable hypotheses. Similarly, the social sciences that demand such an activity of theory limit themselves to a success orientation which can only be realised if they accede to external norms and standards of instrumental rationality, norms which define "progress" in terms of progressive differentiation and specialisation. This differentiation, however, does not simply take the form of a parallel development between these disciplines and the social division of labour which includes them. As already noted, these disciplines become a force of production because their norms and canons are effectively "generalised" to encompass commonsense practices formerly subject to custom, convention, and tradition. At the same time, the social sciences are subjugated to society *because* their mission is to realise society as an historically and culturally specific collective, which is thereafter fetishised as the only alternative to social disorder and disorganisation (see Chapter 9 below).

It is difficult to overemphasise the significance for the critical theory of society of its refusal to accept social science's view of society as its object and rationality as its problematic, rather than the reverse. Fetishising society as the only available collective, rather than as an historically and culturally specific form of life, acquiesces in the denigration of reason into instrumental means/end rationality. At the same time, it sustains the illusion of the neutral observer "outside" the social structure when the commitment to reflexivity and a dialectical and contradictory whole more closely approximates the real "outside." Recognition of reality as a concrete rather than an abstract

totality, which simultaneously includes and excludes the individual, provides a vantage point for subjecting both society and instrumental reason, and thus the social sciences themselves, to critique. By refusing to be reformulated as “rationality,” reason is able to show how the social sciences, along with other activities and institutions, effectively fetishise society today no less than political economy fetishised the wage form over a century ago (Kosik, 1969; 1976; Adorno, 1969).

Thus the critical theory of society constitutes an Hegelian Marxism of sorts, but it remains fundamentally Marxian with the Hegelian modifications already indicated because its analytic is materialist rather than idealist. To be sure, its commitment to materialism is Marxian rather than “empiricist,” but its parallel commitment to the priority of the whole, and to society as a false whole, renders it a *theoretical* materialism, given its refusal to treat theory as a mere agent and reason as an instrument for realising society’s aims and interests (Adorno, 1973). Marcuse echoed the entire first generation of critical theorists when he reminded readers of “Philosophy and Critical Theory” that the immediate political and social-economic conditions which had led to the origins of the Frankfurt School in the 1920s in turn reflected prior intellectual and philosophical concerns which were also unique to Germany. Indeed, Marcuse stressed the *real* origins of the critical theory with *Marx* almost a century earlier in the 1830s and 1840s, at a time when philosophy “was the most advanced form of consciousness,” while “real conditions in Germany were backward.” Although critics of the nineteenth century at first necessarily attacked this consciousness rather than the “objective conditions” which were far behind those in more industrially advanced countries, their twentieth-century successors in Germany were in no such position. Germany was “advanced” both industrially and philosophically in the 1920s, which is to say that there was both substantial social contradiction *and* an overpowering awareness of such contradiction (Marcuse, 1968 [1937]).

## II. *The Princeton Radio Project: Adorno vs. Lazarsfeld in the 1940s and 1950s*

The foregoing provides an outline of the issues surrounding the establishment of the critical theory of society, and its clear differences with “traditional theory” and “positivism” in all its variants. Not

being a specific discipline, it could not expect to acquire the status given to established bodies of knowledge. Being a *critical* theory, it could never hope for the support of established political and economic authority, nor did it want it. This latter point became even more significant than it might otherwise have been when the Depression and Naziism promised a titanic cataclysm with all the associated dislocation and chaos that would come to pass. The events which ensued virtually guaranteed, among other things, that the United States would emerge from World War II as the greatest power, and that those individual emigres committed to returning to that part of Europe not under Soviet administration would be sorely tested in their desire. In what follows, I return to the "scientific experiences" of Theodor Adorno discussed in the previous chapter in order to understand the importance of America for the development of changed attitudes toward empirical social research among critical theorists (Adorno, 1968).

As a prefatory remark, let it not be forgotten that members of the Frankfurt School and their supporters constituted a "special case" on the matter of emigration. Though Marxian by theoretical inclination, their clear commitment to critique of the existing order as a false whole precluded the choice of emigration to the Soviet Union. Apart from the "objective conditions" of Soviet development in the 1930s and 1940s, both industrial and philosophical, relative to the sort of critique which the Frankfurt School had already mobilized against "industrial societies," was the reality of totalitarian tyranny on a scale *approached* only by Hitler. Indeed, the two reasons could be seen to go together inasmuch as the combination of an essentially feudal Soviet society with an admittedly *industrial* superstructure could have been achieved only through a prior commitment to *both* autocracy and forced industrialisation on the grandest possible scale.

While one can readily speak of Adorno's "scientific experiences" as ones which would have been (and occasionally were) "typical" of those of other members of the Frankfurt School in American exile, even the unique features of this experience are significant and deserve comment. This is because, although Adorno was the most aesthetic and least "scientific" of critical theorists, at least according to Jay, certain aspects of his intellectual background and training, particularly in Vienna, made him both more "open" to empirical social research, and more capable than his colleagues and associates of integrating such research into his already established views on the

role of the social sciences in advanced industrial societies. A student of Alban Berg and Arnold Schoenberg during the 1920s, Adorno came into contact with intellectual and artistic currents which were already influencing the entire Western world, or would shortly do so. The example of Karl Kraus comes immediately to mind: his pervasive influence as editor of *Die Fackel* between 1898 and 1936, not only on Schoenberg but on the architect Adolph Loos and on Ludwig Wittgenstein, is evident throughout Adorno's scholarly work (Jay, 1973: 21–24; Field, 1967; Janik and Toulmin, 1973). An example that sheds light on the significance of Adorno's Viennese experience for his subsequent attitude to empirical social research, in particular his critique of "false function," is discussed in the following chapter. Thus, Adorno came to support the necessity of critical theory by showing that only through a reflexivity predicated on the concrete and dialectical whole can it unmask the falseness of "functions" treated as "objective" by social scientists confined to *intellectual* incrementalism, "success" criteria favouring differentiation and specialisation, and traditional theory.

Adorno's American experiences were a direct result of his forced emigration from Europe. On his arrival in the United States he was virtually required to accept academic posts connected with ongoing social science research of an "empirical" kind, in order to support his continued association with Horkheimer and Pollock at the Institute of Social Research connected with Columbia University. In what follows I focus on Adorno's participation in the music division of the Princeton Radio Project between his arrival in 1938 and his departure for California with Horkheimer in 1941. This is not intended to slight the role of the Institute's studies of prejudice and anti-Semitism in labour unions and elsewhere, or the better known collaborative project which led to the publication of *The Authoritarian Personality* under the joint authorship of Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel Levinson, and Nevitt Sanford (1950). In the previous chapter I discussed the importance of this research in contributing to the difficult reception of critical theory in America, while Jay has summarised the combination of difficulties connected with "organisation," "division of labour," the obsolescence of "data," and, in the case of the latter effort, the emphasis on psychological rather than sociological factors which "had the effect of taking the irrationality out of the social order and imputing it into the respondent" (Jay, 1973: 227–229).

The significance of Adorno's experience is only underscored by the fact of his association with the sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld, yet another emigre, but from Vienna and trained in empirical research methods by Karl Buhler, among others. Both Adorno and Lazarsfeld have summarised their experiences as a social theorist and sociologist respectively in a volume of essays titled *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930–1960*, edited by Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn (1968; now also in Adorno, 1998; cf. Jay, 1973: 188–193). Lazarsfeld relates how, though aware of Adorno's position in "German Sociology" as a supporter of the critical theory against its "traditional" opponent, he was nevertheless anxious to recruit him into the music division of the Radio Research programme because of his status as a sociologist of music. "I considered it a challenge to see whether I could induce Adorno to try to link his ideas with empirical research." To this end, Lazarsfeld sought to bring him together with a musician named Wiebe, whose Ph.D. in psychology would hopefully constitute one side of a possible "convergence of European theory and American empiricism" (Lazarsfeld, 1968: 322–23). The plan largely failed, according to Lazarsfeld, because Adorno would not "reduce" his theoretical understandings of the data he was obliged to gather and "interpret" to testable, falsifiable hypotheses. What seemed more to the point was the decidedly Teutonic character of the theoretical postures that Adorno found far more difficult to jettison than Lazarsfeld, the former student of Karl Buhler. Though Viennese by birth and upbringing, Lazarsfeld's exposure to and far greater sympathy for "social technology" made it much easier for him to move into empirical research upon his arrival in the United States (*ibid.*: 274–285).

While Adorno was ready and willing to admit the virtual "sea change" which significantly altered aspects of his scientific, intellectual, and cultural life following emigration to America, his essay shows how his increased capacity for "adjustment" in intellectual matters only served to underscore his commitment to reflection and the theoretical whole in the long run (Adorno, 1968: 338–39, 368–70). After discussing the speculative character of his training up until his emigration in 1937, in particular his disdain for the effort to "ascertain, sift, and classify facts and make them available as information rather than *interpreting* phenomena," he turned directly to the problems which arose when he was obliged to turn theory into hypotheses in the interests of methodical empiricism. He had always in the past abjured "a type of sociology, for which such a mode of thought

could at best supply hypotheses but never knowledge,” claiming that it “was utterly alien to me.” As it turned out, Adorno’s gratitude manifested itself in a determination to maintain his own individuality while at the same time carrying out work on the radio project because Horkheimer “would not have made the proposal unless he was persuaded that I, a philosopher by calling, could handle the job” (ibid.: 340). This squares with Lazarsfeld’s claim that his assistance was motivated by a desire to repay Horkheimer, who was now anxious to have Adorno join the Frankfurt School in exile at Columbia University (Lazarsfeld, 1968: 300–01, 322–23; Jay, 1973: 219–24).

Adorno makes it clear that he could never come to see the United States society “piecemeal.” For him empirical research methods and techniques exhibited just how far “rationalisation” and “standardisation” had gone: both mass communications and sociology in America were no longer free of it (cf. Merton, 1968 [1949]). In addition, of course, was his already-noted resistance to what this methodical empiricism implied for theory in the social and cultural realm. In order to “survive,” theory would be obliged ruthlessly to criticize its dialectical pretensions and tendencies to utopian approaches of the holistic and historicist variety. Only Adorno’s “split appointment” with Horkheimer’s Institute alongside the Radio Research Project allowed him to maintain the sort of distance which guaranteed him some protection from being “subjected to the unmitigated competitive struggle and the presence of externally imposed demands” on his time and energy (Adorno, 1968: 341).

The following excerpt, while substantial, catches the essence of what I meant earlier when I said that ultimately Adorno’s American experience served to *reaffirm* his original theoretical commitment by re-establishing it on firmer ground.

Naturally there appeared to be little room for critical social research in the framework of the Princeton Project. Its charter, which came from the Rockefeller Foundation, expressly stipulated that the investigations must be performed *within the limits of the commercial radio system prevailing in the United States*. It was thereby implied that the system itself, its cultural and sociological consequences and its social and economic presuppositions, were not to be analyzed. I cannot say that I strictly obeyed the charter. This was not in the least motivated by the desire to criticise for the sake of criticism, which would have been unbecoming in a person whose first task consisted in familiarising himself with the cultural climate in which everything that it was

incumbent upon him to study had its place. I was disturbed, rather, by a basic methodological problem—understanding the word ‘method’ more in its European sense of epistemology than in its American sense—in which methodology virtually signifies practical techniques for research. I was perfectly willing to go to the famous ‘other side of the fence,’ and still recall how pleased I was and how much I learned when I personally, for my own orientation, conducted a series of certainly very random and unsystematic interviews. On the other hand, it appeared to me, and I am still persuaded today, that in the cultural sphere what is regarded by the psychology of perception as a mere ‘stimulus’ is in fact, qualitatively determined, a matter of ‘objective spirit’ and knowable in its objectivity. I oppose stating and measuring effects without relating them to these ‘stimuli’, i.e., the objective content to which the consumers in the cultural industry, the radio listeners, react. What was axiomatic according to the prevalent rules of social research, namely, to proceed from the subjects’ reactions as if they were a primary and final source of sociological knowledge, seemed to me thoroughly superficial and misguided. Or, to put the matter more prudently: research had still to determine how far the subjective reactions of the persons studied are actually as spontaneous and direct as the subjects suppose; and how far not only the methods of dissemination and the power of suggestion of the apparatus, but also the objective implications of the material with which the listeners were confronted, are involved. And finally, it had still to be determined how far comprehensive social structures, and even society as a whole, came into play. But the mere fact that I proceeded from art as from something objective in itself, instead of from statistically measurable listener reactions, brought me into a certain conflict with prevailing habits of thought (ibid.: 343–44, my emphasis).

As it turns out, Adorno’s complaint, *even in the early phases of his work* in the music division of the Princeton Radio Project, was less with the presence of “practical techniques of research,” which, as Lazarsfeld would readily have admitted, had for some time been accepted in Europe. Rather, it was the way in which their undue influence had encouraged a view of the social structure itself as piecemeal, with the result that any theoretical effort taking its point of departure in the idea of the dialectical whole was suspect because it could not be verified or falsified. This in turn demanded the struc-



tural decomposition mentioned above, for only in this way could the resulting hypotheses be tested. Since the logic of testing presupposed the logic of measurement given the accepted notion of “evidence” in social research, the theorist was clearly an intellectually displaced person if he persisted with European postures, and especially Teutonic ones, which were increasingly being implicated in the emerging chaos preceding the upheaval of World War II.

Adorno had always resisted the “division of labour” in social research between the investigator and the respondent, not only because he opposed the constraints placed on his own theoretical role, but also because of the status of the “evidence” emerging from the responses themselves. If he was required to scale down his questions in order to put them into questionnaire form, his respondents were similarly being denied the opportunity to go beyond the available responses. Adorno referred at one point to “the utter obscurity of what we call the ‘musical experience’” when it can only be comprehended by effecting a division of labour between investigator and respondent which falsifies the whole by purging it of its contradictory character. In his dispute with Popper, Adorno would later draw attention to the way in which all forms of positivism unavoidably transpose the “observer with a problem” conception of scholarship given in Popper’s “unity of method” into the social and cultural realm, when it is precisely the scholar’s reflexive involvement *as a member* which is central to his concerns and interests (Frisby, 1976; 1972).

Adorno’s resistance is thus directed to a set of presuppositions about society itself which sunders its dialectical and contradictory wholeness and seeks to replicate its division of labour in social research operations themselves. Further, such operations proceed out of giving *empirical status* to conceptual distinctions like the man-nature, mind-body, subject-object, ends-means, and value-fact dichotomies. This cannot help but lead to false concreteness, since the objective is to carve up and put out the world spatially and temporally so that it can be quantified, measured, and claims about it tested “concretely” and in piecemeal fashion.<sup>1</sup> The status of theory in all this,

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<sup>1</sup> George Spencer Brown expresses this procedure for producing false concreteness concisely in *Laws of Form* (1969: 126): “To explain, literally to lay out on a flat plain where particulars can be readily seen. Thus to place or plan in flat land,

however much it may resist structural decomposition, is clear: it becomes an "abstract" accomplice on the order of the architechtonic structures of Parsons who, only by paying obeisance to the priorities of an "empirical culture" in the sociological field, was able to defend himself against the charge of holism and historicism (Parsons, 1951; Parsons, et al., 1951; Mills, 1959: chapters 2 and 3; and Chapter 6 below).

Adorno indicts the investigator/respondent split given in "empirical social research" in the final analysis because it eschews real complexity for convenience. "The exclusive claims of empirical methods find support insofar as subjective reactions are more easily determined and quantified than the structures of the total society, which resist direct empirical treatment." Adorno might have been more blunt and to the point by suggesting that it is only as a consequence of their determination to stand "outside" the very advanced industrial society that makes the social sciences possible, in the sense of legitimising them and giving them their mission as origin ("society") and goal (society), that these "disciplines" are able to avoid reflexivity. It allows them to treat their findings as objective and in no important way related to what makes the idea and achievement of such findings possible. Indeed, Adorno would later argue that the real "value" of empirical research methods for him lay in the meaning that their supporters give to what they produce, and the implications for the theorist of the corollary meaning that they give to the activity of social research as well as to its "products" (Adorno, 1968: 347; and Adorno, 1976: 68-86 discussed below).

Adorno sees the continuing danger of what he termed a "methodological circle" given in the false concreteness of methodical empiricism, assisted by traditional theory, in the social sciences. His view that such activities produce little if any consequential knowledge on their own is premised on the limit that their conception of reality necessarily *begins in* because they honour a scientific understanding of the world, however "distant" the model of this understanding is alleged to be. Radically different was the view of one of Adorno's

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sacrificing other dimensions for the sake of appearance. Thus to expound or put out at the cost of ignoring the reality or richness of what is so put out. Thus to take a view away from its prime reality or royalty, or to gain knowledge and lose the kingdom."

chief collaborators in the music division. After realising that some of Adorno's "idle speculations" occasionally bore fruit when put in the form of predictions about the future popularity of light jazz among certain segments of the population, this individual ascribed Adorno's success as a forecaster to "a sort of magical capacity for intuition." Adorno claims that he became a sort of medicine man for this individual, the latter convinced that no useful knowledge could possibly be obtained in the absence of "strictly observed and recorded facts" (Adorno, 1968: 347-49).

Adorno concluded by giving Americans their due, contrasting their behaviour to that of European immigrants (like Lazarsfeld perhaps) who, under the pressure of prejudice and rivalry, often showed the tendency to be more American than the Americans and were also quick to consider every newly arrived fellow European as a kind of threat to their own "adjustment" (ibid.: 350-51, 368-70). There is a clear commitment in Adorno's thinking to *both* theoretical reflexivity and common sense and against methodical empiricism, as the following statement shows:

In conclusion, perhaps I may add a word about the particular significance of scientific life in America for me personally and for my thinking. My speculations deviate considerably from 'common sense.' But Hegel, thereby displaying his superiority to all later forms of irrationalism and intuitionism, laid the greatest emphasis upon the principle that speculative thought is not absolutely distinct from the so-called healthy common sense but consists essentially in its critical self-reflection and self-scrutiny. Even a mind that rejects the idealism of the total Hegelian scheme must not stop short of this insight. Anybody who goes as far in criticising common sense as I have done must meet the simple requirement of having common sense. He must not claim to have transcended something whose discipline he was never able to satisfy. In America I truly experienced for the first time the importance of what is called empiricism, though I was guided from youth on by the conviction that fruitful theoretical knowledge is impossible except in the closest contact with its materials. Conversely, I had to recognize, with respect to the form of empiricism applied in scientific practice in America, that full scope of experience is fettered by empirical rules excluding anything that is inherent in the concept of direct life experience. By no means the worst characterisation of what I had in mind would be a kind of vindication of experience against its translation into empirical terms (ibid.: 370).

### III. *The "Positivist Dispute": Popper vs. Adorno in the 1960s*

The German Sociological Association meetings in 1961 proved to be the occasion for the first confrontation between Theodor Adorno and Karl Popper. Popper, already the author of *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (1958), published in Vienna in shortened form as *Logik der Forschung* in 1934–35, and *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, a two-volume study published on his arrival in the United Kingdom in 1945, had more recently published *The Poverty of Historicism* in 1957. Professor of Philosophy at the University of London and a leading figure in the philosophy of science, Popper had clearly emerged as a key individual to be contended with in matters relating to theory and method in the social sciences. This followed inescapably from his attitudes toward "responsibility" in social theorising, as well as the contrasting direction—toward differentiation rather than integration, success rather than truth—ordained for the social sciences from the "distant model" status ascribed to science. Science was to be respected ("unity of method") but on no counts emulated on the matter of its direction (integration) or objective (truth).

For the critical theory's part, Horkheimer, Pollock and Adorno had chosen to return to Germany following the occupation period which ended in 1949, while Marcuse, Lowenthal, Massing, Neumann and Kirchheimer, along with others, had decided to remain in the United States (Jay, 1973: 281–99). By 1961 the pre-war "Frankfurt School" had been effectively re-established and its influence on philosophy and social theory was clearly on the rise in Germany. In addition to their collaborative effort in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1972), completed in 1944 while on the West Coast but not published until three years later, Horkheimer and Adorno had developed further their critical views toward "society," and the central role of instrumental, means-end rationality in the denigration of reason therein. The later publication of *Aspects of Sociology* by the Frankfurt School (1972) as a whole served to put into print a series of talks on key concepts in sociology given over Hessian radio in 1949. Here Adorno's influence was strongest, with many of his earlier insights into "society," "individual," "sociology," and "group" crystalized for a more general audience. For his part Horkheimer had published both *The Eclipse of Reason* (1974a) and *The Critique of Instrumental Reason* (1974b), studies showing the threat to reason posed by the increasing omnipotence of society, with its instrumental and anti-reflexive bias.

By 1961 Popper's claims regarding the proper methods, direction, and objectives of sociology and the social sciences had clearly become a *cause celebre*. Having been asked to participate in deliberations of the German Sociological Association concerned with "the logic of the social sciences," Popper formulated his views in the form of twenty-seven theses (1976: 87–104). He expected a thesis-by-thesis response from Adorno, which, however, Adorno refused to give him. Adorno's decision to state an alternate position served to rekindle difficulties which had long been a source of mutual contempt between Popperians and critical theorists. Adorno's alternate statement addressed itself to "positivism" in the social sciences, thereby reviving Popper's efforts to dissociate himself from logical positivism and the unified science position. Clearly Adorno meant something more fundamental than contemporary English usage when he employed the term "positivism." Popper and Adorno allowed much of the ensuing discussion to get hung up on these different understandings, when both were probably aware of what the other meant when they used or alluded to the term (Adorno, 1976: 1–67; Popper, 1976: 298–300).

Apart from this, Popper was furious that Adorno had not responded in a thesis-by-thesis way. Choice of an alternate position provided an instance in microcosm of precisely what Adorno was attacking, namely, the view that such protocols were purely procedural. Adorno formulated an alternate position because he believed that the method of presentation had substantive, rather than simply procedural, implications. To accede to Popper's allegedly procedural requirements would constitute a *de facto* acquiescence in Popper's incremental logic. Popper expected Adorno to respond to *his* arguments, and generally to follow the organisation of *his* presentation, as if the latter were a "respondent" in a sociological survey of radio listening habits or, more pointedly, on trial. Adorno's approach to Popper, by stressing the need to reiterate the overall position of the critical theory toward "positivism" in the social sciences, sought to underscore the dialectical character of these disciplines in spite of their scientific pretensions. And let it be added, Adorno was being equally faithful to the intended format of the 1961 meetings, which called for a statement from Popper followed by a *reply* from Adorno (Popper, 1976: 288–91).

The confrontation between Popper and Adorno was to constitute only a part of what would later be published in Germany under the title *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology* in 1969 (Frisby, 1976; 1972). Popper relates in a concluding statement in this volume how,

in addition to adding the equally important dispute that began in 1961 between Jurgen Habermas and Hans Albert, as well as the introductory remarks and comments by Ralf Dahrendorf and Harald Pilot, Adorno, as chief editor, went beyond what Popper had understood was to be in the volume. As published, the book now included a long introduction by Adorno, which had the effect of burying Popper's twenty-seven theses on "the logic of the social sciences" deep inside. Popper was also upset about the title of the volume, and claimed that it simply illustrated yet again that his opponents had taken to name-calling because they were incapable of criticising his theses "rationally." He claimed that critical theorists had employed the epithet of positivism to refer to anyone who is against speculative thought, and that his demand that discussion satisfy canons of critical rationalism as he had always understood it in no way impugned speculation (Popper, 1976: 296–300). (When the dispute was revived in 1968, the German Sociological Association was temporarily dissolved).

There can be little doubt that Popper (and Albert) had a point when they drew attention to the difference between the debate, what was thereafter discussed, and what finally appeared in book form. The conflict regarding what conferences of this sort are supposed to accomplish, which suggests the "political" character of the dispute for *both* critical theorists and Popperians, cannot help but underscore critical theory's resistance to the claim that proceedings and conferences are "neutral" rather than being dialectically interconnected with society itself. To resist being put in the position of a respondent, as Adorno did, in favour of stating an alternate point of view, simply affirms the gulf separating critical from traditional theorists. Popper's claim that speculation is not forbidden by adherence to canons of critical rationalism in debate and discussion, while not totally unfounded, fails because it tends to see the entire event as a "failure" since nothing was "resolved." Critical theory is concerned to demonstrate that the fact that nothing was resolved is a moment of social reality rather than something "outside" it, and that this confirms the superiority of a dialectical understanding to one predicated on instrumentalism and incrementalism (and in Popper's failure even to reproduce the meaning of Adorno's remarks; see Popper, 1976: 297; cf. Marcuse, 1973; Addis, 1968: 317–35).

Adorno's "introduction" differs substantially from both the other added material on "sociology and empirical research," which is largely

a reformulation of earlier work already alluded to, and Adorno's "response" to Popper's presentation, which can also be found in earlier work, in particular *Aspects of Sociology*. It is a long statement which addresses not Popper but Wittgenstein and logical positivism, and one gets the distinct impression, especially in light of Albrecht Wellmer's subsequent publication of *Critical Theory of Society*, that Adorno is even more indebted to Wellmer's work than he admits.<sup>2</sup> More significantly, Adorno tends to collapse the early and later Wittgenstein, though he focusses more on the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* than on *Philosophical Investigations*. He also scrutinises the work of the Vienna circle around Moritz Schlick, as well as the later efforts of Carnap and Reichenbach. Once again, it is the broader understanding of positivism which is clearly in evidence throughout his exposition. After all, Ludwig Wittgenstein is even less amenable to treatment as a "positivist" under Popper's definition than Popper himself!

Adorno demonstrates a precise understanding of the implications of his broader understanding of positivism when he ascribes a higher order of consistency and a deeper level of understanding to Wittgenstein than to either the Vienna Circle or to Popper. Instead of addressing "scientism" in the social sciences, or the split between facts and values so central to the Vienna Circle's understanding of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Adorno turns to an analysis of the epistemological and metaphysical presuppositions of positivism, and correctly focusses on Wittgenstein as the most powerful exponent of this view, broadly defined (Wittgenstein, 1961 [1918]).<sup>3</sup> The idea that philosophy "disappears" as anything other than the *activity* of scrutinising the presuppositions of science and other disciplines (not just science!), or that philosophy should leave the world just as it finds it, underscores why Wittgenstein could say that "the world is all that is the case," then define it in a logical-atomistic fashion so that it consisted

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<sup>2</sup> Wellmer is thanked by Adorno (1976: 1), but the essay has not been identified by the editors of the English edition. It is probably similar to the concerns of the first essay in Wellmer's *Critical Theory of Society* (1971: 9–65), though Adorno's essay is somewhat more comprehensive.

<sup>3</sup> The tendency to lump Wittgenstein together with Moritz Schlick, the "Vienna Circle" as a whole, and "logical positivism" can be found in the work of Popper, Adorno and Wellmer, though Adorno in particular clearly realised Wittgenstein's superiority to "interpretations" of his work. Much of this difficulty has its source in Russell's 1922 preface to the original English edition, which Wittgenstein almost totally repudiated.

solely of "objects" and "states of affairs" (Wittgenstein, 1961: 1–2.201). Adorno seems to appreciate the way Wittgenstein, almost alone, showed the philosophical implications of abjuring reflexivity as Adorno understands it, though he appears ignorant of the real reasons why Wittgenstein wrote the *Tractatus*, and why he thereafter refused to be associated either with Bertrand Russell's understanding as English translator, or with the subsequent claims of the Vienna Circle allegedly derived from it.<sup>4</sup>

At this point, I hope the reader will indulge the writer in what only appears to be a "diversion." Adorno implies a comparison between Wittgenstein and Max Weber throughout this particular essay which I should like to draw out a bit in what follows, for it is Max Weber whom I believe constitutes a point of departure for both Popperians and critical theorists (Wilson, 1976). Without in any way attempting to summarize an essay, indeed a debate, which must be read as it stands, it seems to me that there are common features to be found in the work of Weber and the young Wittgenstein that are significant for the critical theory of society, in particular its attitude toward traditional theory and empirical method. Both men are concerned to criticize, or at least to address, the limits of a particular mode of knowledge and knowing from *inside* their respective "iron cages," and both, largely as a consequence of this essentially idealist approach, were misinterpreted and misconstrued on important matters like the role of science, the function of theories and models, and the relation between facts and values. While both were speaking to the priority of values over facts and life over science,

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<sup>4</sup> An excerpt from a letter from Wittgenstein to Ludwig Ficker is perhaps most instructive in this regard.

The book's point is an ethical one. I once meant to include in the preface a sentence which is not in fact there now but which I will write out for you here, because it will perhaps be a key to the work for you. What I meant to write, then, was this: My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have *not* written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one. My book draws limits to the sphere of the ethical from the outside as it were, and I am convinced that this is the *ONLY rigorous* way of drawing those limits. In short, I believe that where many others today are just *gassing*, I have managed in my book to put everything firmly into place by being silent about it. And for that reason, unless I am very much mistaken, the book will say a great deal that you yourself want to say. Only perhaps you won't see that it is said in the book. For now, I would recommend you to read the *preface* and the *conclusion*, because they contain the most direct expression of the point of the book (Wittgenstein, in Engelmann, 1967: 143–144).



the works of both were employed in such a way that they appeared to be advocates of science and “empiricism” respectively. Think, for example, of the different journeys taken by Weber’s ideal type, his conception of value-freedom in relation to value-relevance, his theory of bureaucratic authority, and the “Protestant ethic,” since his death in 1920. And what are we to make of a misunderstanding so overwhelming in its consequences that its originators—Russell and the Vienna Circle—could construe the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* as solely or mainly a treatise in logic and language? (cf. Runciman, 1972: 20–22, 27–45, 80, 91–95, 98–101).

Critical theorists could see in this misuse and misinterpretation the natural, normal outcome of a failure of nerve. Refusal to break with the language of neo-Kantian idealism, whether indebted to Schopenhauer (Wittgenstein), or to a reconciliation of the *Methodenstreit* fought out between Menger and Schmoller (Weber), could only serve to reaffirm the idea of an encircled subject whose “thoughts are free” (Marcuse, 1968 [1936]; Janik, 1966: 76–95; Janik and Toulmin, 1973; Cahnman, 1964). Adorno was concerned to show how a broad understanding of positivism, one more “concrete” for him, demonstrated the interdependence between positivism and idealism, “research” and metaphysics, in advanced industrial societies. Refusal to turn away from the false concreteness of facts and objects and the false abstractness of “theories” obliged to justify their presence through the act of structural decomposition under correspondence requirements kept both Weber and Wittgenstein encased in their respective iron cages. Adorno’s (and later, Marcuse’s) allusion to the consequences of suppressing dialectical thinking underscores the difficulties that are bound to arise when neither thinker will say “what cannot be said” (Wittgenstein, 1961: preface, 5.632, 6.4–7; Wilson, 1984; and Chapter 1 above). Neither will speak to values as anything other than the unsayable (not meaningless!) outpourings of a subject whose subjectivity, like his “values,” constitutes a *limit* to the world rather than constituting an indispensable moment of it.

Weber, for example, virtually demanded that the pivotal player in his typology of action—*wertrational* or principled action—be collapsed into either affective or goal-rational types, given the fact that “substantive” rationality was itself only a “formal” concept within the sociological armoury rather than the name given to thought not subject to canons of rectitude from science, or the philosophy of science (Weber, 1947: 184–86). Similarly, Wittgenstein, by constricting

his view of what could be said to an essentially logical-atomist conception of "the world," consigned what could *not* be said, and therefore what was allegedly *more* important to him, to the status of the aesthetic, religious, and mystical no less than Weber consigned his subject to a notion of principled action as "values." Effectively trapped inside dichotomies which proceed (quite unmistakably for Horkheimer) from the "original sin" of the man-nature, mind-body distinctions, now empiricized and bequeathed to us by modern science and rationalist philosophy, both Weber and Wittgenstein have no option but to provide the philosophical ballast for "positivism" (Horkheimer, 1972 [1937]; Marcuse, 1968 [1964]). One could make a strong case for the claim that for both individuals, it is precisely this entrapment and encirclement which gives to their respective works their unique character as exercises which *begin* in limit by speaking authoritatively to this limit *from inside it*. Put more bluntly, and in a way which I think Adorno would accept, what makes "values" and "subjectivity" *valueless* (or less valuable) in a matter-of-fact "positivistic" culture is precisely that they are what they claim to be relative to their opposites. Dialectics cannot tolerate such self-imposed limits.

#### IV. *Radical reformism: Habermas vs. "scientism" in the 1960s*

Jurgen Habermas's contribution to the "positivist dispute" took the form of a critique of Popper which was addressed specifically to Ralf Dahrendorf's remarks on the original statement by Popper, and Adorno's "reply." Dahrendorf had expressed considerable disappointment at the way the debate had turned out, claiming that Adorno's failure to address himself specifically to Popper's twenty-seven theses had given the proceedings the appearance of "sweet agreement." Popper later admitted that he thought Dahrendorf was correct when he argued that Popper should have attacked the Frankfurt School vociferously rather than presenting his theses in point-by-point form. Dahrendorf wanted Popper to reassert the claims against essentialism and utopian approaches of the holist and historicist variety which he had earlier put forward in *The Open Society and Its Enemies* and *The Poverty of Historicism*. It was Habermas' characterization of him as a positivist which caused Popper to point out that *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* was "a realist and anti-positivist point of view" directed at the Vienna Circle and its "logical positivist" approach to scientific discovery and activity (Popper, 1976: 289-90).

Habermas's initial essay "The Analytical Theory of Science and Dialectics" provides the strongest possible support for Adorno's critique of "Society," science, and the social sciences. While recognizing Popper's "peculiar position" as a positivist in the broadest sense who yet subjects inductivism, empiricism, and logical positivism to the strongest criticism, Habermas addresses the more basic similarities already alluded to which make such "criticism" part of what could only be called a family squabble. Popper may disagree with logical positivism on the one side, and with inductivism and empiricism on the other, but their common assumptions about reality, knowledge, and the relation between facts and theories, that is, about the correspondence theory and the idea of the facts as concrete particulars and theories as "abstract" conceptualisations which attempt to capture them by way of structural decomposition, constitute agreements which are far more fundamental (Habermas, 1976: 131-162).

Habermas concentrated initially on the insufficiency of a scientific posture in the social sciences, stressing the need for dialectical understanding and for an appreciation of this whole as concrete rather than abstract. As for the role of theory under critical rationalism: "A factual agreement between the derived law-like hypotheses and empirical uniformities is, in principle, fortuitous and as such remains external to theory. Any reflection which is not satisfied with this state of affairs is inadmissible" (ibid.: 137). The obligation of theory, in short, is to its *object*, which is to say that the "method" it employs must "measure up" to this object, something which no positivistic understanding, with its accompanying presuppositions, can do. The only totality honoured by traditional theory is abstract rather than concrete, and "empirical method" is simply the "other side" of positivism's commitment to traditional theory. Analysis as such is always constrained by a world-view which abjures the dialectical momentousness of the whole, with the result that critical rationalism is only critical *within* science. Science is an historical and cultural *form* of practice rather than the basis for judging it, according to Habermas.

In the remainder of the essay Habermas shows what the postulate of value-freedom requires in the form of social research presuppositions, and also addresses the fallacy of Weber's attempt to preserve it through his assertion of the priority of value-relevance. Science cannot make sense of its own development or operative criteria by demanding that the social sciences adhere to a view of the world which takes its point of departure in the very conceptual

distinctions that science takes for granted by *empiricising* the man-nature, mind-body and derived dichotomies. In this sense the social sciences, or rather social theory, *must* possess a dialectical component: instead of being “inside” science as institution and world-view, social theory’s commitment to a dialectical whole puts it “outside” science. This is really what enraged Popper and Albert in the positivist dispute. Habermas alludes to the phenomenon of the “methodological circle” cited by Adorno as the unavoidable outcome of Popper’s attempt to defend science’s “distant model” status. The upshot of Habermas’ effort is to defend the autonomy of *both* social theory and social practice against “scientism” (ibid.: 149–62).

Habermas’s reply to Hans Albert’s response to his essay criticizing Popper, “A Postivistically Bisected Rationalism,” affirms a “trust in the power of self-reflection,” then goes on to state that dialectics is not put forward as a “new method”, as Albert seems to think. Though Popper breaks through the first level of reflection in his critique of the Vienna Circle, he fails to break through those with which he is in fundamental agreement. Thus his critique of empiricism as well as logical positivism is correct as far as it goes, yet implicit in its very correctness is the problem of consistency given in its adherence to a correspondence theory of truth. A defence of science predicated on its falsificationist bias as a *collective* institution and activity, as already noted, does not reach the constraints posed by the operation of critical rationalism as “a socially institutionalised regulatory system,” but rather goes on *inside* a scientific world-view (Habermas, 1976: 198–200, 210–15). Thereafter Habermas concentrates on specific complaints put forward by Albert concerning the alleged difference between methodological and empirical statements and the fact-value distinction, pointing out the insufficiency of the “rational theorist” as an individual whose “value-relevance” makes it possible for him to ignore, as do both Weber and Wittgenstein, so much of “the world” in his operative definition of it.

In his effort to reformulate social practice in the guise of the social sciences as social technologies, Popper ignores what he needs both to accomplish this effort and to clarify the implications of doing so—namely, a social theory committed to the dialectical whole. Positivism sunders reason by bisecting the rationality of the world from statements about it. The critical theory of society refuses to subordinate itself to the preordained limits and protocols which Popper and Albert say are absolutely necessary for “rational” discussion. They are but

one short step away from the more stringent view that ascribes to all statements which fail to meet formal-logical criteria the status of non-sense. The final court of appeal must address the issue of unintelligibility itself, where no rational understanding of theory and practice will allow either to be subject to the standards and criteria of a science so dependent on the ongoing dialectical relation between them (cf. Habermas, 1975).

Perhaps the most important upshot of this effort, as well as later work by Habermas, lay in his formulation of specific knowledge-constitutive interests of a practical, technical, and hermeneutic/critical kind. For its part, science, he argues, has an overarching *technical-cognitive* interest, which is to say that science and technology are *structurally* interrelated in the sense that the first as cause produces the second as effect. Though only fully developed in work after 1964, the germ of one of Habermas's most significant arguments is to be discovered in this notion of an *inherent* technical interest on the part of science. Its importance lies in the fact of its resemblance to Popper's arguments against essentialism and utopian postures of the holist or historicist type. Though Habermas brackets it as one particular kind of interest suspended between theory and practice, he differs from Popper in the main only in the fact that he applies this argument from inherency to science itself. Only after 1968, and in particular through his critique of Marcuse, will he extend it to holism and historicism as well (see Wilson, 1992; 1989).<sup>5</sup>

At issue in the case of Habermas' modification of Marcuse's critique of Weberian rationalization is whether there are sufficient grounds for delineating a *qualitatively* distinct society from the one conceived of by Marx as an extension of the capitalism of his day to justify a new theoretical structure for the critical analysis and transformation of social and political practice. Marcuse's main objective in "Industrialization and Capitalism in the Work of Max Weber," presented originally at the centenary conference marking Weber's birth, was to indicate the *political* character of Weber's allegedly

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<sup>5</sup> Habermas's second essay in *Theory and Practice* is one of his early efforts to distinguish practical from technical interests where the latter presuppose a *logical* relation between science and technology. He then argues for supplanting it with a critical understanding of the theory-practice relation in social life (see Wilson, 1992; 1989).

“formal” concept of Western rationality (Marcuse, 1968 [1964]). What is missing in Weber’s overarching category of rationalization, he argues, is not just the presence of an optimism sufficient to justify the possibility of possibility. There is also evident here a failure to discriminate between discrete features of the alleged phenomenon itself, for example, the different roles played by science, capitalism, bureaucracy, the rule of law, and the social sciences themselves as distinct elements requiring specific recognition and treatment (Loewith, 1970; Wilson, 1977; 1976). Since for Marcuse the fusion of technology and domination in particular is part of a “world project” in which modern science participates directly by dint of its logic and structure, social transformation in the direction of overcoming this domination would require not only a new technology but a new science. If capitalism is not “responsible” for distorting science in order to generate a technological domination which masquerades as rationality, then overcoming capitalism without overcoming science is insufficient and unsatisfactory (cf. Weber 1947: 158–64; 1946 [1917/19]).

In “Technology and Science as ‘Ideology,’” written in 1969 and dedicated “to Herbert Marcuse on his 70th birthday,” Habermas treats Marcuse’s position as a restatement of the concern in Protestant and Jewish mysticism with the “resurrection of fallen nature” (Habermas, 1971: 85–86). Domination and mastery are virtually *built into* modern science, claims Marcuse, citing “its own method and concepts” as a basis for arguing that such an orientation to nature could not help but generate a similar attitude on the part of some men to others (Marcuse, 1964: 166–67; Leiss, 1974). It is the idea of *rational* domination which is new here, not domination *per se*. From it is derived the view that capitalism received more than simply aid and comfort from science, particularly following nineteenth-century industrialization. If this is indeed the case then Marcuse is in fact suggesting that modern science provided a basic model and *Weltanschauung* which was indispensable to the later construction of social reality under capitalism. Capitalism itself *followed from*, and sought to “capitalize” upon, the model of rational domination already developing in modern science.

Marcuse’s argument that a “new science” is required in order to render modern technology rational and transform capitalism into a more human collective is not a lament for the fact we got the science we got instead of something better. Rather, it expresses the hope that out of the science we got we can *create* something better

as a consequence of having had it. My difficulty with Habermas' critique of Marcuse derives in large part from my belief that the possibility of a new relation to nature viewed as a living partner rather than a neutral externality which excludes us is not as ridiculous as it seems to Habermas. Habermas appears to be in essential agreement with Popper on this score: there is a *logic* of science and the overcoming of this logical structure means the overcoming of science *per se*. "The idea of a New Science will not stand up to logical scrutiny any more than that of a New Technology, if indeed science is to retain the meaning of modern science inherently oriented to possible technical control." Habermas goes on to cite Marcuse's book *One-Dimensional Man*, where he allegedly contradicts himself by saying that to revolutionize technological rationality we only need to transform the institutional framework. "The structure of scientific-technical progress would be conserved, and only the governing values would be changed," concludes Habermas (1971: 88–89; Marcuse, 1964: 234–39).

Therefore the *logical* relation between theory and practice, which Wellmer cites as a rather unique property of Popper's work since the very beginning in *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, holds for Habermas on the matter of science and technology as a knowledge-constitutive relation expressing one particular cognitive interest—the *technical* interest. The difference between Popper and Habermas is thus that Popper's assertion constitutes a claim about the outer boundaries of "knowledge" itself, whereas for Habermas it is only one, and perhaps the least worthy, type of knowing. Elsewhere I have noted how the difficulties attending either of these two formulations are virtually insuperable (Wilson, 1976). One need only point out that modern science and techniques premised on rule of thumb managed to exist independently for approximately three hundred years in the West before capitalism's "interests" in producing technological progress by harnessing technology to science led to its first attempts to bring the two together about a century ago (see Chapter 8 below; Wilson, 1977).

We must turn to a series of *political* events in West Germany, France, and Italy in order to make sense of Habermas' subsequent revision of his original dialectical posture in support of holism and historicism. The student protest movements in West Germany mark a turning point in his theory of society, which now begins to favour incremental and reformist postures of the Popperian variety, however

“radical.” One casualty of these events had been Theodor Adorno, whose unexpected death in 1969 was attributed by many to the stresses and strains of the student protest movement, in particular its resort to violence and intimidation. Habermas appeared in retrospect to have adopted Popper’s point of view associating holism and historicism with violent and irresponsible political actions (cf. Marcuse, 1969). The view that a *logical* relation links science and technology is now extended *from the other side* by Habermas in order to account for the role of the critical theory of society in allegedly fomenting and sustaining the student protest movement. Here is how Habermas first explained this shift in his thinking:

Under other historical conditions, the juxtaposition of the categories ‘revolution’ and ‘reform’ constituted a sharp line of demarcation. In industrially advanced societies it no longer discriminates between possible alternative strategies of change. The only way I see to bring about conscious structural change in a social system organised in an authoritarian welfare state is radical reformism. What Marx called critical-revolutionary activity must take this way today. This means that we must promote reforms for clear and publicly discussed goals, even and especially if they have consequences that are incompatible with the mode of production of the established system. The superiority of one mode of production to another cannot become visible under given structural conditions of military technology and strategy as long as economic growth, the production of consumer goods, and the reduction of average labour time—in short, technical progress and private welfare—are the only criteria for comparing competing social systems. However, if we do not deem insignificant the goals, forms, and contents of humane social and communal life, then the superiority of a mode of production can only be measured, in industrial societies, with regard to the scope it opens up for a democratisation of decision-making processes in all sectors of society (Habermas, 1971: 48–49).

This statement, let it be noted, lies somewhere between his original position in the positivist dispute in support of Adorno, and subsequent concerns about developing a *critical social science* (Habermas, 1979; 1975; 1970: 115–48). It also reflects his belief that it is necessary, above all, to buffer the extremes of Marxist and fascist radicalism, never far from the surface, which erupted in West Germany first in the student protest movement and thereafter in the public and governmental response to it.

The foregoing is not offered as evidence that Habermas is no longer a Marxian thinker; on the contrary. But it does suggest a new direction for the critical theory of society given its earlier retreat



from Marx's revolutionary solution into "negative dialectics" as the basis for a *theoretical* materialism. Habermas' titanic corpus must be understood as an attempt to bring the critical theory back into the business of social change, but on new foundations. What Adorno in particular, but Horkheimer and Marcuse as well, had done was to show how much of a totality the false whole of advanced industrial society had become as a result of the extension of norms of maximisation, technical rationality, and scientism outward to encompass and effectively predefine the entire "structure." Now Habermas was determined to *use* this as his point of departure for reviving an activist approach premised on the need for heightened critical consciousness among societal members. He did not, in other words, fundamentally dispute the analysis, but rather came eventually to the realization that an interventionist posture was the only alternative to the sort of theoretically sophisticated versions of Weberian pessimism and resignation found in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1972; Wellmer, 1971: 53–58; Wilson, 1984: chapters 3–5).

This realisation was doubtless aided substantially by the events of 1968–69 in West German universities. A revolutionary posture and orientation, however unfeasible a "successful" revolution in present-day advanced societies might be, only succeeded in generating a ferocious counter-response (Kumar, 1976). This meant that a middle way on the order of "radical reformism" had to be found. More specifically, it underscores Habermas' determination to build up a "tradition" of social science and social technology in a country without a social history naturally conducive to *either* development. Thus any criticism (or critique) of Habermas directed in the main to his ideas since these events must take account of his imminent practical concerns as one of the more significant persons influencing West German state policy at the time.

More broadly, the *accuracy* of the analysis in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and twenty years later in Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*, made it plain to Habermas that the only intellectually sensible response which would satisfy *both* theoretical and common sense conceptions of reason would be to refuse the Wittgensteinian temptation to justify philosophy because it leaves "the world" exactly as it finds it. Marx is thus revered by being subjected to a critique which transforms his concept and methodology of change in order to render the *objective* need for change itself comprehensible given a false totality characterised by a high order of structural and systemic integration. The very

reasons advanced for either retreating to a theoretical methodology (Horkheimer and Adorno), or eulogising revolutionary praxis (as was arguably the case with Marcuse after the publication of *One Dimensional Man* in 1964), led Habermas to opt for an interventionist posture whose "radical" character would put it beyond the charge of acquiescence in Popperian social technology (Habermas, 1971: 92–93, 107–12, 120–22).

V. *Critical social science: Habermas vs. "negative dialectics" in the 1970s*

My difficulty on this score has always centred on the latent presumption that acknowledgement of the imminent demands of the first argument, regarding the need for a "middle way" in West Germany, would be used to support the "logic" of social science interventionism given the "critical" claims of its "radical" posture in *all* the advanced societies. In *The American Ideology* (1977) and elsewhere, I sought to draw out the implications of such a presumption, in order to show how "relevant" to the United States in particular has been an argument like Marcuse's in *One Dimensional Man* (1964). Marcuse argued that the *last* thing the United States needed was *more* social science: it had become, in every sense of the Marxian understanding, a "force of (capitalist) production." In contrast to West Germany, it was clearly not needed as a buffer for the sort of political extremes alluded to by Habermas in his writings. Indeed, its absorption into the "structure" as a consequence of its central role in the "culture" had effectively rendered it an ideology whose claim to neutrality served to *reveal* its auspices in the very effort to conceal them (see Chapter 2).

Three difficulties in particular suggest themselves to anyone anxious to find the "secret" of contemporary industrial societies in Habermas' work. First, there is the issue of how the critical component could possibly be preserved in the continuous effort to intervene in societal (and sub-societal) matters in a social scientific way. The scope for distinctiveness here is restricted in the main to techniques and methods on the assumption that the basic epistemology ordaining correspondence, hypotheses, and the abstract totality and concrete particular is in place and presumed valid. Such assumptions, as Adorno suggested, are indicative of a *lack* of openness with respect to the role of social thought and theorising.

A related matter concerns whether a zero-sum relation is thought to hold between the critical theory as a “negative dialectics” and the alleged “radical reformism” of a “critical social science” like that of Habermas committed to intervention and the heightening of consciousness. After all, it is easy to suggest that the new approach *supercedes* the old one, thus that the critical theory as conceived by *both* the first generation *and* the young Habermas is excessively “negative” rather than “affirmative” in its attitudes toward the culture and society as a whole (see Marcuse, 1968: 88–134). The view that the development of “society” has rendered the understandings and views of the critical theory virtually obsolete would only make sense in this new equation *if* the parameters for both change and *the knowledge of change* were acknowledged to be *determined and contained* by the social structure itself. That this understanding is not necessarily in the best tradition of Marxian thought only underscores the original point: there is no *necessary* zero-sum relation between a true theoretical posture taking its point of departure in the concrete totality, and “social technology” under the influence of a radical or critical banner.

The final difficulty which presents itself to the reader of Habermas’ work is more fundamental because it addresses the “logic” of his strategy regarding the relation between communication, consciousness, and social transformation. One could make a strong case for the claim that societal members who are allegedly going to benefit from the heightened consciousness generated by a critical social science as an academic version of “radical reformism” would *already* need to possess the consciousness that the efforts of this interventionism are intended to produce. The claim by Habermas and his supporters—that they have finally escaped the dilemma of Marx’s “feedback” conception of revolutionary consciousness by realising the focus of such consciousness in “need dispositions”—falls flat when it is realised that the “success” of such an undertaking, *by Habermas’s own admission*, is far more likely in those countries which have “institutionalised” the social sciences than in those that have not (see Chapters 7 and 9).

Of enduring significance in the work of Habermas, however, is the way he has acceded to the basic tenets of a “positivism” he once found problematic and controversial in Popper. The result is a *theoretical* reconciliation of theory and practice, analytic and remedy, concept and object, premised on reductionism and an acquiescence in the false concreteness given in the empirical bias. Further, his

interventionist posture reveals itself in a Popperian commitment to affirming incrementalism or social technology in and through his writings, something I shall take up in more detail shortly. Finally, there is a heavy dependence, unacknowledged for the most part, on Weber's understanding of "rationalization" and de-enchantment, which Habermas employs as a basis for updating the *Marxian* distinction between the sub- and superstructure in his essay "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'" (Habermas, 1971: 90–95; Marcuse, 1968 [1964]; cf. the previous section, and Wilson, 1992; 1989).

Endorsing incrementalism, however "radical" and "critical" its claims, is problematic because it presupposes something of a zero-sum game between such a posture and the view held initially by critical theorists whose Hegelian Marxism was gradually transfigured into negative dialectics as a critique of one dimensionality. Since practical conditions *always* require some form of "piecemeal social engineering," a recommendation to social scientists which favours a "success" or problem-solving orientation simply constitutes a request that they view progress in their disciplines strictly in terms of the way their efforts are received by those who really define their "problems" for them—the various "users" in business, government, the professions, unions, and so on. Habermas may not intend to put social theorists in an either/or position on the issue of reflexivity versus intervention, but his thinking since 1969 definitely favours this impression. Such a posture, which is given to systems builders committed to *theoretical* reconciliations of the sort noted, fails to take account of the fact that here we are *not* dealing with two "options," proceeding from a basic consensus on the nature of reality and knowledge about it. In effect, one "side" does not accept the ground rules which view negativity of the sort counselled by Adorno and Marcuse as being incompatible with reformism, whether of the liberal or radical variety.

My point here is that the critical theory does not "support" such reforms in the practical realm by turning away from negativity. Rather, it engages these reforms as constructive changes which are both an effort to make the social whole more human than it presently is and a part of this social whole insofar as they begin by taking its false and incomplete structure to be essentially "given." That the dialectical character of this whole is *the reality*, rather than an arbitrary way of looking at it "intellectually," is effectively covered over by the accusations of Popper and his cohorts, which Habermas' "crit-

ical social science” only aids and abets in its “radicalization” of false concreteness (Kosik, 1976; 1969; Wilson, 1991). What all this means, of course, is that there is no way the critical theory of society can possibly abjure its combined commitment to negativity and ultimate optimism on grounds that now we have a “good reason” for getting involved in radical reformism and *therefore for turning away from the critical-theoretical task*. It also means that the attitude it must take to empirical method may conceivably endorse reformist objectives as valuable *given* society as a false totality.

It might be argued that the foregoing has presumed interventionist concerns and “interests” when the empirical method in the social sciences need not have such an animus at all. I would respond that this is highly doubtful, given the fact that even where a particular social scientist claims to be interested in engaging in “empirical” research for its own sake, for example, this work is necessarily “available” for utilisation as a means of intervention by others, whether social scientists or “users” in corporations, governments, professions or unions. The academic division of labour to which social science as theory and method accedes, however poor a mirror of society as a *social* division of labour, is nevertheless integrated into this larger structure in quite specific and continuing ways through the dependence of the university and “research” on the above institutions (Grant, 1969; Wilson, 1999). Even the individual researcher, allegedly employing empirical methods in the absence of any specific or general interventionist interest, must publish or otherwise make visible his or her efforts if he or she is to gain the recognition on which advancement and/or status depends. Finally, even were I to grant the above claim, the points I have made regarding intervention itself as a feature of the whole it claims to be “outside” of (neutrality), save for the matter of values, would hold with even greater force for an empirical method allegedly uninterested in anything other than an accurate registry of “the facts.”

Radnitzsky’s (1970) effort to bridge the gap first articulated in detail in the “Popper-Adorno” controversy by underwriting Habermas’s “global programme” for a critical social science carries the attempted reconciliation of critical theory and social technology to something of an end-point. His determination to find common ground on which Anglo-American empiricism and Continental dialectics and hermeneutics can build a discipline committed to “radical reformism” echoes a similar false “theoretical” resolution achieved earlier by Parsons

and Mannheim. In both cases, the resolution was false because it was effected *sociologically* and therefore in express opposition to the continuing *reality* of *societal* contradiction as a feature of social structure and the social division of labour (Durkheim, 1952; Mannheim, 1940; Parsons, 1951; Adorno, 1969). Quite apart from a view of language understood as a neutral instrument "outside" society, whose "standards" commit it to smoothing over rather than embodying social contradiction, this development bears no relation whatsoever to the continuing need for the critical theory as a negative dialectics.

Not only is radical reformism no substitute for the critical theory of society; it also fails as a meaningful reorientation of sociology as a discipline whose theories serve its accumulative and interventionist objectives, either directly or indirectly. Indeed, the idea of a "reflexive sociology" is itself a contradiction, since sociology's scientific pretensions, given in its commitment to "works," necessarily disposes it toward society and against reflection and negativity. This suggests instead that the critical theory must now go beyond even Adorno's understanding of the social sciences and empirical method and take account in its critical posture of the fact that society now includes a specific knowledge-producing component with "radical" and "reflexive" pretensions *alongside* conventional social science. To be sure, eventually this alleged "difference" between an orthodox and a "critical" social science would be revealed for what it really is, because the latter's acquiescence in the concrete fact and the abstract whole would compel it to opt for either one-dimensional intervention through "liberal empiricism" or the false resolution of contradictions through some form of "grand theory" (Mills, 1959).

A sincere commitment to the view that radical reformism is a distinctly different enterprise from both the social sciences and the critical theory fails first of all to appreciate the extent to which this alternative stands in essentially the same relation to social reality now that conventional social science did for an earlier period in the development of advanced industrial societies. In addition, by repudiating objective conditions, radical reformism finds itself in the unenviable position of having to presume the very heightened consciousness in the absence of these conditions which it aims to effect. Perhaps the most paradoxical feature of this support for a critical social science is the way that its impatience leads it to recommend actions which repudiate the idea that the distinction between thought and action

is false, as Marx and Engels did when they endorsed revolutionary action in the absence of objective conditions. Only the steadfast conviction that universal intelligibility can be presumed for all or most as an inherent capacity and “interest” *in this absence* can overcome such a paradox. I would argue that this is untenable given the level and character of individuation in the advanced societies at present (cf. Adorno, 1973; Habermas, 1970; and Chapter 7 below).

The life of critique depends on a determination to hold fast to negativity in the absence of objective material and social conditions *because* this negativity, as recognition of the contradictory character of society (even in the face of ideology and rhetoric defending the truth of the present reality), is *part* of this unfinished reality, not something “outside” it. Negativity would only be inconceivable where the social contradictions which brought it into being had been overcome and the real need satisfied. My point has been that a critical social science is far more likely to underwrite, perhaps even legitimise, these contradictions than it is to overcome them. To refuse to accord analytical validity to the socially “correct” (but untrue) dichotomy between thought and action is to speak to what collective life beyond social contradiction must mean. Commitment to negativity addresses the essential difference between reality and truth, not in the hope of system collapse, but in the expectation of transcendence. Because the possibility of such developments relates to practical realities, these developments are not to be construed as realisable by and through top-down interventionist strategies and techniques alone, whether of the reformist or the radical reformist variety (Dreitzel, 1972; and Chapter 9 below).

Adorno’s demand that we reappraise the presently inverted relation between social theory and sociological data accumulation through empirical method, where theory can survive only if it accedes to its structural decomposition into testable, falsifiable hypotheses, speaks both to the reality of sociology as the first science of society as a *false* totality and to the real need. The fact that he endorsed pessimism by according “society” the status of a frozen construct whose monolithic character admitted of little if any dialectical movement in the direction of becoming in no way diminishes the perceptiveness of the following observation regarding reflection in contemporary society. It is one which those who support the displacement of the critical theory by a critical social science might ponder.

Thought is subjected to the subtlest censorship of the *terminus ad quem*: whenever it appears critically, it has to indicate the positive steps desired. If such positive goals turn out to be inaccessible to present thinking, why then thought itself ought to come across resigned and tired, as though such obstruction were its own fault and not the signature of the thing itself. That is the point at which society can be recognised as a universal block, both within men and outside them at the same time. Concrete and positive suggestions for change merely strengthen this hindrance, either as ways of administering the unadministrable, or by calling down repression from the monstrous totality itself (Adorno, 1969: 153).

### VI. *Critical theory and "empirical method"*

In the foregoing I have addressed the ambivalence of key exponents of the critical theory of society, but particularly Adorno and Habermas, on the matter of the role of sociological research. The two major components of the social sciences as research disciplines—empirical method and "traditional" theory—were early understood to be two sides of a single coin, whose value in advanced industrial societies was largely a function of assumptions about reality, knowledge, and the relation between "facts" and theories, all derived from modern Western science. Science's ultimate adherence to a correspondential conception of knowledge is predicated on the assumption that the parts are concrete and the whole that renders them sensible as parts is abstract. As noted, this has a direct bearing on the status of theory *vis-à-vis* data in social science research operations, since theory can only justify itself when it is decomposed into testable, falsifiable hypotheses. Both points have proved to be essential for understanding the Frankfurt School's critique of the social sciences.

Though heightened "openness" to sociological research, and to the prevailing conception of "theory" in the social sciences, only became significant for the programmatic concerns of Jurgen Habermas in the period immediately following the West German student protest movements in 1968–69, one can readily discern important precedents in the American experiences of Adorno between 1938 and 1949. As already noted, it would be difficult to deny the impact of "empirical research methods," with their clear implications for both theory and practice as Adorno understood them, not only in bringing an entire "culture" to light for him, but also in firming up his original position, albeit on somewhat different grounds. In the fol-



lowing statement made in 1968, Adorno refers to his views on “empirical research,” developed after his return to Europe after 1949.

My own position in the controversy between empirical and theoretical sociology, so often misinterpreted, particularly in Europe, I may sum up by saying that empirical investigations are not only legitimate but essential, even in the realm of cultural phenomena. But one must not confer autonomy upon them or regard them as a universal key. Above all, they must themselves terminate in theoretical knowledge. Theory is no mere vehicle that becomes superfluous as soon as the data are in hand (Adorno, 1968: 353).

What this statement addresses, among other things, is the extent to which the social sciences, as creatures of the processes of rationalisation they seek to comprehend in the name of “society,” have become a force of production produced and sustained by society itself. While truth for Adorno is to be found in the *object*, only the subject can ferret it out (Adorno, 1973: 66–77; cf. Wilson, 1984: chapter 4; and Chapter 9 below). The social sciences, though certainly not the neutral tools or instruments which the idea of value-freedom would have us believe, are a reflection of society as a false whole for first-generation critical theorists. This means that their understanding of reason as rationality, and thereafter as the *problematic* given society as the ideal, necessitates some understanding of their role in the redefinition of both common sense and practice in the advanced societies. Truth is thus measured against existing social reality, which includes the social sciences as one of the reciprocal modes of “rational domination” alongside the natural sciences, capitalism, and bureaucracy. In this sense, then, the truth of society as a false whole compels us to see in the social sciences a “correct” reflection of “society.”

In addition to Popper’s stronger case for *science* as an institution and activity concerned to override individual commitments to verificationism with collective commitments to scepticism and falsificationism, the critical theory saw in his repudiation of reflexivity and dialectics a social theory whose alleged inestimable strengths were actually intolerable limits. Elsewhere I have addressed the distinction between an integrative direction, given science’s monopoly in the “search for truth,” and one that favours differentiation where “success” criteria function as surrogates for truth in the absence of “critical rationalism” as a check and control on “irresponsible” thinking (Wilson, 1976). Here I have attempted show how more basic similarities revealed in

adherence to the vaunted "unity of method" in Popper's thinking, in particular correspondence and false (empirical) concreteness, underscore a handmaiden role for the social sciences as externally directed disciplines beholden in distinct ways to Society (also Hayek, 1955: 74). Popper's conception of "piecemeal social engineering" or "social technology" as the basis for *theoretical* development in the social sciences, in short, only makes explicit what was either presumed or implied by less capable exponents of this position.

The view that a logical-structural relation exists between ideas and action of all types has led Popper to emphasize caution and responsibility when "theorising." The prototypical instance supporting this posture for him is the alleged relation between "utopian" social theories and political totalitarianism spelled out in *The Poverty of Historicism*, and earlier in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. Habermas' original acceptance of this posture on the matter of relations between scientific theories and technological applications reached the opposite conclusion from Popper: instead of being good practice, the science-technology relation ran a strong risk of being bad practice. What must be his strongest statement on this tie is found in *Legitimation Crisis* where he states: "To understand the development of science and technology, we must also conjecture an inner logic through which a hierarchy of non-reversible sequences is fixed from the outset" (Habermas, 1975: 11). Far from constituting a "distant model" to be respected but not emulated, science for Habermas posed a distinct threat to the continued autonomy of interaction in advanced industrial societies (Habermas, 1971). The impact of the student protest movements in West Germany led him to extend the reasoning that had caused him to accept the idea of a "logical relation" between science and technology (albeit to radically different conclusions) to utopian social theories displaying holist or historicist features. Thus, the real significance of Habermas' claim of a higher order of reflection than Popper on these matters now lies in the fact that he employs the logical relation as a basis for *the critique of science as well as holism and historicism* (Wilson, 1976).

Partiality for reason has always been the central tenet of the critical theory of society, no less today with Jurgen Habermas' commitment to reviving the goals and values of the Enlightenment than with the first generation. The social sciences figure prominently in this problem because of the way that traditional theory and empirical method work themselves out in their activity in the advanced

societies. A determination to subject to critique not only Weber's attempts to characterize reason itself as irrational because of its emergent form in the person of "rationalisation," but also the views of Durkheim and Mannheim on the alleged "neutrality" of the social division of labour, clearly had to include a critical analysis of their respective sociologies. Weber's lament (or Mannheim's) is little better than Durkheimian optimism because both take the distant model of science for granted and proceed accordingly (Wilson, 1977: 29–50, 145–99; and see the following chapter). Habermas's perception that "negative dialectics" and the critique of "one-dimensionality" constituted the acquiescence of reason in pessimism and resignation led him to attempt to reconcile theoretical reflection with optimism in a way which tried to "see through" the social sciences without ignoring the specific understandings and developments that they stand for. Partiality for reason means commitment to dialectics, and this commitment precludes allowing "society," conceived in terms of rationalisation and division of labour, to become a reified monolith whose "increasing functional interdependence" renders it a false whole which can only become more total in the future.

All the other difficulties cited aside, however, Habermas and his followers might well contemplate the fact that Adorno in particular developed *both* an increasingly "open" attitude to empirical social research *and* heightened pessimism during the period of his American stay from 1938 to 1949. The Marxian analytic itself problematises the idea that "radical reformism" and a "critical social science", or reflexive *sociology*, are more capable of escaping the consequences of their function as ideological ballast for advanced industrial societies than were empirical social research and Lazarsfeld's "administrative sociology" at an earlier point in the development of these societies. If Habermas can still claim a direct line of descent from Marx, then this line of descent must proceed from the very positivistic auspices which several critical theorists, including Habermas himself, have discovered in Marxian theory. Impatient with Marx's conception of "objective conditions," they have concocted their own, which now *include* the social sciences in the social dialectic that is society, thereby revealing perhaps the fallacy of "intervention" itself.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### FUNCTIONAL RATIONALITY AND 'SENSE OF FUNCTION': CRITICAL COMMENTS ON AN IDEOLOGICAL DISTORTION

In what follows, I attempt to recapture the concept of 'function' for thought, thereby extending farther and focussing to a greater extent the critique of social science found in the last chapter. In concert with Marxists, critical theorists, phenomenologists and ethnomethodologists determined to recover reason from its anti-reflexive and anti-practical resting place in positivism and "scientism," I extend this concern beyond the problem of rationality as it is typically configured in these intellectual concerns. I do this by bringing an intellectual practice to light which these essentially "critical" disciplines and approaches have in common, even as they go about the task of speaking in reason's name to the directly or ultimately instrumental biases of Western rationality discovered in key institutions like capitalism, science, technology, bureaucracy and the social sciences. What I have in mind here is the tendency to equate *function* with the apotheosis of bad reason in the form of 'functional rationality'. It is as if a concept, originally formulated in support of hoped-for alternatives to all pre-bourgeois forms of domination premised on caste, class and power, had now become the virtual "property" of bourgeois thought itself.

Instead of being seen to stand against narrow and truncated conceptions of reason as rationality, now as before, function is equated with precisely these conceptions, and is understood to constitute the essence of "society" as a (bourgeois) social division of labour. In contrast to society itself, function is subjected to an inverse fetishization by those critical of the Western project but committed to reason. Because of its co-optation by modes of social scientific discourse in particular, it is now felt necessary to turn the concept over to those who sing its unqualified praises in bureaucracies, corporations, and universities throughout advanced industrial societies. My resistance to this development is predicated on the view that in the concept of function we have an analytic of immense critical value to the very

groups which refuse to fight the fact of its apparent capture by the social sciences, and by positivism generally. As a consequence, Marxian thinkers, and critical theorists in particular, give up the philosophical commitment to concepts *as universals* in favour of an operationalist conception of language which is allegedly committed, according to its practitioners, to "functionalist" canons favouring the reduction of what is intended to what is said (Marcuse, 1964: 205–16). The acquiescence of the former groups in this conception of function causes them to turn away from it, thereby effectively giving it up to the scientific and positivistic worldview so central to advanced industrial societies.

Instead of concentrating on the way that the concept of function has been employed by sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists working within the academic (and social) division of labour in these societies, I address work that is critical of function. This whether it is criticism from those within the academic division of labour like Weber, Durkheim, Mannheim, Schutz, and Arendt, or critique from those outside it like Marx and the Frankfurt School of critical theorists (cf. Wilson 1977: 4–6, Chapter 1 above). Not surprisingly, any attempt to recapture function for thought will depend on the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Adolph Loos, as well as that of Theodor Adorno. Adorno was a critical theorist whose work is significantly different in many respects from that of his colleagues in the Frankfurt School. This was largely because of his experiences in Vienna as a student of Schoenberg and Berg in the 1920s. Without in any way denying the non-critical criticism of Wittgenstein in particular, I want to argue in what follows for a revised understanding of his attack on pre-World War I Viennese culture. Neither he nor Loos were caught in the grip of a conception of function that had become the property of the haute-bourgeoisie from which each came. On the contrary, the idea of "sense of function" found in Loos and Wittgenstein is addressed to the peculiarly bourgeois obsession with ornamentation, and here is to be discovered its critical moment (see Chapter 1 above; Wilson, 1976).

Central to this exercise, as noted in the title, will be the contrast between functional rationality and sense of function. Functional rationality, I argue, is a standard whose utilization in advanced industrial societies proceeds from the fetishization of (modern, bourgeois, capitalist, civil, etc.) "society" as the only available human collective rather than a culturally and historically produced form of it. Once



this fetishization has taken place the battle lines are effectively drawn. Those who honour its allegedly objective standards treat any activity, behaviour, or decision as "functional" when it is seen to serve the constituency of their intellectual and professional interest, whether this constituency be "society" as a whole, or specific subgroups, particularly formal organizations in the area of work and labour. In this regard, so-called "functional explanations" have been criticized from within the social sciences as either an evaluative scheme or a prelude to a "real" explanation because of their concern to explain in terms of effects rather than causes. On the other side, those who equate function with bad reason, rather than with reason itself, accede to this proprietorship by allowing it to act as a modifier which is presumed to condition anything that it modifies in a downward direction. In short, what is "functional" for both sides is what is functional for society and its subgroups. Functional in this characterization refers to what is supportive of an instrumental interface between economic and/or technological rationality in some formally organized setting.

Some concepts quite obviously matter more than others where issues of great theoretical moment are being discussed. Thus I emphasize the need to see through the reductionist notion that concepts ought to be understood as terms with specific operational meanings rather than as universals. The idea, already noted, that this procedure is referred to everywhere as a "functionalist" conception of language should make my point unambiguously. Here function and functional both refer to what can be reduced, under a correspondence epistemology, to the idea that what is said is what is meant, and that what is meant can be known by aggregating the definitional meanings of individual terms. In clear contrast to a dialectical conception committed to the view that "objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder" but rather "come to contradict the traditional norm of adequacy," such a one-dimensional posture is linear, incremental and (allegedly) accumulative and appropriative (Adorno, 1973: 5; Marcuse, 1964: 123-143). It proceeds from the presumption that knowledge is a commodity to be grasped and husbanded, and underscores the link between "piecemeal social engineering," as Karl Popper understands this term, and the view of the whole as abstract rather than concrete, a concatenation of empirical parts-as-fact-as-events to be comprehended through "ex-planation." Though clearly demarcated from causality as a different form of

ex-planation, functional approaches and frameworks can better be understood as failed causal explanations. They provide evidence that causes cannot, after all, be isolated as specific events (or event-complexes) and thus cannot be "known" in the way desired (cf. Wilson, 1991).

### I. *The Aristotelian concept of function and co-operation*

Aristotle tells us that the virtue of a thing is to be discovered in the excellence with which it performs the highest functions of which it is capable (Aristotle, 1955: 224–225, 274–275). Overlooking "excellence" in favour of "highest," we can see in Hannah Arendt's treatment of politics as speech and deeds directed to how life should be lived an undeniably Aristotelian rendering which equates what is highest with that which is most unique to human beings as human beings. Politics so understood is to be radically contrasted to present day usages and understandings, for it stresses the individual's obligation to stand out by displaying precisely this uniqueness. Though Arendt was often prone to treat function as the property of the social sciences, her distinction between co-operation and division of labour is instructive. This because it understands by co-operation an opportunity for the individual to simultaneously display him or herself and at the same time perform a function which contributes to some collective effort without in the process degrading the individual to a mere cog in the apparatus.

Division of labour is based on the fact that two men can put their labour power together and 'behave toward each other as though they were one.' This one-ness is the exact opposite of cooperation; it indicates the unity of the species with regard to which every single member is the same and exchangeable. Since none of the activities into which the process is divided has an end in itself, their 'natural' end is exactly the same as in the case of 'undivided' labour: either the simple reproduction of the means of subsistence, that is, the capacity for consumption of the labourers, or the exhaustion of human labour power (Arendt, 1958: 123).

It is true that Arendt largely ignores the clearly capitalist motives for so organizing human beings in their productive relations to artifacts, instruments, techniques, and technologies. Nevertheless, her statement does capture the essential dilemma given in *any* effort that

fails to distinguish collective effort where unique capabilities can be exhibited from a formally organized division of labour. This latter understands by function the performance of a relatively routinized task or operation that *any member* of the group could perform after but a few moments practice. It is no doubt true that in this process individual workers are "reduced" to the status of tools of the technology itself, in clear contrast to the admittedly idealized crafts and guilds. Yet the sheer efficiency given both goals and a consuming public dictates an emphasis on the *process* of production seen in predominantly technical rather than social terms. Every individual is *potentially* exchangeable, so what is functional for the particular division of labour under consideration is the efficient, thus the technology-intensive, production of commodities according to a *pre-formed* work (or labour) plan admitting of little or no discretion or individuation. Arendt thus adverts to the possibility that we might conceivably honour a notion of function less subordinated to efficiency and process considerations without thereby being accused of either utopianism or a misplaced nostalgia for the medieval guilds (Wilson, 1977: 191–230; Macpherson, 1962).

This is significant in light of Arendt's view of the Hellenic conception of politics as individual display in the act of addressing questions about how life should be lived. Since such a notion of politics and the political appears irretrievably lost to us, how do we come to terms with the decidedly a- (or anti-) political role of governmental-distributive networks whose structure and behaviour are themselves predicated in the main on technical progress and social welfare? Arendt's failure to see any option to a largely Weberian resignation in the face of the rise of "Society" gives her analysis an unfinished quality, analytically speaking (Suchting, 1962: 47–55). To conceptualize "sense of function" as an activity or set of activities conceivable in collective settings today overcomes the tendency, all too tempting, to reduce it to the functionally rational requirement of a formally organized and structured division of labour. This latter is characterized by a total system plan under norms of efficiency but in the interests of profit maximization, whether short or long term. It also resists any notion of meaningful individuation that might seem to take place apart from collective life. Far from either fetishizing society *or* fetishizing function, such an understanding addresses *praxis* as an activity in the world, but one that is nevertheless a reflective

undertaking not motivated by intervention and a predominantly technical interest.<sup>1</sup>

There is, however, another dimension which is to some extent implied by what has been said thus far, yet the significance of which is liable to be downplayed or ignored altogether. It is the need to comprehend by "sense of function" a notion that is likely to be *more* "objective" in its power to contribute to practical problems and needs than functionally rational and formally organized tasks can be in anything other than a thoroughly routinized environment. Thus sense of function could be understood to be the "other side" of discretion in the form of innovative activity in some collective setting. It is necessary to keep underscoring this latter aspect, not because it is even conceivable that such activity could occur in the absence of its collective meaning and significance. It is rather because so much of what passes for innovation is seen to be concretely individual where the individual and the collective are understood to be in a zero-sum relation to one another (Wilson, 1980; and Chapter 8 below). Bourgeois ideology only gives away what it can afford to, however, which is to say that it is almost to be counted an indication of how *societally* (as opposed to collectively) produced the "individual" is that he asserts his own autonomy by denying the clear fact of this production. The very crisis of the individual, and of individuation itself, is to be seen in the spell that his own alleged right of a property in his person has at a time when this very possessive proprietorship has in fact passed to society as a false totality (Wilson, 1989; Wilson, 1992).

I submit that the argument for recovering sense of function, and distending it from functional rationality in the interests of function as a universal substantive not reducible to falsely concrete repertoires under an empirical convention, must not be presumed synonymous with promoting the eccentric, the isolated individual, or the "subjective." It must instead make its case within these polar alternatives by stressing its unabashed commitment to an objectivity not subject

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<sup>1</sup> The following contrast should underscore the difference between an interventionist and reformist conception of social change and one predicated on the dialectics of universal intelligibility and recognition. For the first reality is an empirically concrete concatenation of parts as facts as events, while for the second reality is a concrete totality. This contrast portends a radically different role for *theory*: in the first case its legitimacy depends on its structural decomposition into testable, falsifiable hypotheses while in the second it can stand on its own without being required to function as a handmaiden to "empirical research" and interventionism generally.

to the fetishism which fails to see in society simply one historically and culturally produced form of collective life rather than the only conceivable version of it. Once again, it is Adorno who puts my point precisely when he tells us that truth is to be discovered in the *object* but that only the subject can ferret it out. The commitment to overcoming the rigid confines of dichotomies and distinctions, whose spell lies in the degree to which they are now understood under a strict and narrow empirical convention to be conterminous with life, is central to dialectics (Adorno, 1969: 144–153). Most significant, the fraudulent notion of freedom given in the illusion of the individual's separateness from a societal totality in increasing control of its "individual" moments requires us to start *taking back our concepts*. This in turn demands that concepts themselves be recovered and treated as universals rather than mere terms whose meanings are exhausted in behaviours that are observable, or observable in principle.

## II. *The Durkheimian concept of function and social solidarity*

No discussion of the commitment in social science and social theory to the concept of function can avoid the central role played by Durkheim's analysis of the social division of labour in this development. Durkheim's starting point in *The Division of Labour in Society* is with the need to steer a middle path between the Scylla of Marxism as an allegedly revolutionary social philosophy and the Charybdis of both Utilitarianism and Social Darwinism.<sup>2</sup> To this end, he will argue in favour of reform and its intellectual correlate—an interventionist sociology committed to environmental changes in a social structure which only needs to be "normalized" rather than fundamentally restructured at its base. At the same time, to be sure, Durkheim is no friend of either utilitarian mechanistic thinking or Social Darwinism's "survival of the fittest" view of collective life. In a significant section of the above work, he disavows any view of society as a mere aggregation of individuals. He then exhorts those who care about

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<sup>2</sup> Its actual title as translated, is *Of the Division of Social Labour* and it was originally written in 1893, with a significant preface to the second edition on occupational groups added in 1902.

collective life to express its essential priority by treating "social facts" as things in and of themselves, not as abstractions reducible to allegedly more concrete psychological manifestations in individual behaviours and beliefs. Indeed, Durkheim views the "individual" as a social creation in a most specific sense. On the issue of whether people are first and foremost egoistic beings whose behaviours can be expected to comport with the vision of human nature discovered in political economy, Durkheim makes the following observation. Far from exchange (value) constituting the basis of solidarity among individuals in society, no exchange could occur at all in the absence of a prior solidarity (use value) (Durkheim, 1952: 200–206, 215–217).

Sociological analysis demonstrates for Durkheim that our choices are essentially two: continue with the present (1893, 1902) "abnormal" or pathological state of affairs or normalize these developments through the joint influence of sociology as a discipline and support for occupational solidarity through a revival of guild type structures within industrial society. His criticism of the dilettante who occupies himself with esoteric theoretical researches is well-documented in the introduction and conclusion to *The Division of Labour in Society*, as is his commitment to an incremental and interventionist posture predicated on a new discipline with a new realm of facticity as its property.

Our illness is not, then, as has often been believed, of an intellectual sort; it has more profound causes. We shall not suffer because we no longer know on what theoretical notion to base the morality we have been practicing, but because, in certain of its parts, this morality is irremediably shattered, and that which is necessary to us is only in the process of formation. Our anxiety does not arise because the criticism of scholars has broken down the traditional explanation we used to give to our duties; consequently, it is not a new philosophical system which will relieve the situation. Because certain of our duties are no longer founded in the reality of things, a breakdown has resulted which will be repaired only in so far as a new discipline is established and consolidated. In short, our first duty is to make a moral code for ourselves. Such a work cannot be improvised in the silence of the study; it can arise only through itself, little by little, under the pressure of internal causes which make it necessary. But the service that thought can and must render is in fixing the goal that we must attain. That is what we have tried to do (ibid.: 409).

Apart from how such a statement totally ignores the fact that only in and through his own *theoretical* posture can such a claim for interventionism, incrementalism, and relevance generally be demonstrated,

note the implications of endorsing the development of a discipline because of its allegedly moral or ethical character.

Durkheim saw his mission as one involving a "return," albeit in the modern context, to the original solution to the problem of "dynamic density" realized in the urban centres of the later medieval period. This solution had been effectively destroyed by Western industrialization during the nineteenth century, thus the relatively recent emergence of the abnormality he claimed to have located. Repairing it incrementally through intervention and reform would, he believed, avoid the evils of both revolutionary disorder and a non-circulating elite, a problem he inherited from de Maistre and Bonald (Nisbet, 1952: 167–75; Wolin, 1960: 352–434; Wilson, 1977: 184–89). The key vehicle which will facilitate sociology's effort to normalize the division of labour is individualism, argues Durkheim. By equating its attainment with the performance of socially (read occupationally) desirable functions voluntarily chosen he intends first to overcome the abnormal view of the individual as an entity whose irreconcilable conflict with society is supposed, following Mandeville, to be the engine of its development. Second, however, he wishes to realize a new (organic) solidarity by making individualism infinitely more "available" than earlier doctrines and understandings had done (Wilson, 1984: 35–71). In effect, Durkheim's new solidarity, replacing the pre-industrial (mechanical) form after an abnormal or pathological interlude, would generalize the norm of individualism to vast numbers of individuals through their participation in the work or labour force. No longer in a zero-sum relation to society, but thoroughly "functional" for its development, individualism so understood becomes the last but supreme vestige of a collective conscience whose other aspects have atrophied with the onset of industrialization and the consequent collapse of mechanical solidarity (Durkheim, 1952: 283–303, 333–351).

Durkheim's parallel between mechanical solidarity, the abnormal division of labour and (hoped-for) organic solidarity as types of social structures, and the three kinds of dyadic association he cites is instructive, for it is at the root of his understanding of function as the harmonious and solidaristic performance of industrial and organizational functions (*ibid.*: 54–69). His third type of sociation is central to any comprehension of what sorts of relations lie at the base of the organically solidaristic society. Durkheim stresses that here we have the phenomenon of differences that attract because they complement one

another, in contrast to association based on likenesses that attract (mechanical solidarity) or on differences that repel (the abnormal interlude). To make individualism functional for society by generalizing its availability, then, might appear to require of industrial organization what the hardier members of the Human Relations movement, itself derived mainly from Durkheim's theory, occasionally demanded. For them, it was axiomatic that production values and output norms be subordinated to solidarity in the event of a conflict between them. However, it must be remembered that Durkheim did not oppose the so-called "general movement" of the division of labour *per se*, but only its abnormal manifestation (anomic, forced, etc.). His commitment to getting things back on the right track by correcting the excesses of industrialization took the form of restoring the needed social moorings given the new reality and its potential for a new solidarity (ibid.: 353–395).

In this vein, notice the way Durkheim configures the problem of abnormality as one which is seen by some to demonstrate that the division of labour has been pushed as far as it can go. In effect, it becomes, according to them, "a source of disintegration," where the individual performs a set of tasks entered into coercively rather than voluntarily and in which he no longer feels that he is serving something beyond his own contribution with which he agrees. As the collective conscience declines, no new forms of solidarity come forward to replace it. Thus, the real problem:

But since we have shown that the enfeeblement of the collective conscience is a normal phenomenon, we cannot consider it as the cause of the abnormal phenomena that we are studying. If, in certain cases, organic solidarity is not all that it should be, it is certainly not because mechanical solidarity has lost ground, but because all the conditions for the existence of organic solidarity have not been realized (ibid.: 364–365; also the discussion of function at p. 49).

Such a rendering thus treats "industrial society," following his forebears St. Simon and Comte, as a structure expressive of the highest development of human powers. Where he differs significantly from them is on the question of the inevitability of this development. The need to repair a structure through conscious tinkering, which is *potentially* capable of such a realization given both "enfeeblement" and industrialization *as distinct phenomena*, sets Durkheim apart from his predecessors. A clear and unambiguous conception of social function, as noted, is needed if sociology, acting through occupational



associations, is to achieve the generalization of individualism on which the emergence of the new solidarity depends.

Let us examine the relationship between function, individualism, and society in Durkheim's argument in greater detail. Presumably, in a normalized division of labour where the pathological aspects of industrialization, coupled with a collapsing collective conscience, had been repaired by the joint efforts of sociologists and occupational groups, almost any organizationally defined function containing specific tasks and more general (and discretionary) social roles would be *ipso facto* expressive of individual fulfilment. All that would be required is that the individual in question actually have made an initial voluntary choice regarding his or her occupation. In contrast to what Victor Thompson calls task-specialized functions, the first coercive and the second voluntary in this conditional sense, Durkheim makes plain what constitutes the key characteristics of a societal or occupational function which is expressive of individuation rather than a constraint upon it.

As regulated as a function may be, there is a larger place always left for personal initiative. A great many of the obligations thus sanctioned have their origins in a choice of the will. It is we who choose our professions, and even certain of our domestic functions. Of course, once our resolution has ceased to be internal and has been externally translated by social consequences, we are tied down. Duties are imposed upon us that we have not expressly desired. It is, however, through a voluntary act that this has taken place (*ibid.*: 228–229).

Several points in this statement require further elaboration. First, there is the bias supporting work and labour over “domestic” functions (Wilson, 1973; Wilson 1989). Second, there also a bias favouring “society,” once the initial choice has been made, when it becomes almost mandatory to interpret staying at one's post as a social, and therefore a *moral* duty. Third, overlooked here is how those with particular economic and political interests *necessarily* have a greater stake in the success of society as a specific and historically ordained project than others whose solidarity is assumed to be conducive (rather than inimical) to productivity and the proper performance of these functions.

The first observation simply draws attention to what Durkheim had pointed out at the very beginning of *The Division of Labour in Society*. All sectors of collective life under the sway of the so-called industrialization experience are now or eventually will be subjected

to the operation of the division of labour in its modern, allegedly non-ascriptive, variant. Though he even extended his prediction regarding the extent of its influence to agriculture, in contradistinction to Smith and John Stuart Mill, it is clear that the argument as it stands must be understood to comprehend even "primary-group" relations like family, friends, and locale. His concern about normalizing the division of labour, given that this is the *only* option to perpetuating it in its abnormal or pathological state, takes on an added urgency. This is because of the virtually unrestricted ambit of its authority and influence, combined with the fact that there is no possibility of returning to the mechanically solidaristic collective. Since the division of labour is to be comprehended as effectively determined, rather than inevitable, with respect to its continuing development, we must come to a decision on the matters we can still decide on. We must decide whether it is to continue as a blind force or whether we can, through the activities mentioned above, impose some moral or ethical character on its direction and essential character. It is impossible to overestimate, so it would seem, the importance of his view of sociology thus understood as a *moral science* because it is the science committed to engendering a new industrial and urban solidarity by supporting and assisting in the normalization of the "social" division of labour. The pose of neutrality and objectivity, like the choice of the worker, is conditional, since the real purpose of this incremental and interventionist discipline devoted to reform is to isolate those facts that are supportive of the new solidarity from those that are inimical to it, and thereafter to support the former over and against the latter (*ibid.*: 32–38).

No analysis of the objectives of the task of normalization, so understood, can ignore the need to speak to the distinction between sense of function and functional rationality because it directs us to the relation between individual "social" functions and the overall scheme that is "Society" itself. Durkheim's solution, after all, ostensibly seeks to realize organic solidarity by aggregating microcosmic successes in the workplace en route to a macrocosmic resolution of the problem of abnormalcy in industrial societies as a whole (cf. Argyris, 1972; and Chapter 6 below). In both instances the model is the urban centre of the higher middle ages, since it is here, Durkheim alleges, that the problem of population density combined with conflicts in values was first resolved.

Durkheim wants nothing less than to achieve a reconciliation between solidaristic values of an essentially pre-industrial form of collective life and the industrial and technological reality of urban and secular capitalist societies. This merger, as it turns out, requires that one set of collective controls, already in eclipse because they no longer correspond to social reality, be replaced by another set which have at their centre the equation of individuation with functional role performance in the workplace. Notice that Durkheim's commitment to function, expressed in his criticism of dilettantism and resistance to specialization, makes no real claims on those who organize the world of work and labour, but really only speaks to the need for a fit between the individual and the societal totality itself. Since the vital centre of this emerging totality, even at the time he wrote, was the workplace and the values of exchange, profit and production associated with its emergence, the notion that one's individuation need no longer be achieved at Society's expense served to ensure that the individual's integration would go essentially unquestioned.<sup>3</sup>

Two final excerpts should underscore the dangers attendant on following Durkheim in his effective fetishization of Society as the only available collective, whether its division of labour is understood to be abnormal or normal(izing):

The division of labour does not present individuals to one another, but social functions. And Society is interested in the play of the latter; insofar as they regularly concur, or do not concur, it will be healthy or ill. Its existence thus depends upon them, and the more they are divided the greater its dependence. That is why it cannot leave them in a state of indetermination . . . Among lower peoples, the proper duty of man is to resemble his companions, to realize in himself all the traits of the collective type which are then confounded, much more

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<sup>3</sup> A prime exponent of the clearly Durkheimian animus to repair "sick" organizations one by one is Christopher Argyris (1972), an eminent administrative theorist and consultant at the time. Likewise, the work of Elton Mayo, founder of the Human Relations movement, is signally indebted not only to Durkheim in general but to his specific thesis regarding the social division of labour. In *The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization* (1933) and elsewhere Mayo follows Durkheim in treating human beings as irrational and sentimental beings in search of new moorings. Reason becomes the property of the industrial apparatus, as does *function*, in this clear effort to adopt Durkheim's "method" to American industrial society in the period between 1920 and 1950.

than today, with the human type. But, in more advanced societies, his nature is, in large part, to be an organ of Society, and his proper duty, consequently, is to play his role as an organ (Durkheim, 1952: 407, 403).

Regardless of how readily we agree with Durkheim's support for sociology as the discipline-specific set of practices devoted to the study of social facts as things, we must see in this attempt to provide a new academic pursuit with its legitimate territory an uncritical deification of society. In effect, society becomes the new secular structure that will displace present values and practices associated with religious and rural life and with the family and family background generally. Durkheim's own background could not have been irrelevant to his determination to *repair* the pathological features of the emerging collective rather than overthrow it. Neither a perpetuation of the pre-emancipation *status quo* in Europe nor revolutionary violence, as Marxism allegedly promised, could possibly guarantee the stability that continued economic and technological development demanded. To repair or reform the "abnormalities" of society requires aggregating individual successes in microcosms of the society's emerging structure like the workplace en route to normalizing the whole. Sociology becomes an interventionist discipline committed to the piecemeal and incremental approaches and methods required.

Such an approach is the only option given Durkheim's already noted vilification of intellectual dilletantism in *The Division of Labour in Society*. The supreme illusion of his method is that it actually creates the social structure through piecemeal and incremental approaches, when it in fact describes a *totality*. Its movement, comprehended uncritically as mere division of labour, allows little room for either thought or action to meaningfully oppose its "progress" with other values. As Adorno (1973) pointed out, J. C. Bluntschli, in his *Theory of the State* (1989 [1885]), had already realized that society was the product of the "unclassed middle", with its commitment to capitalist industrialization and the supremacy of capital over both land and labor, notwithstanding the contrary claims of political economy. In this sense society was a "society of industry" expressive of a new set of interests committed to the generation of a continuous and growing social (economic) surplus, and the world-wide industrial and technological development such a goal presupposes. Far from "function" having a sense in the emerging equation that was *independent* of predefined general and specific objectives, its very dependence on

formal and organizational predefinitions became indicative of its false sense.

### III. *Functional explanation in sociology*

Before looking at the way that Max Weber and Karl Mannheim in particular dealt with this tension between sense of function and functional rationality, some attention must be paid to the idea of a "functional" explanation in sociology. To the extent that Durkheim's preference for Society is replicated in sociology, understood as a model for his ideal of the new form of collective life, one can discover significant information about his view of social function in the nature of the functional type of explanation he clearly preferred. Perhaps nothing is more important in this regard than the fact that a functional explanation is also asserted to be a form of *evaluation*. Since it proceeds from the commitment to explain in terms of effects rather than causes, there is a clear tendency to speak of "functional prerequisites" and to argue that if there are indeed indispensable functions then the "structures" allegedly performing them must be similarly indispensable. Fallding notes that the central literature in sociological theory on the subject *begins* with a particular social system (or subsystem), then goes on to examine how the particular set of activities in question contributes to the whole. "To ask for the function of any social arrangement is to call for its justification—or alternatively for its condemnation" (Fallding, 1968: 81). Ends, goals or objectives are effectively *given* in a functional explanation because the isolation of reciprocal effects proceeds from the reality of the system as a persisting or structural whole. This givenness of goals, and this priority of the system as a whole to the "parts" whose justification lies in their contribution to it, is supremely expressive of the false function of functional rationality and the normal division of labour, in contrast to what Arendt termed "co-operation."

Fallding catches the essence of this difference when he contrasts "the function of an activity *within a system*" with "the contribution it makes to the whole." The first could conceivably occur independently of the second, since in the first case only the particular function is specified and therefore *helps* the relevant whole, while in the second the system whole itself must be specified prior to the activities "inside" it. Fallding also notices a "teleological residue" in

functional thinking which provides a dynamic aspect to such explanations because it sees the system whole as the result of developments over time, where the activities or functions are seen to serve *purposes*. "Where a system state or need-satisfaction stands at the end of a process of human endeavour, it exercises some directive power over the efforts taken to achieve it" (ibid.: 78). Merton's point about the distinction between manifest and latent functions, while significant for some analytical purposes, is ultimately moot for sociology as the science of Society, where the contrast between intended and unintended effects is at best of secondary importance (Merton, 1957: 19-84). A functional explanation in sociology, and, by implication, a conception of society as a functionally rational order, requires individual functions in the whole to be judged by reference to the objectives or purposes of the whole and their effects within it. Thus while an emphasis on causation directs us to elements outside the system under investigation, one on effects focuses our attention on what is going on inside it, and therefore presupposes the priority of the system as a whole. The element of evaluation is unavoidable where a rigid distinction like the one between function(al) and dysfunction(al) is maintained. That such a distinction is equivalent to the one between normal and pathological, as Durkheim understood them, must be clear.

Furthermore it is argued that though all judgments of *either* type are explicitly taken from the standpoint of *society*, this does not make them moral or ethical judgments, as Durkheim implied, but rather *technical ones* concerning "the working of social systems" (Fallding, 1968: 82-83). But all this claim really means is that moral or ethical judging or evaluation is really technical precisely *because the social system itself is given*, in terms of both its goals and the structures that must be judged in terms of the reciprocal effects of their respective functions. Presupposed in the technical character of such judgments as decisions about the working of the system, then, is the fact that *the goals are themselves* to be taken either as given or uncontroversial, thus someone else's business (if anyone's). Fallding spells out the character of this sort of "objective evaluation" in the following statement, which catches both the nature of society as a systemic and abstract whole and its dynamic, developmental, even teleological, aspect:

We imply objective evaluation of two kinds, in fact, whenever we specify a function. Basically, we are making a judgment as to whether the expenditure that goes into the creation and maintenance of the arrange-

ment is worthwhile; but we determine this worthwhileness by both a backward and a forward look, as it were. The backward look tries to sum up the efficiency of the arrangement in producing its effects. To the extent that it is inefficient, wasteful, it is dysfunctional in a way. The forward look examines whether the effects themselves are valuable in terms of some schedule of needs which we postulate for the life of man in society (ibid.: 81).

When Fallding argues that the point of reference for functional judgments of the allegedly "objective" type is "the present society," he glosses over an important distinction. Today any empirical observation, and the theoretical construct that informs it, will take place within society as an unspecified "generalized other". The far more significant point, however, is that no sociology is conceivable as a discipline and set of professional practices in the absence of a commitment to society as a relatively specific formal ideal. Sociology's bias toward society as the only possible collective "available" is reflected in its commitment to piecemeal and incremental intervention in the interests of reform, or, in Durkheim's words, the normalization of a social division of labour which is accepted as a "whole" uncritically.

The idea that in functional analysis we have a *specific type* of explanation rather than the failure to explain, where by explanation is understood causal explanation, has been the basis for much discussion and dispute in the literature of social theory. I have examined aspects of this problem elsewhere (Wilson, 1991; and Chapter 3 above; Wilson, 1976). To fail to give causes is to *begin* with what needs to be explained on the presumption that the "something" that exists for the sociologist must *already* have systemic properties. An emphasis on effects only underscores this element of givenness by drawing attention to activities and structures where the common-sense presumption of reciprocity and functional interdependence is itself justified by reference to the argument from functional prerequisites. Isajiw's attempt to hedge the problem of causality in philosophy by speaking of "productive causality" and "telecausality" as properties of a functional explanation only serves to demonstrate that an *external* factor, or set of factors, either cannot be discovered or is not worth discovering. In the event, sociology, as the first science of society, must take its point of departure in the above presuppositions because no other collective is (or ought to be) "really" available to the sociologist, thus to the well-informed societal member

(Isajiw, 1968). To ask for an explanation of some part of the "system," or of the system itself, is to *step outside* the system in the sense that one addresses the clear historical possibility that *some other collective* might have been possible after all had causal agency been different. As we shall see, Weber is therefore correct to contrast the two "types" of explanation on the basis of the claim that causal explanation seeks to explain the unique and non-recurrent rather than the recurrent, but wrong not to draw the obvious conclusion from this fact (Weber, 1947: 99–104).

Some of the difficulties endemic to functional explanation are nicely captured by Carl Hempel, whose analysis begins with the following observation, then goes on to show the logical problems which a commitment to functional explanation, or explanation in terms of effects, entails:

The kind of phenomenon that a functional analysis is invoked to explain is typically some recurrent activity or some behaviour pattern in an individual or a group; it may be a physiological mechanism, a neurotic trait, a culture pattern, or a social institution, for example. And the principal objective of the analysis is to exhibit the contribution which the behaviour pattern makes to the preservation or the development of the individual or the group in which it occurs. Thus, functional analysis seeks to understand a behaviour pattern or a sociocultural institution in terms of the role it plays in keeping the system in proper working order and thus maintaining it as a going concern (Hempel, 1959: 278).

Hempel argues that unlike a "deductive nomological explanation" where "the explicandum follows from the explanans", a functional explanation is guilty of affirming the consequent because it needs what it allegedly wants to explain as a precondition for explaining it. Furthermore, even if we accept the idea that there are indispensable "functional prerequisites" which must be taken consistent care of in order for society to exist, this in no way sanctions the "structures" allegedly performing them at any given time. One way of showing this would be to ask what an "adequate" performance of some indispensable function might be, for this draws attention to Fallding's earlier point about the rigid distinction between the functional and the dysfunctional (Fallding, 1972). One is hard pressed to claim that a structure can only be adjudged dysfunctional when it, or rather some part of the "social system" with which it is connected, collapses and effectively "ceases to function." There appears



to be no meaningful way for degrees of function or dysfunction to be isolated empirically.

#### IV. *Weber and the problem of (functional) rationality*

We can no longer put off discussing Max Weber's ambivalent analysis of function and functional explanation as it relates to his view of the individual in society and to the "problem of rationality" in the West (Weber, 1958, 1949; 1947: 87-123; 1946: 77-156). Most significant in Weber's case is an essential ambivalence that I describe in Chapter I as a commitment to criticize the rationalization process *uncritically*. This is because in Weber's case it is a criticism of Western rationality as its norms are embodied in key institutions like capitalism, science, technology, bureaucracy, and the social sciences that takes shape *from within* the authoritative auspices of these institutions. This criticism focuses in particular on social scientific practices understood as disciplined observation suspended between theory and practice. Weber places only the concrete methodological individual as intending actor, along with principled action and substantive rationality as sociological research values and requirements, against the rational mode of life as it is embodied in these key institutions. He then proceeds to render even this effort nugatory by declaring first that principled action must self-destruct in favour of either affective or goal rational types. Thereafter Weber states that substantive rationality itself be understood to constitute only a "formal" concept within sociology rather than a critical theoretical notion standing outside its rationality norms (Weber, 1947: 184; cf. Jameson, 1973).

Weber, however, is nonetheless aware of this ambivalence even though he finds it impossible to leave his post and theorize critically. The fact that his own criticisms of the rationalization process self-destruct because of his determination to treat them *sociologically* as bias, subjectivity, and value in no way minimizes his distance from Durkheim's more total sociological understanding and support for "society" (Wilson, 1977: 145-70). At the same time, it is necessary to be clear on the fact that his assistance to society and sociology, in contrast to Durkheim, is compromised by his resistance to the functional analytic and explanatory bias in both society and sociology. Before looking at this latter resistance, however, let us not forget to disentangle his substantive criticism of function from his analysis

of formal rationality embodied in capitalism, bureaucracy, and other institutions. Formal rationality is the institutional manifestation of the process of modern Western development inaugurated by Protestant worldly asceticism and, later on, capitalism, or at least its spirit, and it is here that the "other side" of Weber's ambivalence is clearly evident. A substantive criticism of bureaucracy can be reconciled with support for capitalism as *both* a formal and substantive ideal in the following way. Whereas capitalism is objectively rational, as it ideally is embodied in formally rational capital accounting practices, bureaucracy points to the erosion of such practices in favour of more amorphous functionally rational, organizational requirements.

Protestantism and capitalism inaugurate the rationalization process whose key characteristic in its early phases is its ideal of objective formal rationality in the face of collapsing traditions. However, the more insidious aspects of this process are conveniently deposited with bureaucracy in the field of collective action and sociology, in contrast to economics, in the area of collective analysis (Weber, 1949: 63–76; 1947: 189). Knowing he cannot have his capitalist free market ideal, Weber is determined to deny his opponents theirs. No capitalism, no socialism; the latter is, after all, a violation of "occidental reason." Modern secular bureaucracy, spawned by capitalism and its money economy as a centre effect of its own partially self-negating development, expresses the essence of *functional* rationality because cartels and the use of a new state apparatus supplant the earlier ideal of formally rational capital accounting practices. The disciplinary parallel to capitalism as Weber idealistically understands it is of course economics. The methodologically concrete "individual" as intending actor is the free market capitalist of marginal utility (or institutional) economic theory, and the disciplinary culprit with whom the sins it engendered are deposited is sociology. For Weber, capitalism is to bureaucracy as economics is to sociology, thus his overriding concern to develop an economic sociology, a sociology of economic action (Swedberg, 1998). Looked at from the other side, however, Weber wants a sociology of *scarcity* defending objective and individual centred formal rationality *against* the more amorphous collective and institutional product of its mature development beyond both capitalism and socialism—bureaucracy, that is, functional rationality (Weber, 1949: 63–76; 1947: 189).

Weber's discussion of functional analysis in the introductory sections of *Economy and Society*, which Talcott Parsons translated as *Theory*

of *Social and Economic Organization* and titled "The Fundamental Concepts of Sociology," anticipates many subsequent objections, while at the same time placing the concept of function within a larger analytical framework. In his introduction, Parsons evidences the influence upon his own thinking that "functionalism" in anthropology and sociology has wrought. Most significant in this regard is what he considers to be Weber's obsolescent equation of structural functionalism with an evolutionary emphasis on the relations between an organism and its "environment" at any time in its development. Writing in 1947, Parsons sounds particularly antediluvian in light of recent concerns with ethnology and socio-biology when he cites the harm done to any effort "to think explicitly in terms of a theoretically generalized social system" by such biological and evolutionary concerns. Parsons wants to distend an emphasis on functions, structures, and systems from evolutionary biology in favour of physiology, following two of his own mentors, Cannon (1963) and Henderson (1958, 1967). As a specific instance of the antediluvian thinking that I have attributed to Parsons, note the following editorial remark that he puts forward to demonstrate Weber's "obvious" obsolescence.

The present state of anthropological research, which has advanced enormously since Weber wrote, would seem to throw considerable doubt on the validity of this statement. In making it, Weber apparently does not adequately take account of the fundamental fact that *no non-human species has even a primitive form of language; whereas no human group is known without a fully-developed one* (Parsons, in Weber 1947: 104, note 27, emphasis mine).

Parsons' other major point, in criticism of Weber's treatment of functional analysis, suggests that his concern with the motivational understanding that the individual actor has of his own actions is problematic to the extent that Weber comprehends such a concern to be antithetical to functional analysis. I have tried to suggest a more dialectically meaningful way to see the interrelation between Weber's substantive notions and his methodological concepts. It would point to a serious tension in his work between a formal ideal (capitalism), which is also at least implicitly a substantive ideal, and one which is purposely understood to be alienated from the functional or organizational rationality (bureaucracy) which it itself has helped produce. A significant parallel to this might in turn require us to see in Weber's demand for an explanation that is *both* causal and motivational his commitment to stopping sociology short of its mark as

a "generalizing" discipline. At the same time, this would remind readers of the conceivability (*not* the possibility) of outcomes other than rationalization and world de-enchantment. Weber effectively consigns functional analysis to the role of either studying thoroughly "instinctual" forms of animate life (bees, termites, ants) or acting as a *pre-explanatory* enterprise in situations where it must "function" as a surrogate for a real explanation or as the prelude to an attempt to go beyond it. Even in the case of bees, termites, and ants, for example, Weber claims that "all serious authorities are naturally fully agreed that the limitation of analysis to the functional level is only a necessity imposed by our present ignorance which it is hoped will only be temporary" (1947: 105; cf. Bennet, 1964).

Because sociology is ipso facto a part of society as a specific kind of collective, Weber addresses the necessity of going beyond the isolation of prerequisites for survival. In such an activity sociology simply defies its own categories while it carries out its mission for society without cavil. Weber's problem, implied in the foregoing, is that he detests the collective that sociology has no choice but to help bring into being. Yet he allows his pessimistic rationalization thesis to effectively predefine his own critique as bias, subjectivity, and value because he will not leave his sociological post and theorize critically. A "capitalistic," as opposed to a bureaucratic sociology, given his understanding of capitalism, is a forlorn hope at best. Indeed, it is one not really possible in a society which takes the best features of formal rationality as a substantive ideal and mutilates them in line with bureaucratically (functionally) rational institutional modes and requirements.

The upshot of all this is that Weber yields to the temptation to give function away to the rationalization process understood as bad possibility. He does this while depositing his commitment to "sense of function" with the formally rational capitalist whose obsolescence and eclipse has been guaranteed by the very developmental dynamic capitalism has helped to set in motion. Weber puts only the concrete individual as an intending actor whose motives must be "understood" in the way of sociology's obligation to pursue a generalizing objective, in line with a social-scientific, rather than a social-theoretical, agenda. For Durkheim, sociology's refusal to put causal and motivational understanding before functional analysis, so understood, indicates the extent of its near total acquiescence in the societal task that he first fully articulated and set for it. Functional analysis, in

short, favours functional rationality, comprehended as bad possibility, in the most specific sense possible, because function is treated as synonymous with that process of rationalization that appears increasingly determined to realize society fully.<sup>4</sup>

V. *Mannheim on the functional rationalization of (substantial) reason*

Karl Mannheim treats Weber's residual theoretical commitment as unfinished sociological business, whether it is Weber's *intending* actor with motives as well as "behaviour" and function, his category of principled action between goal-rational and "affective" types, or his "formal" category of substantive rationality. Indeed, Mannheim's redefinition and reformulation of the Weberian problem of rationality in the West indicates his commitment to achieving a resolution between Weber and Durkheim, along with lesser lights (Mannheim, 1951, 1947). Mannheim makes his objective plain in the way that he reconstructs the formal/substantive distinction in Weber as a *societal*, thus sociological, conflict between "functional" and "substantial" reason. Weber's residual theoretical critique, hidden away in the "deviant" categories enumerated above, is effectively annihilated when his "problem" is turned into a Durkheimian dilemma soluble within both society and (therefore) sociology. That *both* sides of Mannheim's dichotomy between functional and substantial rationality lie within Weber's concept of formal rationality should be clear from the nature of this redefinition and reformulation. In the process Mannheim reveals a significant commitment to reconstructing the Weberian problem of rationality as one no longer beyond sociology (thus society) after all.

Indeed, in Mannheim's hands rationality and irrationality now constitute features of the world given to the sociological observer for

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<sup>4</sup> I do not mean to imply that the animus of these two types of understanding is the same, only their "effects," so to speak, in Weber's schema. Both the task of causal explanation and the *necessity* of motivational understanding, seen as simultaneously a theoretical and a practical or commonsense requirement, stand in the way of the sociological agenda. For Weber the sociologist, however, even motivational understanding addresses the limits to real (causal) explanation. It is only as a substantively rational "practical" man that Weber sees in motivational understanding a way of standing up for the objectivity of true subjectivity in the guise of intent and principle (Chapter 1).

scrutiny. The dialectical tension between elements of this problematic in Weber, however much reduced to the fact-value issue Weber allowed them to become, still spoke, albeit forlornly, to possibilities that were conceivable (however unrealizable) outside sociology and society. At the same time, there is no point in avoiding the necessary admission here: Mannheim "empiricizes" the problem by an act of sociological reduction *just as Weber implied that he must* when the latter refused to leave his sociological post and theorize critically, and instead consigned himself to "uncritical criticism" from within sociology's (thus society's) authoritative auspices.<sup>5</sup> No greater indicator of pessimism and resignation, where an individual is still capable of writing about it, could be found than in Weber's intellectual self-contempt and self-abnegation, that is, in the act of renouncing as mere values, bias, and subjectivity, the theoretical and critical concerns guiding and supporting his herculean intellectual efforts. Mannheim decides, in effect, to bring Weber into "the world" so that the analytical categories he has developed can now be put in the service of what is nothing less than a Durkheimian problematic—the problem of solidarity *given* "industrial society."

In this effort, Mannheim will go even farther than Durkheim in fetishizing society by addressing the problem of achieving "increasing functional interdependence" as one which only needs to absorb individuals with different *goals* in order to be resolved. First, Durkheim's claim to have discovered the solution to the problem of "moral density" in the urban centres of the higher middle ages is accepted without cavil, thereby eliminating any argument for the persistence of serious value conflicts from the relevant field of action. Second, Weber's rationalization process is no longer understood to embody a reconciliation of formal and substantive requirements in its *origins* (e.g. theoretically in the form of the free-market capitalist). Instead,

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<sup>5</sup> Protestantism makes possible a "spirit" of capitalism, which in turn generates capitalist economic institutions and provides them with both religious and secular legitimation, argues Weber. But capitalism's very dynamic generates both bureaucracy and sociology as the institutional embodiment of the rationalization process. For Weber, staying at one's post, when one is a member of the Protestant bourgeoisie, means staying at that mooring in the process where one finds himself *occupationally*. He makes this particularly apparent in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1958), particularly the chapter titled "Luther's Concept of the Calling," and in "Science as a Vocation" (1946: 129–56).

it is empiricized by its reductive understanding as the central features that bureaucracies and task-specialized industrial divisions of labour share in common—functional rationality and its standards for success (Mannheim, 1952: 235–49). It is precisely Weber's postulation of the *conflict* between formal and functional rationality, embodied in bureaucracy as the leading edge of the rationalization process, which is shunted aside in Mannheim's reductivist and presentist analysis. In the process, to be sure, the alleged objectivity of Weberian rationalization and de-enchantment, where function *means* bad possibility in the form of the collapse of value and freedom, is reformulated, but in a way in which society still wins and "function," thus understood, still loses. In *Man and Society in An Age of Reconstruction* (1940) Mannheim literally "ex-plains," in the sense alluded to earlier, why Weber's "deviant" categories can, after all, make sense to the sociologist. This person would otherwise be frustrated at the apparent "confusion" in Weber's thinking between the discussions of sociological methodology (ideal type, verstehen, comparative method, value neutrality, behaviour, understanding, etc.) and his pessimistic analysis of Western development.<sup>6</sup>

By "functional rationality" Mannheim understands a situation in which "a series of actions is organized in such a way that it leads to a previously defined goal, every element in the series of actions receiving a functional position and role". Such rationality is operating maximally when, "in order to attain the given goal, it co-ordinates the means most efficiently" (1940: 53). Mannheim's understanding is almost totally an *organizational* one: like Herbert Simon and numerous others after him, Mannheim will speak naturalistically of "organizational" needs and demands, but unlike them he will not hide his framework in a subfield of the social sciences concerned with administration and organization. In the grand European tradition (to 1960), Mannheim will keep alive the St. Simonian and Comtean

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<sup>6</sup> George Spencer Brown puts it this way in *Laws of Form*:

To ex-plain, literally to lay out in a plane where particulars can be readily seen. Thus to place or plan in flat land, sacrificing other dimensions for the sake of appearance. Thus to expound or put out at the cost of ignoring the reality or richness of what is so put out. Thus to take a view away from its prime reality or royalty, or to gain knowledge and lose the kingdom (Brown 1969: 126).

Adorno addresses the way Mannheim one-dimensionalizes *both* Marx and Weber in *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* (see Adorno, 1967: 37–49).

commitment to an *organizational* conception of industrial society. Here those with a "directing role" are seen to be servants of the whole and embodiments of "objective" expertise and competence, however problematic their deficit of "substantial rationality" may turn out to be in the circumstances (Wolin, 1960: 358–88; Wilson, 1973; Wilson, 1977: 184–89).

Mannheim's rendition of the problem of rationality as he has redefined it is thus instructive, for it appears to be far more comprehensive than it really is given his attitude toward both functional and substantial rationality.

Increasing industrialization, to be sure, implies functional rationality, i.e. the organization of the activity of the members of society with reference to objective ends. It does not to the same extent promote "substantial rationality," i.e. the capacity to act intelligently in a given situation on the basis of one's own insight into the interrelations of events. Whoever predicted that the further industrialization of society would raise the average capacity for independent judgment must have learned his mistake from the events of the past few years. The violent shocks of crises and revolutions have uncovered a tendency which has hitherto been working under the surface, namely, the paralysing effect of functional rationalization on the capacity for rational judgment (Mannheim, 1940: 58).

Notice how Mannheim has empiricized the category of substantive rationality in Weber by reducing it to substantial rationality. It is no longer a theoretical hiding place for the intending actor beyond sociology's ability to appropriate it as an agent of the rationalization process. The new formulation sanctions the collapse of principled or value-rational action altogether because the problem is now seen to be one that involves a conflict between the goals of a given group or organization and those of particular individuals. The implication is that this problem can be resolved societally in terms of antinomies, rather than denied such resolution by reference to the idea of societally insoluble contradictions. This constitutes nothing less than a confirmation of the task (or "function") that Durkheim had bequeathed to sociology, albeit now in the language of Germanic social theory and social science.

To say that substantive rationality is redefined so that it undermines Weber's latent critique, and comports with his category of goal-rational rather than value-rational (or principled) action, is perhaps the best way to point to Mannheim's acquiescence in reductionism and presentism.



We understand as substantially rational an act of thought which reveals intelligent insight into *the interrelations of events* of a given situation. Thus the intelligent act of thought itself will be described as "substantially rational," whereas everything else which either is false or not an act of thought at all (as for example drives, impulses, wishes, and feelings, both conscious and unconscious) will be called "substantially irrational" (*ibid.*: 53, emphasis mine).

The final arbiter of whether "intelligent insight" (or judgement) has been demonstrated, i.e. whether the thought in question realizes its objectives and takes account of its effects, is clearly a version of *goal-rational* conduct on the individual's part. The problem thus becomes one of adequate versus inadequate socialization to proper system goals on the part of the individual, as it is not only implied but articulated by Durkheim. The individual's production as a social category requires that all residual (or "deviant") forms of rationality on his part standing against the system (e.g. action, intention, substance, value) be reformulated, in Mannheim's words, as "drives, impulses, wishes and feelings, both conscious and unconscious." Value-rational, or principled, action, in short, becomes synonymous in the new equation with a higher form of affective or emotive behaviour to be dealt with, along with what Weber terms "traditional" behaviour, as a form of maladjustment, deviation, or disorder. The final upshot of this radically revised understanding of the situation is that Weber's emphasis on intention, purpose, and motive in addressing the problem of rationality by individual actors is effectively overcome. It is redefined as unfinished sociological business in line with Durkheim's vision of organic solidarity, and of sociology's role in the effort to achieve it through "normalization."

## VI. *The aesthetic and critical conceptions of form and function*

I am now in a position to conclude this inquiry by introducing some novel understandings whose net effect should render the exercise a prologomenon to subsequent efforts. The aim here, as noted, is to revive the extended interest in this effort to recover and take back key concepts and understandings, among them "function." This concluding effort emphasizes my commitment to concepts as universals whose very inability to absorb their objects demands resistance to their operational reduction to terms with "concrete" definitions. Understood to include a moment whose capacity for disciplined

observation must be seen to constitute nothing less than a "false outside" inside life, thought can assist life only by efforts which show its scope by demonstrating its limits. In what follows, I shall be occupied with precisely this need to realize a heightened conception of possibility beyond the confines of this pre-eminently sociological moment.

Adolph Loos and Ludwig Wittgenstein understood themselves to some extent to be "integral men," in the sense intended by Karl Kraus when he took aim at *fin de siècle* Vienna, particularly after becoming editor of *Die Fackel* in 1899 (Janik and Toulmin, 1973: 13–91; Field, 1967; Iggers, 1967). In order to protect "culture" in the generic sense of this term, both insisted that form be subordinated to function so that an aesthetic and cultural sphere could be guaranteed protection from the incursions of a false function in the service of formal requirements. Neither function nor culture is served, Kraus asserted, where there is a conspicuous failure (or refusal) to make a distinction between an urn and a chamber pot, so that the urn is used as a chamber pot and the chamber pot as an urn. This sentiment, not so different at all from Weber's commitment to principles, values, intentions, and motives, readily carried over into a vast number of endeavours like language and speech (Kraus), philosophy (Wittgenstein), architecture (Loos, Englemann, Wittgenstein), musical composition (Schoenberg, Berg), literature (Hofmanstaal, Zweig, Musil), poetry (Trakl), and science and technology (Boltzmann, Hertz, Helmholtz).<sup>7</sup> The plain argument amounted to this: allow function the priority over form which it must have if its ambit is to be properly restricted in line with cultural, aesthetic, literary and other concerns. Failure to heed this injunction results in the worst of all possible worlds, or so it seems. In the event, "function" has unlimited sway precisely because it proceeds from prior non-functional considerations (class, caste, power, gender) which are effectively covered over, either by being ignored altogether or by being treated as issues *deriving from* the alleged objectivity of "functional rationality."

Again, there is no concern here to play down the essential difference between the attack mobilized against Vienna between 1890 and 1914 by the figures just cited and the notion of critique premised upon

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<sup>7</sup> Weber's real distinction then is between false motives, intentions and purposes serving the (false) function of the rationalization process and the *real* motives, intentions, and purposes which for him *stand against* function defined in terms of this rationalization process.

dialectical, historicist, and holistic thinking which we have been using as our resource throughout this chapter. What is significant instead is the assistance which the prior critique provides us with in our effort to recover function, in spite of the resistance of these largely in-house critics of bourgeois culture in Vienna during this period to Marxian and Hegelian theoretical and analytical concepts. As an example, consider the aid rendered by someone like Loos to anyone interested in disentangling "true" from "false" functions by requiring form to follow function rather than dictate it. In the latter case, a pre-formed and pre-planned and organized notion is effectively repudiated, and function is defined and valued by reference to its capacity to meet allegedly more "objective" standards. Only in the first instance, in clear contrast to the second, is the system, structure, or organization fetishized, with the result that the sway of "false" function within it is given an almost limitless ambit.

This is not to deny the need to speak to the opposite problem, one in which function may appear to be fetishized either because it is distended from prior formal requirements, or because no such possibility allegedly exists. At this point Weber's distinction between rationality from the standpoint of the actor's intentions and rationality in terms of the consequences or results of such intended action may be of limited assistance (Weber, 1947: 100-03, 112-18). As long as the individual and the collective are not put in a relationship of mutual exclusivity, one to the other, but are rather understood topically as moments, this distinction is useful in any effort to recover or rehabilitate function. Weber's view, given an empirical convention, was that society in the person of the rationalization process and its leading institutions was the *only* human collective realistically "available". This ultimately led him to pessimism and compelled him to treat his concrete individual as one who was in a battle to the death with society. In clear contrast, Durkheim had sought to take account of such an attitude in his attempt to normalize such a "pathological" view of collective life by making individualism functional *for society* by generalizing its ambit and making it available to a vastly greater member of persons in industrial society. Mannheim, finally, had reconciled Durkheim and Weber by reformulating the Weberian problem of rationality in a way which now expressed an essentially Durkheimian dilemma.

From what has been said, it would seem possible to maintain an objective notion of function only insofar as we are able to keep it

in a position of relative autonomy and independence from the demands of pre-formed and pre-defined systems and structures. This would be true whether the relevant structure was society as a whole, organizations characterized by bureaucracy and division of labour, or other subgroups basing their status as “goal-oriented” collectivities on their imitation of formal organizations or systems. Here the claim of “increasing functional interdependence” can be seen for what it really is given the interests, motives, and structures it serves. The problem would then lie in how we could conceivably treat function as objective in any real sense in light of its apparently unavoidable subordination to some social structure. Having said this, I nevertheless would argue that the status of “function” as a universal allows us to keep this notion alive *as possibility* in explicit contravention of empirical conceptions of the concrete and the abstract.<sup>8</sup> Even if subsequent analysis could reveal that Weber’s principled actor—motivated, intending, and value-bearing—or Arendt’s individual in a co-operative network rather than a formalized division of labour, were really “part of” society in one way or another, this would not invalidate the argument.

The solution to the problem requires us to begin with society as a false and abstract whole, and to take note of how the principle of individualism is distributed *given* the presumption (and desirability) of “increasing functional interdependence.” Function is distended from its status as a modifier conditioning rationality in a downward direction, for both supporters and critics, whether within or outside societal rationality norms. This is achieved by simply requiring that the logic of co-operation that it demands be *carried through to everyone equally*, in a substantively *rather than* a formally meritocratic way (Wilson, 1977: 200–30). This is the model with which to confront those who would argue for the objective validity of a concept of function clearly subordinated to *prior* formal understandings. These understandings have been hypostasized, reified, and fetishized so that they appear from the present vantage point to be *in res natura*, or, at the very least, all that is “available.” No one has captured this sense of func-

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<sup>8</sup> This would overcome the conflict between viewing man in the collective exclusively in terms of the societal fetishism, with its derived presumptions regarding rationality and function (Durkheim), while addressing man’s possibilities by pointing to his status as an isolated “individual” actor (Weber). Note that this conflict is itself the product of empiricizing the man-nature dichotomy whose central role in the modern Western project is unchallengeable, a point I develop in Chapter 10.

tion better than Adorno, himself so critical of the *lack* of objectivity in the social scientific disciplines and one whose Viennese training was so central to his rather unique concerns as a critical theorist of the first generation. Responding to Aldous Huxley, he said:

Domination may be defined as the disposition of one over others but not as the complete disposition of all over all, which cannot be reconciled with a totalitarian order. This is even more true of work relations than of sexual anarchy. A man who existed only for the sake of others . . . would, to be sure, have lost his individual self, but he would also have escaped the cycle of self-preservation which maintains the Brave New World as well as the old one. *Pure fungibility would destroy the core of domination and promise freedom.* The weakness of Huxley's entire conception is that it makes all its concepts relentlessly dynamic but nevertheless arms them against the tendency to turn into their own opposites (Adorno, 1967: 105, emphasis mine).

It is his determination here and elsewhere to render momentous Weber's linearly conceived problem of rationalization as *rational domination* which is so important in Adorno's formulation and understanding of the problem. Weber yields up reason to the rationalization process, which he is then tempted to treat as itself "irrational," thereby leaving himself no option but to treat his own resistance as subjectivity in a world in which only objectivity, however fraudulent, "matters". This capacity to see *domination* in socially "functional" relations leads Adorno to offer the solution of total extension in the name of possibility while at the same time, and necessarily, keeping the dialectic alive in the name of reason. Reason and possibility thus have the same name: when the first exercises itself in as unfettered a way as possible, it speaks to what life itself could have—real freedom. Both Socrates and Christ suggested that the truth of universal intelligibility might after all lie in just such a willingness to exist "only for the sake of others" (Arendt, 1958: 246–47). It is more than a coincidence that in this remarkable insight even formal logic is in agreement with dialectics rather than with "empirical reality."

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### USE VALUE AND SUBSTANTIVE RATIONALITY: MARX AND WEBER ON DICHOTOMIZATION IN MODERN SOCIAL THEORY

Two particularly important dichotomies for anyone studying modern social theory are Marx's distinction between use values and exchange values and Weber's distinction between substantive and formal rationality. Indeed, it might be argued that in these distinctions lies a basis for understanding several of their most significant arguments about the central role of capitalism in modernity. Not surprisingly, they have also been significant elements in the emergence and evolution of postmodern thought, particularly the distinction between use values and exchange values in Marx (Baudrillard, 1981: 130–42; 1975: 21–52).

In what follows, I want not only to discuss their function in Marx's and Weber's respective theories, but to cite some later instances of this type of thinking enroute to addressing both the central role of dichotomies and important differences in the way they are employed in and as theoretical strategies. As an opening observation, it can be argued that the invocation of dichotomies constitutes a vehicle for bringing to disciplined consciousness attitudes and world views already held or generally accepted by the thinker or speaker. As such, they possess both the strengths and the weaknesses of all second order constructs relative to the first order constructs of everyday life, namely, that they achieve greater conceptual precision, but at the cost of the complexity of empirical reality (Weber, 1978: 8–11; 19–22; 1949: 89–111). For this reason it makes sense to treat them as approaches to reality rather than solely, or even mainly, as ways of describing it (Weber, 1949: 106–107; Wilson, 1984: 8–11; see Chapter 10).

Having said this, a number of issues present themselves to anyone anxious to penetrate the deep reality of dichotomization as a culturally available and socially and intellectually necessary practice for members. A most important consideration is the relation that obtains, or is supposed to obtain, between each "side" of the dichotomy.

Does one side environ the other, or do they carve up reality such that there is a fairly even division? Is one side the ideal that its other fails to measure up to? Or is it an originary and/or future telos or end point? If the latter, then is there alleged to be a discernible process whereby one achieves or again achieves this origin/goal? How much of its attainment is inevitable and how much determined and/or a function of human agency? From the questions I have asked, it must be clear that I am addressing the kinds of dichotomies formulated in moral philosophy, social and political thought and, more recently, in the social sciences.

These questions raise important issues about conceptual and theoretical strategies, as well as constituting key features of a thinker's work. They also provide us with important ways of understanding this work, including not only what motivates it but the intellectual and practical lineage of its central dichotomies. What "family resemblances" or "elective affinities" do these dichotomies bear to other concepts, as well as to those that are either contrary or opposite to them? (Wittgenstein, 1953: no. 67; Weber, 1946: 62–63, 284–285). In addition, all dichotomies of any gravity have a history, and some even have "careers." It is necessary to know what these are if we are adequately to place them in their milieu for a fuller understanding of and sensitivity to their meaning. Again, this may be a more relevant consideration for dichotomies and distinctions in moral philosophy, social and political thought, and the social sciences. This is principally because dichotomization would appear to be an even more central feature of the investigative method or procedure in these disciplines than is the case in the natural sciences (Greimas, 1968).

The greatest thinkers in these fields regularly accompany their expository work with periodic indications that they are attempting to be methodologically and/or procedurally self-conscious while in the midst of carrying it out. One way of achieving this would be to "stand back" from what they are doing from time to time in order to reflect on how and why they are doing it, both in a general sense and in their own specific way. How does their theoretical strategy make sense to them as a device for achieving a fuller understanding, and a more effective presentation, of the issues they are addressing? Another would see this standing back as a way of asserting or reasserting matters of principle that must not be allowed to slip into the background or be forgotten. In this latter case the link between

the topical and the prescriptive function of dichotomies would be even closer to the surface than is the case with thinkers engaged in less transparent theoretical strategies.

These two forms of methodological or theoretical self-consciousness roughly correspond to those of Marx and Weber respectively. In both cases it is striking how each acknowledges the role of their key “significant others” relative to the dominance of the more immediately “real,” albeit incomplete or false, side of the dichotomy. In Marx, the relation of use value to exchange value involves the temporal precedence of use values, as well as a preference for these values as ones that will ultimately triumph over exchange values in and through a historical process of human unfolding. Thus exchange values take the form of a distortion, *albeit a historically necessary distortion*, which yet constitutes the driving force of this process, particularly as it reaches its apogee in a dominantly (if never fully) capitalist society (Marx, 1973: 100–103, 547, 881; 1976: chapter 1; Meikle, 1985; Wilson, 1991).

For Weber, the activity of dichotomization is to a far greater extent conditioned by his more conscious attempt to function as a methodologist in and for the emerging discipline of (German) sociology than is the case for Marx (Cahnman, 1964: 103–127). While Weber formulates second order constructs like “Verstehen,” he also seeks a greater transparency by raising to this same level the process itself in his discussion of “ideal types”—Weber’s formalization of what phenomenologists would later call “second order constructs” (Schutz, 1962–64; 1967). For Weber, the need to rely upon and utilize concepts with which he disagreed constituted nowhere near the problem that it did for Marx, doubtless because of his more central role and status in the dominant intellectual controversies of the day in Germany. In clear contrast is Marx, a refugee in one or another jurisdiction while he carried out his major writings, but one who hoped that his critique of political economy would become part of the discipline of economics long after it was clear that this would not be the case.

### I. *Social science and its significant others*

My utilization of the term “significant other” as a way of making reference to the residual yet (if anything) *more* important function of

use values and substantive rationality relative to exchange values and formal rationality respectively requires some explanation. The "significant other" is a core concept in sociology and the social sciences generally that addresses those persons, groups, and institutions whose norms, values, principles, and standards are or ought to be aspired to by members of their respective collectives. Significant others embody, or are intended to embody, the cultural—even transcultural—centrality and integrity of a given collective's core values. Not surprisingly, they are therefore key elements of what social scientists call the socialization experience, the process whereby norms, values, principles and standards are transmitted to ensuing generations and new arrivals (Brim and Wheeler, 1966).

In calling use value and substantive rationality "significant others" because of the way they function as key concepts in social research strategies, I am addressing a central institution of modern Western reason—disciplined observation between theoretical reflection and daily life practice. The form of life that this commitment to disciplined observation gives to modern Western civilization is reflected in its belief in autonomous "facts of life," and in the central role of disciplined observation in the regularized and timely apprehension of these facts that this civilization requires (Wilson, 1984; 1977). At the same time, however, both use value and substantive rationality (as well as their respective other sides) and the significant other are concepts that are located in disciplinary and professional practices which have to be explained to most members. Both are thus second order, intellectual constructs (like their respective dichotomies) rather than the first order ones that characterize everyday life within given cultures, classes, and groups (Schutz, 1962–64).

For Marx and Weber both the process of conceptualization in general, and their own constructs in particular, were practices that they believed should be rendered as transparent as possible without compromising the scholarly task. This was to be accomplished either through an analytic standing back (for both thinkers) or a principled interlude (Weber), either in the process of the exposition itself (both) or in special essays and treatises devoted more concertedly to the goal of methodological clarification (Weber). Having said this, however, it is necessary to qualify the statement already made to the effect that use values and substantive rationality, as well as their respective dichotomies, are second order constructs. This is because while use values and substantive rationality are second order con-

structs, both on their own and as part of a dichotomy, they are also first order constructs, *or rather second order constructs of first order constructs* (Voegelin, 1952: 29).

While it is certainly the case that this claim also holds for their respective other sides—exchange value and formal rationality—it is to the difference between them rather than to the similarities on this score that we need to attend. In the event, use values and substantive rationality are not distinguished from exchange values and formal rationality simply because the former are idealized and prescriptive first order constructs while the latter are real and descriptive. Even in the case of Weber, and certainly in that of Marx, this would be not only to simplify the matter but to distort it fundamentally, by reconstructing the difference as one reducible to the distinction between values and facts. For in both instances the ground provided by an understanding of the priority of use values and substantive rationality, *because of their superior access to the deeply real or true*, motivates each thinker's theoretical strategy in his deployment of these central, even elemental, dichotomies.

There is a sense in the work of both that by “deeply” real is meant not only, or even mainly, historical or final priority but a kind of phenomenological priority, albeit one that is dynamic rather than reducible to the static distinction between base and superstructure. Thus each respectively regards use values and substantive rationality not only as grounding exchange values and formal rationality but also as continually generating them from human, or humanly produced, resources. These resources are at one and the same time continually present to human being in the world while nonetheless being more “essential” (Marx) or “substantive” (Weber) than their respective other sides. Yet the central role of humanity over time and space in its own history-making on earth explains how it is that use values and perhaps even substantive rationality can, indeed must, generate forms different from, and even in conflict with, themselves (see Chapter 10). The display of difference, conflict, and especially contradiction is, after all, the very purpose of both dichotomies, rather than an unintended result of their utilization and deployment by Marx and Weber (Wilson, 1984: 88–97; Jameson, 1973; and the Introduction to this volume).

Thus each dichotomy consists of both a second order construct and a second order construct of two first order constructs. The point, however, is that use value and substantive rationality produce the

side that is deeper, and not just in an ideal or prescribed sense that can be reduced solely or mainly to the distinction between values and facts. The limitation inherent in employing concepts and dichotomies that seek through second order constructs to depict first order constructs that are either different, contrasting, opposed, or contradictory to one another requires us to resist this tendency to reduce them. This is particularly important when the result is a dichotomy that is more unreflectively taken for granted because it is assumed to be more coterminous with a more directly apprehended reality. What is accomplished by such a reduction dissipates the tension inherent in the original, while generating a shorthand for reality which sees each side as factually equal. In the event, it becomes a prelude to the absorption or collapse of what was intended to be the deeper side, now reduced to "values" (Voegelin, 1952: 13–23; Weber, 1949: 10–12; and Chapter 1 above).

This apparent factual equality takes the form of an equation that contrasts the perceptibly real on the one hand with the normatively real on the other. The former is assumed to be synonymous with what is "really" the case, factually speaking, while the latter now understands by the normatively real either the isolated actor's subjectivity as a fact or those values actually held by or available to members (Weber, 1949: 1–10, 22–25, 55–60).<sup>1</sup> Before giving Marx too much credit for his refusal to engage in these kinds of reductive strategies, we should note that neither economics nor sociology was sufficiently "refined" as a discipline at the time Marx wrote. Having said this, it is still correct to note that Marx almost always resisted practicing the fact-value distinction in his own work because it was obvious to him that the political economists almost always failed to practice it in theirs. Nevertheless, both Marx and Weber were cursed by Engels and Mannheim respectively, interpreters whose effect was to empiricize the idea of the deeply real given in use value and substantive rationality by reducing it to subjective ends or values in their respective governing dichotomies.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In his methodological essays, Weber argues that "scientifically valid social science analysis can strive for supra-cultural validity." This is the real, strategic reason why Weber, as editor of the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, needed to defend both value-freedom (*Wertfreiheit*) given value relevance or relatedness (*Wertbeziehung*) and the corollary protocol reduction to facts and values as an operational requirement in social science research and presentation.

<sup>2</sup> I discuss "empiricization" in several places throughout *Tradition and Innovation*

## II. *Momentous dichotomies and conflicting levels of reality*

The fact that some first order constructs are not really constructs generated in what phenomenologists call the “natural attitude” at all, but are formal derivations from second order constructs, including second order constructs of first order constructs, is highly significant (Voegelin, 1952). Their purpose is to achieve a more formalized type of description, prescription, and/or prediction than normally can be achieved at the first order level whenever we employ them. Dichotomies (along with their component parts) take the form of permitted, sanctioned, even expected and required, ways of conducting conceptual and theoretical activities in our culture in order to achieve these objectives. When one side of a dichotomy is contrasted to its conceptual other by being constituted as a first order deeper reality relative to the more superficial, available or distorted reality of this other, we have a uniquely powerful way of employing this culturally sanctioned disciplinary and professional activity.

Dichotomies, as noted, have their roots in daily life, and may have been a feature of such life and living for a very long time, if not from an early point in the human habitation of the earth. Like all forms of complex reasoning, however, their sustained strategic deployment depends not only on writing, and later the printing press, but on the gradual ascendancy of the written tradition over the oral tradition that the latter technology has made possible (Innis, 1951; 1950; McLuhan, 1964; 1962; 1951). Yet what is significant here is the present theoretical utilization of second order constructs intended to depict constructs of reality at different levels of first order reality, in contrast to the perennial human practice of constructing first order constructs in and through the commonsense mode of everyday life. Conspicuously absent in the first order constructs of everyday life, in contrast to those derived from second order constructs produced

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(1984) as an intellectual and cultural activity and process necessary for generating the commitment to independent and autonomous “facts of life.” As a moment of practice, this commitment is necessary if we are to engage in abstraction, but must never be considered sufficient in the absence of reflexivity. Failure to complete the full circuit of thought, and the resulting empiricization on its own, always favours a false, technicized practice and a preference for flattened out, unmomentous, one-dimensional distinctions. Such distinctions, alongside an unwavering commitment to “facts of life,” are all-too-often the essence of our “form of life” in advanced industrial societies.

in an intellectual or scholarly mode, is the conscious reference to levels of reality and their apprehension (Edel, 1959).

First order constructs generated in daily life may encounter, produce, and address preferences or values through what is observed in the commonsense mode. But only through second order constructs that seek to reproduce this reality (or others) in a disciplined or theoretical mode is it possible to lay claim to the presence of a deeper reality relative to that available in and through first order depictions. This is why the reduction of more "momentous" and topical dichotomies to a mere reproduction (or implication) of the described and prescribed, of facts and values, constitutes a lower and less distinctive form of theoretical reflection and reasoning than their originals. For in this state, such a reduction is much closer to a first order construct produced in the natural attitude of everyday life, something made possible, even necessary, by its empiricization into the taken for granted reality that is, after all, a characteristic of everyday life itself (Schutz 1962-4: part I; Wilson, 1991: chapters 3-5).

This suggests that dichotomies may be best understood as devices which help us overcome the limitations given in second order formalizations by employing contrasting sides that are more, indeed much more, than mere descriptions and prescriptions, facts and values. Because these latter have been flattened out and effectively "one-dimensionalized," as in the case of the reduction to values and facts for instance, the constructive tension, the dialectical interplay, has been lost between each side. In the event, the resulting dichotomy is little more than an available shorthand for thought in the form of a second order construct first reduced, then empiricized, into a first order construct that is little more than a proxy for a description of *mutually exclusive alternatives*. In the case of the fact-value dichotomy, it has become an exemplar of our general culture in its very worst sense. No distinction in the modern sociological arsenal better illustrates the consequences for thought of this cultural practice of empiricization through reduction than this dichotomy. It underscores just how efficiently dichotomies addressing significant contradictions in our culture are being converted into available and sanctioned second order versions of first order constructs as a purposeful outcome of the process of socialization itself. This point had already been made most pointedly by Marx in his comments on the public/private dichotomy in Hegel (see Avineri, 1968).



Our need for, as well as the culturally available practice of, dichotomization is responsible for the waning attempt to capture momentous and contradictory features of collective life in and through dichotomies. Unfortunately, it is also responsible for the heightened effort to reduce dichotomies to “manageable proportions” by simultaneously “empiricizing” them and rendering their “sides” mutually exclusive. That we are especially in need of the former activity must perforce be evident in the all-encompassing power of the latter pursuit in our present culture, alongside the continuing neo-conservative political, societal, and economic agenda that supports it (see note 1, Author’s Introduction). Momentous dichotomies like the distinctions between use value and exchange value and substantive rationality and formal rationality are simply less likely to be generated in the face of the truncated notions of the practical and commonsensical that increasingly dominate our intellectual landscape as well as our everyday life. Under the joint pressure of neo-conservative practicality and postmodern forgetfulness, even reference to the term “capitalism” has either abated altogether, or been reduced in the contemporary one-dimensional lexicon to historical description or “obsolete discourse” (Wilson, 2002; and Chapter 1 above).

Not only are universities following this trend toward jettisoning forms of reflection and critique that seriously dispute the desirability of either neo-conservatism or postmodernism as dominant, required, or officially approved ideologies. They, along with the granting bodies to which they are increasingly beholden, are often in the forefront of such a trend in response to their desperate need for funding, often at almost any price. Over thirty five years ago Robert Hutchins and Clark Kerr defined the emerging American “multiversity” as an organization that would do anything that anyone in society wanted done if one were willing to pay for it (Hutchins, 1967; Kerr, 1964). Not only have things not changed; the situation has intensified as a consequence of over twenty years of a neo-conservative agenda that has continued to attract public support through the electoral process in virtually all capitalist democracies. The societies being created by this agenda now include more and more people who wish to see the university turned into a training school as the *quid pro quo* for public and other support, “downsized,” or displaced altogether in favour of community colleges. Frequently, it is to a combination of all three of these alternatives that neo-conservative governments turn

(Wilson, 1999; cf. Weber, 1946: 129–156; Freund, 1968: 3–35; Bendix and Roth, 1971).

While these remarks may seem far away from, if not irrelevant to, the topic of dichotomization, and in particular to the dichotomies between use value and exchange value and substantive rationality and formal rationality, this is not the case. Indeed, the relation between the need for mobilizing constructive dichotomies of the sort cited, and the presence or absence of institutions committed to supporting these practices, as the university once was, must be obvious. To put the matter in a form that comports with what has already been said, the university is increasingly committed to teaching or encouraging students to flatten out or ignore altogether momentous dichotomies rather than to generate or reflect on them. That some graduate students are still encouraged to engage in this latter practice not only begs the question. It ignores the increasing pressure, even on those in fields still considered to be more esoteric, to adopt (or adapt) research, thesis and dissertation topics that are more “user friendly” to both neo-conservatism and postmodernism. It is not just that application has supplanted critical thought across a vast number of disciplines beyond professional studies. Rather, the implication of such long-term research funding dependencies on the part of academic faculty and graduate students must be clear. They are being encouraged in the most direct way to acquiesce in externally defined notions of application that equate it with immediate or eventual “commercializability,” in Canada even more than in the United States, or so it would seem (Advisory Council on Science and Technology, 1999; 2000).

### III. *Weber's acquiescence: treating substantive rationality as a 'formal' concept*

In contrast to Weber, Marx sets the stage for his attempt to employ use value against exchange value by asserting not only its phenomenological superiority but its originary and/or future priority as well. It will be evident in what follows that Marx is far less willing to detach phenomenological from originary and future priority than Weber, and employs prediction, along with a dialectical/historical and developmental argument from both Aristotle and Hegel, as a strategy to this end. For Marx, this is motivated by a view of the relation between concepts and reality that refuses to accept the pur-

suit of identity through correspondence as the sole, or even the major, justification for theoretical thought (Marx, 1973: 100–08; cf. Lukacs, 1978; Meikle, 1985; Ollman, 1979; Sayer, 1979; Wilson, 1991: chapters 3–5). Weber, in contrast, formalizes, and effectively de-historicizes, the activity of distinction in general and taxonomy in particular, in order to bound and define the things he is doing, as if such formal rationality were *de rigueur* for anyone aspiring to the mantle of “responsible sociologist.” The irony of this is that by formalizing and de-historicizing distinctions and taxonomies in the interests of neutrality, thereby freeing both from critical reflection, he is required to acknowledge the authority of the protocol distinction between method and theory (Weber, 1978: 3–307). Even though this allows him to get his scientific work as he understands it done, such an acknowledgement only functions “positively” by demonstrating his own ambivalence as a scholar who is simultaneously part of and (allegedly) at a distance from the so-called rationalization process (Freund, 1968).

At the same time, however, and as a result of this commitment to “gatekeeping” as a central arbiter of the *Methodenstreit*, he underscores the difference between an observer-based scholarly orientation to reality and the critical mode of theorizing which abjures such activity on its own as anything but “responsible.” To this end, he is forced to acquiesce to a far greater extent than Marx ever did in the distinction between description and prescription, a functional version of the fact-value dichotomy. In the event, the predictive element is smuggled in as a combination of extrapolated and inevitable (not determined) description and an implicit or explicit reference to the values of the speaker or writer. The irony of Weber’s position is most readily in evidence when he provides a justification for the very reduction to facts and values that he is determined to eschew in other parts of his work. In these latter instances, he shows that he knows the difference between being a formally correct traditional scholar and a critically reflexive intellectual practitioner. This contrast is particularly evident in the mode of exposition of his early methodological essays and the combination of assertion and reflection that characterizes *Economy and Society*, written later. Nevertheless, the distinction between formal and substantive rationality in Weber’s work does not resolve itself into a defense of the importance of critique. It rather justifies the very reduction to description and prescription, facts and values, method and theory that gives the stamp

of authenticity to the completion of reality because of the apparent hopelessness and futility of any "subjective" opposition to it. This renders Weber's observations regarding the alleged pluralism and antagonism of values in human life little more than a forlorn hope (Freund, 1968; Bendix and Roth, 1971).

To argue that conventional accounts of the tension in Weber between being an actor and a scholar thoroughly miss the mark is not to claim that they are untrue. I rather wish to make the point that they arise out of a superficial reading of Weber. This reading misses a deeper tension between critical thought and disciplined, scientific observation as zero-sum options in Weber, options he never fully resolved, even with *Verstehen* and the individualizing method. It is even tempting to argue that his alleged hostility to Marx was less a result of their different take on the facts and how to understand them than it was envy on Weber's part. After all, this form of thought and thinking had been invented by a prominent predecessor, but was no longer considered "respectable" or "responsible," even by Weber himself. The deeply real priority of substantive rationality becomes intolerable for Weber once reality itself has been formulated in a way that equates it solely with the facts available to a disciplined observer. That these facts are sufficient rather than only necessary to a proper description of this very reality for him leaves substantive rationality no option but to acquiesce in the values of the forlorn subject who is barely his own end, forget that of anyone else (Chapter 1 above).

The idea that both sides of a dichotomy have an equal claim to the accolade of being real, or more real, is no longer sustainable in the face of a protocol which even yields pride of place to formal over substantive rationality in the way we state the dichotomy. This is in contrast to the way that we always "know" that use value is prior in every sense to exchange value for Marx, but not as a way of falsely prioritizing prescription over description, values over facts. It is rather because the relation between them is always dynamic and dialectical, thus "substantive" and material in the Aristotelian understanding, and never merely "formal" like the dichotomy between "formal" and "substantive" (*materiale*) rationality in Weber (Meikle, 1985). Weber makes this all too clear in his concluding sentence to the section of *Economy and Society* titled "Formal and Substantive Rationality of Economic Action," where he makes the following observation:

Quite *apart* from and in addition to a substantive critique of the *results* of economic activity [*Wirtschaftsergebnisse*], it is possible to take an ethical, ascetic, or esthetic critique of the ethos of economic activity [*Wirtschaftsgesinnung*] into consideration as well as the *instruments* of economic activity [*Wirtschaftsmittel*]. The ‘merely formal’ performance of money calculation *may* appear to all of these approaches as quite secondary or even as fundamentally inimical to their respective postulates (even apart from the consequences of the specifically modern calculating attitude). There is no possibility here of deciding upon but only of determining and delimiting [*Feststellung und Begrenzung*] what is to be called ‘formal.’ In this context the concept ‘substantive [*materiale*]’ is itself in a certain sense ‘formal;’ that is, it is an abstract, *generic* concept (Weber, 1978: 86, translation modified).

When we look at the relation of the concrete to the abstract and the whole to its parts in the thought of Marx and Weber we can see how and why formalization was much more central to Weber than to Marx. In this case, as in others, inverting two momentous distinctions like the abstract and concrete and the whole and its parts has significant implications for the epistemological assumptions of both thinkers, particularly since these distinctions constitute the most basic way we typically contrast critical and traditional theory. The result only underscores the serious differences between them, differences that are more a function of the relative roles of theory, practice and disciplined observation in the postulation of knowledge claims in each person’s work than they are evidence of any absence of methodological (or procedural) self-consciousness on Marx’s part. In addition, by the turn of the century there was a far more formalized and discipline-based division of labour among increasingly professionalized academics, manifested in the emergence of economics and the more “social” sciences, than had existed in Marx’s time (see Wilson, 1991: 180–200; Wiles, 1972: 3–14).

The emergence of this more formalized academic division of labour was a subject of great concern throughout Western Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but nowhere more so than in Germany. Throughout this period, Weber was nothing less than a “gatekeeper” who played a central role in deciding what was and what was not theoretically and methodologically “legitimate” in the social sciences and social theory. This is only underscored by the crucial “brokering” function he performed, particularly at the German Sociological Society meetings in 1910 (Cahnman, 1964; Bendix and Roth, 1971). This role made it not only possible but necessary for

him to encourage a detached and neutral posture in one role that he was more than willing to forego in others. Indeed, importation of the concept of "role" from its original home in the theatre into social theory and the social sciences, anticipated by Smith over a century before, provided both evidence of this division of labour and a conceptual defense of its legitimacy (Smith, 1966; Mead, 1962). This suggests that we recast Weber's formal distinctions so that they now function less as an indication of how "responsible" he was and more as a device which allows him to engage in activities that are at the very least in fundamental conflict with one another.

One could even argue that in Weber we see an individual whose well-documented torture at the hands of a civilization he despised yet could not repudiate constitutes an early extreme instance of what Merton and others would later call role strain (Merton, 1957; Marianne Weber, 1975). Only here the strain that arises is mainly intellectual in nature, thus between the desire to engage in an active form of reflection given its highest modern expression by Marx and the professionally respectable, but intellectually unsatisfying, activities of disciplined observation, formal gatekeeping, and "boundary maintenance." These latter activities, in clear contrast to the former, make their fortune out of the very societal complexity, with its apparently unavoidable "situational ethics," that must have been a major source of pessimism for Weber. This deep conflict in Weber, reflected in the tension between intellectual and professional roles, contrasts strikingly with the far less significant conflict between thinking and acting. Seen in this light, being a hospital administrator during the Great War is far more a conscious effort by Weber to forget this deeper intellectual conflict than it is a justification for raw, unreflective, practical action.

Putting a spin like this on Weber's careful formal distinctions within sociological theory underscores the significantly altered status of both theoretical reflection and everyday life practice relative to disciplined observation in his thought. If the first must now be either reduced to testable, verifiable/falsifiable hypotheses or factually jettisoned as "values," the second must be made responsible increasingly to the formal requirements of detachment, objectivity, and neutrality (Chapter 3; Wilson, 1976). This redefinition of practice based on a new, specifically "societal" rationality constituted a necessary complement to the flattening out of political economy and its (Marxian) critique that was simultaneously being realized by the emergence of

economics as a formal discipline (Wilson, 1991: 147–200). The result of this new, vastly different understanding of the diminished functions of both theory and practice relative to detached and neutral disciplined observation led Weber to equate formal rationality with the concrete and the concrete in turn with the factual. Substantive rationality, now consigned to the status of an abstraction concerned with value(s), in particular the valuing individual subject, becomes little more than a residual element of reality, seen from the standpoint of the increasingly pre-eminent, formally rational, sociological observer.

#### IV. *Marx's resilience: observing use value through exchange value*

This contrasts strikingly with the relation between use values and exchange values in Marx, for in this case we are not dealing with a distinction that is mainly formal at all, but rather with one that is both historical and broadly empirical (rather than narrowly “empiricized”) in nature. This is perhaps most evident in the very different role assigned to theoretical reflection vis-à-vis detached and neutral disciplined observation in mobilizing and explicating the dialectically interpenetrating reality of contradiction that deployment of this dichotomy intends. Although Marx acknowledges that we only know use values through exchange values because only the latter are really observable as such, it is use values that nonetheless ground and make possible exchange values, both spatially and temporally and in a phenomenological sense. Such an assertion underscores the deep function of both theoretical reflection and practice vis-à-vis disciplined observation, since exchange values are only thought to be pre-eminent because they are knowable in and through everyday life and its disciplined observation. The following passage from the classic analysis of the commodity in Chapter 1 of *Capital* makes this clear:

When commodities are in the relation of exchange, their exchange value appeared to us as something totally independent of their use value. But if one now abstracts from the use value of the products of labour, so one obtains its value, as it was just now defined. The common factor [*Gemeinsame*] that is represented [*sich darstellt*] in the exchange relation, or in the exchange value of the commodity, is therefore its value. The course of the investigation will lead us back to exchange value as the necessary mode of expression, or form of appearance [*Erscheinungsform*] of value, which for the present, however, is to be

observed independently of this form (Marx, 1976: 128, translation modified).

Yet this understanding can easily be misunderstood, particularly given our continuing preoccupation with the apparent powers and capabilities, if not self-sufficiency, of disciplined observation. When Marx addresses the limits of this activity he really means to say that on its own disciplined observation is incapable of anything more than perceiving exchange value because this is the essence of *both* as respectively the subject and the object of the commodity (Wilson, 1991; 1977: 236–48).

That Marx equates all forms of disciplined observation on their own with limit rather than with a self-sufficient pre-eminence is no minor matter in the present discussion. It serves to underscore the contrast between truly reflective practice and a peculiarly modern usurper that claims to have overcome both theory and practice by falsely unifying them in and through disciplined observation. The idea that such disciplined observation could dare claim the mantle of theoretical and practical self-sufficiency because it had reduced thought to testable, verifiable/falsifiable hypotheses enroute to constituting practice in its own image struck Marx as an absurdity or as madness (*Verrücktheit*; see Marx, 1976: 76; Wolff, 1988: 61–82). It is all-too-easy to forget that Marx, virtually alone among post-Hegelian thinkers of his day, sought to steer a careful course between two extreme positions on the matter of how best to seek human improvement. He accepted neither Comte's view that the social sciences should displace philosophy in this quest nor Hegel's view that a philosophically inspired practice was what was mainly required. For Marx, observation, no matter how necessary, always functions as a limit to understanding whenever it is alleged to constitute a mode of knowing, however disciplined, which claims to be both autonomous from and superior to either reflection or practice, but especially to both taken together.

This phenomenological priority of use values is complemented by Marx's historical observation that exchange values only take hold and proliferate at the boundaries of communities, where relations between strangers are the norm (Marx, 1973). There is in this claim an observation about the impact of economic growth, expansion, and development over time, space, and circumstance on traditional networks of extended family, kin, and groups of families in common locales. At the same time, this observation simply builds upon and



extends his phenomenological claim, inasmuch as there is a clear and unmistakable sense that for Marx relations between strangers, however inevitable and however necessary, still constitute an interruption in normal, daily life that will eventually be overcome. Only now we must turn to the interplay of human sense-making processes observed, then reflected upon, in historical time and space through the labour process in order to understand the limits of disciplined observation vis-à-vis both theory and practice. In the Marxian eschatology, history means the production of humanity as a species being that reclaims its collective origins in the whole by overcoming the contradiction between use value and exchange value, thereby confirming labour as the source of all value (Marx, 1973: 83–11; and Chapter 10 below).

For Marx, then, use value is equated with the whole, which is understood to be concrete, in contrast to exchange value, which is equated with some to many of its parts and is understood to be abstract. Use values are not temporally and historically bound in the way that exchange values would seem to be because they are not derived, but are primarily the objects of everyday life rather than disciplined observation. What thus may appear from our vantage point to be a theoretical reversal of conceptual etiquette on Marx's part expresses not only an innovative adaptation of a strong tradition of thinking that reached its apogee with Hegel; it also constitutes a strategic reconsideration of the categories of political economy themselves. The supplanting of both reflection and practice by disciplined observation makes it more and more likely that we shall rest satisfied with the epithet of the irrational or the pre-modern as a description of essentialist, holistic and historicist modes of thinking and theorizing. As it turns out, this mode of reflection has been a central element in human thought from the very beginning. It provides us with many impressive modern formulations, and increasingly constitutes the vanguard of a "post-postmodern" response to postmodern thinking itself (compare Hayek, 1955; Popper, 1957, 1945; with Adorno, 1976; Marcuse and Popper, 1976; and Wilson, 1977b).

This becomes clear when we turn our attention to Baudrillard's two studies that address the distinction between use values and exchange values most directly. Baudrillard insists on treating use values as nonexistent because Marx admits that they can only be known through exchange values. He thereby falls into the trap of equating

the real with that which can be perceived by and through one or another form of observation. This leads him to accept literally Marx's employment of the term "value" as something which belongs with use as well as exchange activities, even though Marx frequently employs exchange value and value per se interchangeably, as already noted. A closer inspection reveals that Marx reconstructs "use values" as activities having a value in order to provide a form of equivalence that will allow him to compare them for his readers and listeners, and for no other reason. This means that Baudrillard's discussion of the use value of a commodity and of the labour power required to produce it, though it faithfully reproduces Marx's exposition to his readers and listeners, misses the deeper intention of this surface formalization and reconstruction. Marx was simply required by the circumstances of the debate with political economy to employ a convention that we all have to engage in from time to time, namely, recasting in our opponent's language our own differences with him or her in order to begin or continue the conversation.

This becomes apparent once we remember that Marx continued to harbor the hope that his own critique of Ricardian political economy would eventually come to constitute the new mainstream in the developing discipline of economics until well into his work on *Capital, Volume I*. Marx had the choice of either staying true to the labour theory of value that the political economists themselves had turned away from in their haste to embrace and become apologists for capital, or of following them into their hypocrisies of self-justification, including their reinterpretations of Locke and Smith in particular. His choice of the first alternative required not only a strategy of disputation and persuasion that included redefining use as a form of value (Wolff, 1988). As noted, it also required him to mediate between an Hegelian and a Comteian approach to knowledge and knowing by acknowledging a limited, but nevertheless important, role for disciplined observation and its more specific understanding of the "empirical" (Wilson, 1991: chapters 3 and 6). Baudrillard's apparent confusion on this score is highly suspect, not only because of his obvious intellectual acumen revealed in his sensitivity to and experience with these concepts. It is also clear that his confusion arises out of what can only be a purposeful (or simply strategic) misunderstanding of the project that Marx was engaged in. In order to make a monkey out of Marx, he has to endorse, or at least provide implicit support for, the very self-sufficiency of disciplined observation that Marx was

at such pains to dispute in his critique of the method of political economy (Marx, 1973: 108–111).

To be sure, such a posture is certainly compatible with the contempt for critical reflection that is so central to both formal rationality and neo-conservatism. This is because it either asserts or implies the futility or danger inherent in all arguments that do not reduce thought and thinking to less momentous distinctions and a more hypothetical role for theory relative to both disciplined observation and “piecemeal” outcomes. The commitment to holding the tension between each side of a distinction, where the empirical is only one among many components in determining reality and the real, is abjured in favour of an immediate resolution—efficient causality over all other contenders (Chapters 3 above and 10 below; Wilson, 1976). It is obvious that Baudrillard does not do this in order to defend positivistic notions of reality premised on identity and correspondence; on the contrary. It is rather that postmodern deconstruction will use any intellectual weapon at its disposal to assert as a final negation the futility of negative dialectics’ negation of the self sufficiency of disciplined observation as a proxy for thought and practice.

#### *V. Dialectical momentousness versus one-dimensional reduction*

It was suggested earlier that dichotomies are devices for overcoming the inability of second order constructs to capture more of the empirical complexity found in the first order constructs of everyday life, without sacrificing the greater conceptual precision of second order constructs. Weber, after all, was the first to admit that the price one paid for the conceptual precision of “ideal types,” what Schutz and others would later call second order constructs, was the complexity of empirical reality itself (Weber, 1949: 43; Schutz, 1962–64). Once we acknowledge that this reality usually begins or ends by being coincident with what Schutz called first order constructs, we can understand better Marx’s refusal to allow the limits of identitarian and correspondential thinking to engender a sense of futility. This helps us realize why distinctions are devices for coping with the fact that the world and its understanding requires the play of concepts in the form of momentous dichotomies that present us with alternatives, possibilities, and choices within and between, whether on a continuum or otherwise. Dichotomies allow us to turn a sow’s

ear into a silk purse by making what formally might constitute a clear limit into an opportunity for reflection on what could be, should be and/or really is the case. The concept, in its relation to observation, perception and thought, either directly derived from or relatively independent of it, thus provides us with a singular opportunity. It can now configure the whole we really want to talk about in ways that we really need to talk about it precisely because dichotomization has been given the widest and deepest possible ambit (Wilson, 1984: 88–97).

This is in no way intended to ignore or play down the point that dichotomies are not only different because perspectives and cognitive interests are different, but also that they acquire a different status based on the way they are valued by others depending on the latter's purposes. I have tried to address this topic by comparing and contrasting the ways that Marx and Weber develop, extend, and employ what I believe to be two of their most seminal dichotomies. For my purposes here, there should be little doubt as to which dichotomy I believe to be the more capacious, momentous, and seminal. My interest has been to try to make sense of contemporary events and developments from the sort of critical perspective that I think is better mobilized by Marx than Weber. Having said this, I cannot deny that this result is in large part explained by the fact that it was Marx's implicit, and often explicit, intention, certainly after *Capital, Volume I* if not before, to provide this very perspective, in clear contrast to Weber. While Marx only became a gatekeeper by turning on many of his activist supporters, declaring that he was not, after all, a Marxist, Weber became one following recovery from a near-total nervous collapse through academic recognition of his knowledge and erudition (Marianne Weber, 1975; cf. the Introduction to this volume).

This contrast should be enough to underscore the importance of circumstances alongside heredity and more general socialization in influencing not only the dichotomies that will be chosen but the ways they will be employed to achieve particular political, social and cultural, as well as intellectual, purposes. By Marx's own rules of engagement, to which I have clearly given priority here, dichotomies are the more effective and successful in their purposes the more momentous, even dialectically momentous, they are. For Weber, however, the function of this very basic human tendency was quite different, mainly because of methodological concerns and preferences

not unrelated to his background, circumstances and resulting values. Save for the central instance I have recounted, Weber did not address dichotomies as a methodological subject of study to anywhere near the same extent as Marx, probably because he tended to view them as the product of formally rational, abstract processes. His approach to both concept formation and dichotomies indicates the increasingly important function of formal rationality and formal discipline in the emergence and development of what were already recognized, or soon to be known, as “disciplines” during Weber’s adult life. Weber effectively purges dialectics from the process of conceiving, formulating, and applying dichotomies in favour of a conception of “sides” that views them as formally exclusive (or “vanishing”) rather than empirically interpenetrating and interdependent (Jameson, 1973; Zeleny, 1980; Meikle, 1985; and the Author’s Introduction).

Further to this point, perhaps it was Weber’s desire, no less than Durkheim’s from his own quite different perspective and concerns, to support and encourage the formal recognition of sociology as a professional, as well as an intellectual, discipline (compare Weber 1978: 1–4, 11; 1949: 72–78; 89–94; with Durkheim, 1952: introduction, conclusion). This in contrast to Marx, whose interest in such recognition for economics first led him to try to realize the true aims of a theoretical practice led astray by Ricardo and his supporters, and then forced him to develop a critically reflexive counter-structure faithful to the original goals of political economy when it failed. In this sense, and ironically, the present day discipline of economics constitutes the defeat of Marx’s initial efforts as the price he had to pay for the confirmation of his theory of development. This defeat took the form of the repudiation of his true political economy, one based on the priority of labour to capital rather than the reverse, and one necessarily addressed to the future as well as the present (Wilson, 1991: chapters 1, 4, 7, appendix). Instead of acquiescing in traditional theory, with its conceptual nominalism, concrete particulars, and abstract wholes, and in the reduction of thought to testable, verifiable/falsifiable hypotheses, Marx resisted this denaturing of theory, which only purged it of dialectics so it could appropriate a flattened out proxy for reality through method. Marx clearly realized that this also constituted a political/economic agenda, whether understood by its practitioners or not, in contrast to Weber, who as I argued in Chapter 1, tried, often successfully, to repress what he clearly knew to be the case.

As Wittgenstein argued, our tendency to dichotomize reflects a deep need to accomplish through conceptualization a theoretical proxy for certain knowledge, where it is implicitly or explicitly understood that such knowledge is not possible, and may even be undesirable (Wittgenstein, 1977; Manser, 1973; Rubenstein, 1981; Wilson, 1991: 32–37; 1984). In this effort, the categories we formulate and prosecute relative to the respective roles and priorities of thought, observation and perception, logic, generalization and value, among other things, must be judged by reference to our own needs, values, and circumstances. But this is not to say that we either can or should allow the circumstances and biography of others to override our own needs as intellectuals, no matter how much “respect” we hold them in. This point is somewhat ironic given my own purposes here, because it is Weber himself who never tired of telling us how important it is that we understand our own values to the best of our ability (Weber, 1949: 21–23).<sup>3</sup> Weber’s very ambivalence toward, and one-sided endorsement of, the requirements of discipline and formality in all sociological practices, however understandable in the circumstances, makes his seminal dichotomy between substantive and formal rationality less useful for me. The very fact that he gave priority and precedence to formal over substantive rationality in the way that he stated the dichotomy is at the very least telling, if not conclusive, on this score.

Weber’s dichotomy provides me with less theoretical space for critique and the construction of more human collective forms than Marx’s distinction between use and exchange values because the dialectical tension implicit in the latter has been resolved in the former by formal rationality in favour of formal rationality. Sociology is thus happily obliged to acquiesce in this supremacy for Weber in ways that were unacceptable for Marx in his ongoing battle with political economy and its heirs at an earlier date. In his ambivalence, Weber knew that the theoretical space should be there and desperately needed to be there, but could not leave his post in good conscience and assert the social, as well as the theoretical, priority of substantive over formal rationality. Even its moral priority could

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<sup>3</sup> Weber’s insistence on knowing one’s own values can be compared to Jacques Monod in *Chance and Necessity* (1972). Monod argues that it is precisely the fact that we cannot change our most fundamental values that limits our ability to know them as an observer rather than an “owner.”

only be acknowledged if this latter was equated with a formally encircled subject conceived as an object for a professionalizing sociology whose progress demanded that it sacrifice what Durkheim called “the silence of the study” for specialization. Weber reposed no hope in the possibility of an alternate collective form, and grudgingly endorsed a sociology that was hostages to formal rationality as a consequence. Durkheim, in contrast, embraced the opportunity to endorse his sociology as the science of a new solidarity, with its task of constructing a professional “moral code” for industrial society itself (Durkheim, 1952: 406–409).

In opposition to both Weber and Durkheim, I want to argue that we can, should, and must mobilize and utilize *dialectically momentous* dichotomies in order to turn a sow’s ear into a silk purse. In doing so, we must perforce indicate to our students and to other citizens why this is a good, desirable, and necessary thing to do, not only for thought but for practical reasons as well. Indeed, it is an intellectual activity that we must not allow to be sacrificed to anybody’s agenda, especially given today’s neo-conservative attacks on thought and reflection in all its forms, save for those endorsed as either post-modern or of “practical” value to capital’s “bottom line.” Dialectically momentous dichotomies address limit as opportunity, which is to say that the activity of conceiving, formulating, and applying them is good and desirable for both intellectuals and for society as a whole. This is because they open out the space for thought relative to discipline in all its forms, whether method, organization, legality or in subjects and “disciplines” that are guided by these values (Wilson, 1977a; Wilson, 1973). They implicitly oppose the present supremacy, tending toward hegemony, of temporal over spatial values, by helping us locate, ground and sediment the real nature of these temporal values as ones thoroughly hostages to an exchange process led by a globalizing capitalism (Wilson, 2002). In clear contrast, capital asserts and defends not only its need, *but its right*, to be in a zero-sum relation to use values because use values prioritize space over time and support a redefinition of time relative to space that can only compromise exchange values (Chapter 10 below).

## VI. *Facts, values, and the reality of possibility*

The construction and prosecution of momentous dichotomies is consequential for the relationship between theory and practice for reasons

that are independent of the need for critical intellectualism and reflexivity for their own sake, however much these practices benefit from dichotomization. At some point a crucial inversion occurred, one that is captured in the difference between the dichotomization practices of Marx and Weber. From life being the norm against which exchange value was addressed critically because of how far short it fell in Marx, life as substantive rationality became the residue that was assumed to reside within the emerging totality of formal rationality as the norm for Weber. To the extent that we can find a single excerpt that captures this recognition in Weber, it is the one already cited from *Economy and Society* that reduces substantive rationality to an abstract, formal concept in sociology. This is in clear contrast to Marx's insistence in Chapter 1 of *Capital* on attaching a value to use only in order to criticize capitalism and its worship of exchange value in the conceptual and terminological language of his opponents. "Value" in Marx is always implicated in the fact that exchange only occurs at the boundary rather than at the core of collective life, whether we understand by "boundary" a spatial/territorial or a normative concept. The implications of this reality for a globalizing capitalism are purposefully avoided rather than confronted head-on in Weber's reformulation of this process as one characterized by faceless rationalization (Marcuse, 1968: 201–226; Freund, 1968; Loewith, 1970).

The implications of this consequential inversion, well captured in the very different understandings of concept formation, theorizing, and the construction of momentous rather than "formal" dichotomies in Marx and Weber respectively, returns me to the topic of the "significant other" and its central role in dichotomization practices. For it is only by confronting what has happened to thought and thinking as a consequence of the requirement that dichotomies be reduced to mutually exclusive, formally empiricized alternatives that we can appreciate this inversion for what it really signifies. Instead of life in the guise of use and function constituting the one side and capital and exchange value the increasingly significant other, the central reality from which we take our sociological point of departure is now formal rationality and the inexorable process of rationalization. The encircled subject-as-object of substantive rationality, far from being the real *one*, is little more than an object of nostalgia, thus hardly a significant other at all, whether alone or in the aggregate. Meanwhile, sociology continues to pretend, albeit with a decreased



sense of urgency, that this formally rational one really is the other in the person of the “secondary group,” when it is clear that in fact the so-called “primary group” has become secondary in all but name. Sociology thus occupies the space bounded by the one and the “significant” other in a form that is all-too-authentic to its real project—the triumph of disciplined observation. This makes it more and more difficult for theory to assert human possibilities that now always seem utopian because of what the theory-practice relationship has become under the joint hegemony of formal rationality and value on exchange (Wilson, 1999; 1977: 231–53).

In the light of this project of denaturing thought and theory by reducing dichotomies to one-dimensional and mutually exclusive either/ors we must ask the following question. Is it possible any longer for *either* side of a dichotomy to be significant as a one or an other in such a parody of both reality and possibility? That such a question may seem silly or inconsequential only underscores the extent to which we no longer expect dichotomization to perform the functions that it originally was, and still is, made for. The journey from the one extreme of dialectical momentousness toward its opposite extreme of one-dimensional, either/or, mutual exclusivity was already well underway when Marx attempted to challenge it first within, then against, political economy. One could even argue that Marx’s critique of the method of political economy, in the *Grundrisse* and elsewhere, provides indirect evidence of just this kind of concern about the diminished role of dichotomization once Ricardo and his successors had begun to convert political economy into economics.<sup>4</sup> For Weber, in contrast, dichotomies must simultaneously be heuristically respectable as “ideal typical” tools for analysis rather than an analytical centre in their own right, while also constituting an occasional basis for conducting guerilla warfare against that which must sociologically, historically, and descriptively/realistically “be.”

The fact that one still thinks of dichotomization as a process of potentially momentous thinking in Marx, while being more prone to consider dichotomies as relatively formal vehicles for an analysis that lies outside them in Weber, is enough to make the point. It

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<sup>4</sup> In *Theories of Surplus Value* Part II, Marx thoroughly anticipates in his critique of Ricardo the preoccupation of the emerging discipline of economics with the premature rush to “laws” understood (wrongly) by reference to the physical rather than the biological sciences.

suggests that the combination of positivism and idealism is probably more lethal to critical thought and deep counter-structural analysis than either one on its own (Wilson, 1991: chapter 5, 127–28, 108). Dichotomies as formal devices become a central part of the conceptual territory possessed by a given discipline, instruments whose unmediated descriptive potential makes them vehicles in the appropriation of a reality for which there is “really” no alternative. Literalism becomes ever more the order of the day, as, for example, when Marx is “tripped up” by Baudrillard for not realizing, that, after all is said and done, use value really cannot exist. To be sure, dichotomization, as evidenced by this and other renderings, has since fallen on even harder times than is evident in Weber’s work. This was, if not prefigured, then certainly intimated in Weber’s anticipation that once dichotomies rather than dichotomization became the focus, they would be judged as valuable precisely to the extent that they achieved the very false concreteness that they were intended to escape (Jameson, 1973; Andreski, 1964: 1–18; Brown, 1969).

In the event, the model of utility and function is today as far from Marx as one might imagine in the circumstances; that is to say, it is defined by reference to those dichotomies whose earlier versions had been most emptied and flattened out. Such unreflective—thus practically as well as intellectually unchallenging—distinctions were, after all, best capable of functioning as proxies for the very foreordained descriptions to which they were now to be limited “with the certainty of a fate.” No dichotomy better realizes this status as the centrepiece of our indefinitely unfolding, globalizing, one dimensional present without end than the distinction between facts and values. Once values have been reduced to actor subjectivity and irrationality and brought into the world in ways that make it impossible for *their* use to really be of value in the face of *their* exchange potential, even the apparent equality of facts and values becomes both fictive and utopian. In its place we have a world increasingly denuded not only of possibility in reality but of reality in possibility, a world full of facts that amount, whenever required by the “objectively correct” rendering, to little more than actors’ descriptions, reduced to subjective values.<sup>5</sup> This rendering, not surprisingly, is increasingly

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<sup>5</sup> But see how Weber tries to deny that recourse to ideal types implies a “rationalistic bias,” no matter what values they seem to be straining toward, when it is

synonymous with what I have elsewhere called, in deference to (incorrect) American rather than (correct) European practice, neo-conservatism (see note 1, Author's Introduction).

Not wishing to end on a pessimistic refrain, however, I suggest that as aggregated yet solitary individuals we begin to reverse this false impression by reconceiving, then acting on the basis of, the university and higher education generally as an opportunity rather than a limit. Central to this endeavour will be our commitment to reviving momentousness and true topicality in and through dichotomization as a dynamic practice whose prosecution prioritizes space over time in an effort to assert the importance of use value as sense of function (Adorno, 1969: 105; Wilson, 1999; Chapters 4 above and 10 below). Subverting the aims of those who govern our universities by proclaiming that the true community is comprised of faculty and undergraduate and graduate students rather than administrators and private benefactors, with the state as grant-giver and legitimator of the dominant ideology, seems to me an excellent place to begin.

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clear that sociological method is no less subordinate to formal rationality, and therefore exchange values, than substantive rationality itself, in *Methodology of the Social Sciences* (1949). This is even more obvious in *Economy and Society* (1978: 26–28).

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PART TWO

RECONSTRUCTING SOCIAL SCIENCE:  
FROM SOCIAL THEORIZING TO REFLEXIVE PRAXIS

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## EDITOR'S NOTE TO PART II

To the extent that advanced industrial societies remain committed to the idea of . . . objective knowledge, and to the idea of a unity of knowledge as a positive, or effectively positive, affirmation . . ., they will be unable to resist the argument that ours is, after all, a post-capitalist, even 'postmodern' social structure. The fact that it is a social economy which has generalized secondary group statuses and observers rules so far beyond the confines of work and labour settings that capitalism only appears to be nowhere because it is everywhere receives no credence, especially in a period of neo-conservative ascendancy. In this sense, ours is a capitalist *society*, where the absence of several of the formal characteristics of a capitalist economy is a *prerequisite* for, rather than a threat to, this development.

—H. T. Wilson, "Technocracy as Late Capitalist Ideology"

One of the most pervasive concepts in the social scientific arsenal that concerns Wilson throughout this volume, and one that is inseparable from that of the isolated, disembodied, and formally free "individual," is that of Society/society itself (see note 1 to Chapter 1). In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the discourse of the social sphere came to address a kind of hybrid realm for coping with struggles within civil society on the one hand, and with conflicts at the heart of political democracy on the other. The adjective "social" thus qualified a set of allegedly discrete activities issuing from these birth pangs of the modern era: attempts to alleviate social problems with the aid of professional and philanthropic social services, to view such problems through the scientific lens of social statistics, to regulate the division of social labour or to manage social conflicts, and even to renew the social order through the movement of socialism. From the beginning, these responses to the social question were framed and mediated by moral and political discourses articulating the need for social control, social justice, and social solidarity, which in turn were underwritten by an elaborate sociological and analytical vocabulary of social action, social systems, and social facts (cf. Adorno,

1969; Donzelot, 1994 [1984]; Wilson, 1989: Chapter 3; 1978). In short, the stable structures and mobile mechanisms which were thought to constitute “society” came to designate a populated space and historical substance in their own right, and thus to constitute an object of scientific knowledge, a target of political power, and a site for the expression of cultural values.

The critical task of classical social theory was to respond to the social problems and crisis tendencies of its day. As Weber noted early on in his career, the category of the “social” does not signify so much “the boundary of a certain field of phenomena as it does the *viewpoint* under which the phenomena of economic as well as of social life are observed . . . : both are consciously limited to the present, that is, by the historical epoch which is distinguished by the advancement of capitalism” (Weber, 1904: ii). The principal aim of social scientific inquiry must therefore be to acquire “historical and theoretical knowledge of the cultural significance of capitalist development” (ibid.: v), and especially of its social conflicts and cultural contradictions. As he argued in more general terms later in his career, the task is not to develop a substantive, evaluative, or materialist critique of capitalism but rather to formulate ideal types that will render instances of and deviations from instrumentally rational social action “as visible as possible” (Weber, 1978 [1918–20]: 6):

Quite *apart* from and in addition to a substantive [*materiellen*] critique of the *results* of economic activity, it is possible to take into consideration an ethical, ascetic, or aesthetic critique of the *ethos* as well as of the *instruments* of economic activity. The ‘merely formal’ performance of money calculation *may* appear to be quite secondary or even fundamentally inimical to their respective postulates (even apart from the consequences of the specifically modern way of calculating). There is no possibility here of making decisions about but only of determining and delimiting [*Feststellung und Begrenzung*] what should be called ‘formal.’ ‘Substantive’ here is itself in a certain sense a ‘formal,’ that is, an abstract, *generic* concept (Weber, 1978: 86, translation modified).

It is significant that this statement appears in a methodological discussion about how the spirit of modern economic rationality can be observed within a sociological context. The usual English translation of “materiale” as “substantive” tends to conceal Weber’s implicit reference to Marx’s evaluative critique of the results and means of capitalist economic activity on materialist, that is, on empirical and experiential as well as moral and political grounds. However, economic and political sociology can only “observe” and “take into con-

sideration” such critical views in a formal and limited way without deliberating on their value or deciding their substantive significance.

Beginning from the thesis that the discourse of “society” continues to provide the terms of our collective reality principle and the *raison d'être* of the civilizing process, Wilson argues that the functional-technical, scalar-authority, and career-professional norms of bureaucratically organized capitalism that Weber first identified have been expanded into a technocratic mode of social organization (Chapter 6). The ideology of techno-scientific progress underwrites *political legitimation through rational domination* by allegedly guaranteeing both the stability of the capitalist economy and the security of its bureaucratically organized institutions. In a remarkable passage that concludes the notes for *Economy and Society* from 1910–1914, Weber traces the consequences of modern bureaucracy and industrial capitalism to the “charismatic transfiguration [*Verklärung*] of Reason” in late eighteenth century Europe. Expressing his usual ambivalence over this process, he points out that the individual freedoms promoted by the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*), and the Rights of Man advanced by the French Revolution, generated the (largely unintended) consequences of Thermidor in the short term, and institutionalized the entrepreneurial ethos of bureaucratic discipline and economic exploitation in the long term:

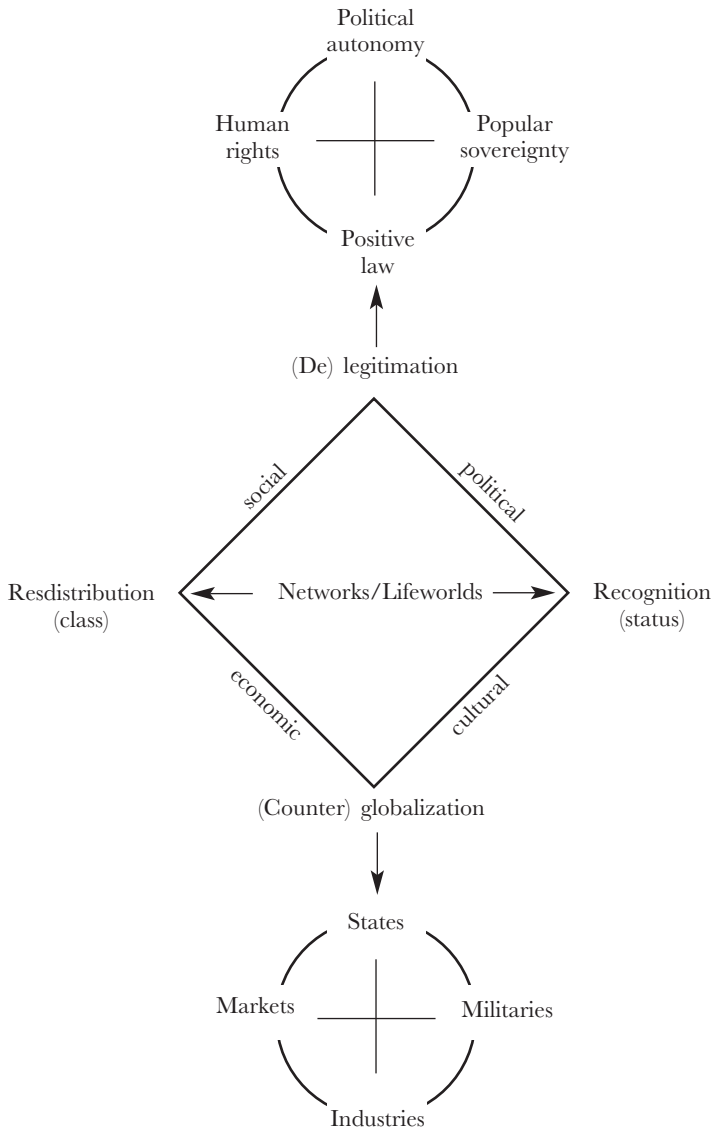
This charismatic transfiguration of ‘Reason,’ which found characteristic expression in its apotheosis by Robespierre, is the last form that charisma has adopted in its fateful historical course. It is clear that these requirements of formal legal equality and economic mobility prepared the way for the destruction of all patrimonial and feudal legal orders in favour of abstract norms, and hence indirectly bureaucratization, and in a very specific way the expansion of capitalism. Just as the ‘*inner-worldly asceticism*’—adopted with some dogmatic variations—and the specific discipline of the sects bred the capitalist attitude and the rational ‘vocational man’ [*Berufsmensch*] who was needed by capitalism, so the basic Rights of Man [*Menschenrechte*] provided the pre-conditions for capital’s struggle to exploit things and humans freely (Weber, 1978 [1910–14]: 1209–10; translation modified).

As Wilson argues, Weber’s sociological writings, and not just his more candid political journalism, implicitly harbour a lingering nostalgia for the vocational ethic of the heroic era of early capitalism. At the same time, a strong concept of substantive (*material*) justice as expressed in the value-rational legacy of natural law is symptomatically missing from (or at least obscured in) his later formulations

of the pure types of legitimate authority. These historical figurations of “the charisma of reason” do not just destroy feudal tradition and pre-modern custom; they also promote the interests of capitalist and legal rationalization by intensifying the policing of populations, the juridification of politics and the formal legitimacy of utilitarian contract (Weber, 1978 [1910–14]: 275; Wilson, 1985). In short, Weber’s work projects the “charisma of reason” as a vanishing mediator of historical progress by narrating the shift from the ascetic moral culture of industrial capitalism to the spiritless casing (*Gehäuse*) of mechanized bureaucracy (cf. Jameson, 1988).

Weber’s remarkable account of the dialectic of enlightenment highlights how the emergence of human rights discourse promotes both the formal legal equalities essential to the process of bureaucratization and the economic liberty and mobility indispensable to the rise of industrial capitalism. At the individual and group level, this civilizing process unreflexively promotes middle class norms and values in both lay and professional thought (Chapter 7). Figure II represents my attempt to plot the charisma of reason in the public sphere along the twin axes of *capitalist (counter) globalization* and *bureaucratic (de)legitimation*, on the one hand, and of *class redistribution* and *status recognition*, on the other (cf. Fraser, 1997). These axes intersect in institutionalized networks and communicative lifeworlds which (in Pierre Bourdieu’s terms) constitute particular modes of conduct (*Lebensführungen*, or habitus) and fields of struggle over the accumulation and conversion of various forms of capital: social (methods for establishing professional and interpersonal connections), economic (mechanisms for producing and distributing wealth), political (means for exerting influence and power), and cultural (rituals for conferring prestige and distinction) (Bourdieu, 1998). Today these processes have been extended globally through the interaction of transnational state agreements, commodity exchanges, industrial processes, and security arrangements (Giddens, 1990), which in turn are legitimated or challenged through intensified public discourse concerning the meaning and viability of political autonomy, human rights, popular sovereignty and positive law (Habermas, 1998). In each case, the functioning of the public sphere depends increasingly on the accumulation of statistical information and social scientific knowledge that further advance the technocratic *scientization of politics* (Habermas, 1998, 1971).

Figure II: The Charisma of Reason and the Public Sphere



(Based on Bourdieu, 1998; Fraser, 1997; Giddens, 1990; Habermas, 1998)

The growth of the social sciences since the nineteenth century has contributed to this process of rationalization and routinization while providing it with a new foundation in relations of trust between political, economic and scientific professionals and citizens, clients and subjects of study (Chapter 8). This bond between science and society, and between politics and publics, was initially legitimated in terms of the liberal promise of historical progress and social improvement through rational control: “[L]iberalism and social science were based on the same premise—the certainty of human perfectibility based on the ability to manipulate social relations, provided that this be done scientifically (that is, rationally). It is not merely that they shared this premise but that neither could have existed without it, and that both built it into their institutional structures. The existential alliance was the natural consequence of their essential identity” (Wallerstein, 1999: 147–48). Michel Foucault’s later work documents some of these affinities by showing how the social sciences came to constitute “the population” as both a discrete object of knowledge and a sovereign power in its own right. With the rise of modernity, the exercise of administrative power over persons and things came to be articulated through the principles and practices of a regulative rationality (“governmentality”) which calls for the deployment of specific tactics of discipline and interlocking strategies of behavioural control: “We need to see things not in terms of the replacement of a society of sovereignty by a disciplinary society and the subsequent replacement of a disciplinary society by a society of government; in reality one has a triangle, sovereignty-discipline-government, which has as its primary target the population and as its essential mechanism the apparatuses of security” (Foucault, 1991: 103; cf. O’Neill, 1995: 43–63). The production of certified knowledge and statistical information on the indices, patterns and rates of social change thus calls for the invention of new categories of men and women who can then be brought under the gaze of impartial observation and managed as docile citizens, including workers and the unemployed, the poor and the homeless, or the perverse and the criminal (Scott, 1988; Wilson, 1989, 1992).

Wilson’s objection to Habermas’s post-1968 endorsement of the social sciences as a vehicle for repoliticizing the social sphere must therefore be understood in light of the ideological function of social scientific models of knowledge and learning when they are pressed into the service of both private capital and public administration, as

has long been the case in North America (Chapters 8 and 9). To be sure, strategies of governance which formerly drew on the moral capital of public trust in trained professionals and presumed loyalty to scientific experts have been increasingly questioned or even interrupted in recent years by frequent appeals to local accountability and community participation (Rose, 1996). Wilson stresses that in spite of the ongoing legitimation crisis of the sciences generally, the social, behavioural, and administrative sciences in particular continue to play an important substructural, legitimating, and socializing role in promoting scientific definitions and technocratic solutions to moral and political problems, a tendency already evident from Saint-Simon to Veblen and from Herbert Simon to today's rational choice and systems theorists (cf. Coleman, 1990; Wilson, 1973). As he argues in *Political Management*, with the rise of behaviourism in the first half of the twentieth century attempts were already underway "to recast this apathy in the form of a 'science,' or rather an ideology of scientism, whose unstated commitment was nothing less than the technocratic concern to convert political issues into administrative problems soluble by elites and cadres of experts" (Wilson, 1985: 128). As the academic commitment to specialization and professionalism intensifies, public indifference, impotence, and contempt for both politics and science becomes more widespread, even in the face of renewed efforts to rationalize the economic "efficiency" or governmental "relevance" of social scientific inquiry.

Recent critical social theorists have tried to address these problems by announcing the emergence of "a new modernity" characterized by the shift from an industrial society, with its power struggles over the production and distribution of commodities ("goods") between social classes, to a post-industrial society ruled by the "knowledgeable" calculation and control of risks ("bads") for the population as a whole (but cf. Wilson, 1977: chapter 1). Ulrich Beck and others, for example, argue that the recomposition of work processes toward a more plural, mobile, and flexible system of (un[der])employment has incited a search for biographical, neo-individualist solutions to systemic dysfunctions which the social sciences are often only too happy to provide. The process of "reflexive modernization" thus rejuvenates the mission of the "knowledge society" already announced by sociologists in the 1950s and 1960s by reformulating the collective consciousness of class and community in subjective terms as personal knowledge of sexual, ethnic, and generational statuses and identities

(Beck, 1992: 87–150; Beck, Giddens, and Lash, 1994). Wilson's distinctive critical response to this latest phase of the "essential process of modernity" focuses on a modest proposal to repoliticize the dialectic of the social sciences by radicalizing Alfred Schutz's phenomenological "postulate of adequacy" as an educative project for redefining the public sphere of political speech and post-revolutionary citizenship (Chapter 9). This proposal entails insisting on the mutual accountability of professional and common sense knowledge "from below" as a regulative ideal for the research situation experienced as both a mode of social interaction and an instance of civic participation (cf. O'Neill, 1995: 131–190). An important weakness in the work of first generation critical theorists, which Wilson and critical theorists like Habermas and Beck have tried to address, derives from their apparent distrust of the reflexive, critical and charismatic potential of common sense knowledge and the public use of reason. Wilson's proposal goes beyond such skepticism by questioning whether the integral role of the social sciences in "reflexive modernization" may actually further entrench the rule of trained experts and the depoliticization of the public sphere, at least in North America, with its long history of scientifically sanctioned "disciplined observation" and "governance at a distance."

That the implications of this assessment extend well beyond any discipline-based methodological postulate becomes clear when we consider how capitalist enterprise and its bureaucratic apparatuses require these postures of distance and discipline for their own continued functioning. As Wilson demonstrates with reference to the lessons to be learned from Weber and American sociology, since capitalism only appears to be nowhere because it is everywhere, Marx is our best guide for establishing an agenda for the reconstruction of the social sciences in the interest of redefining the public sphere for the twenty first century (Chapter 10). In particular, Weber's insight that Benjamin Franklin's maxim "time is money" ideally typifies the work ethic of capitalism in commonsense idiom (Weber 1958 [1904–05/1920]: 48–52) must be supplemented by Marx's observation that "space is money" as well, and in particular, that the world historical tendency of capital is to annihilate space with time through the accelerated proliferation of science-based technologies. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx explains how the expansion and intensification of the means of transport and communication and of machines for regulating the rhythm and pace of production inau-



gurate a thoroughgoing transvaluation of the spatio-temporal parameters of human existence:

Thus, while capital must on the one side strive to tear down every spatial barrier to intercourse, i.e. to exchange, and conquer the whole earth for its market, it strives on the other side to annihilate this space with time, i.e., to reduce to a minimum the time spent in motion from one place to another. The more developed the capital, therefore, the more extensive the market over which it circulates, which forms the spatial orbit of its circulation, the more does it strive simultaneously for an even greater extension of the market and for greater annihilation of space by time . . . There appears here the universalizing tendency of capital, which distinguishes it from all previous stages of production (Marx 1973 [1857–58]: 539–40; cf. *ibid.*: 524–25).

Anticipating his more elaborate discussion later on in *Capital* of the production and distribution of surplus value in the expenditure of socially necessary labour *time*, here Marx explores the other side of this process in a theory of socially necessary labour *space*, that is, the relative values of ‘capitalized’ and ‘uncapitalized’ spaces of work and action. In order to realize surplus value, capital must meet a set of technical, resource, and socio-cultural requirements for local production and consumption (from the home to the factory) and for managing the places of market exchange and distribution (from the grocers to the stock exchange). It is not only that “time is money,” but also that space is dominated by and measured against an abstract concept of technologically defined time. From the clock to the computer, and from national territory to cyberspace, the aim of capital is to accelerate the pace of production, circulation and consumption in order to expand its reach over every aspect of human and non-human life.

Part of the enduring legacy of the critical theory of society in German thought has been to articulate how the ideology of rational domination erases the boundaries between the public and private spheres and disassembles the bridging functions between political and economic institutions. By eroding both personal intimacy in the private sphere and political speech and action in the public sphere, the rise of the social constitutes a virtual realm in which individuals become unequally but increasingly dependent on one another as they struggle for sheer survival or cultural distinction (Arendt 1958: 47). By sealing off private needs from public evaluation and determination, the social sphere becomes a threat to any aesthetic, scientific

and political culture in which principles of taste, truth and justice can be subject to discussion, dispute, and discrimination: "Generally speaking, culture indicates that the public realm, which is rendered politically secure by men of action, offers its space of display to those things whose essence is to appear and to be beautiful" (Arendt 1954: 218; cf. Fraser 1989: 160n). Although the "intellectualization of kitsch" and the desublimation of bourgeois values since World War II have helped to democratize access to the achievements of the culture industry, their commoditised consumption and status-based distribution tend to hide the class structure of their production. As Marcuse (1964) pointed out forty years ago, where political and social questions are increasingly reduced to the terms of the universe of discourse and action established by late capitalist modernization, the appeal of change appears either conformist or incoherent, and the chance of alternatives becomes increasingly utopian or remote. And yet the civic project of the *vita activa* is unattainable without the critical faculties and reflexive praxis which are the vocation of reason.

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## CHAPTER SIX

### TECHNOCRACY AS LATE CAPITALIST IDEOLOGY: BETWEEN SPECTRE AND MYTH

“Technocracy” is a concept which both resists formal definition and cries out for it. To the extent that it stands for process as well as structure, Nietzsche’s point about the elusiveness of concepts that are shorthands for process is particularly well taken. To be sure, the concept’s inability to appropriate its object—the phenomenon itself—argues for its status as a universal substantive rather than a mere term whose meaning is dependent on its reduction to “concrete” functions and operations (Marcuse, 1964: 84–120, 203–224; Adorno, 1969). Having said this, however, it must be clear that conventional standards of intelligibility cannot be totally ignored. In a society which honours the norm of adequacy, with its emphasis on identity, a correspondence theory of knowledge and an empirical convention which views the whole as an abstract concatenation of “concrete” parts-as-facts-as-events, it is difficult to analyze technocracy and allied concepts without acquiescing, at least initially, in the idea of knowledge as a grasp, an appropriation.

It becomes all the more necessary to honour such a convention when it is remembered that by “technocracy” is understood not only observable (or observable in principle) structures and processes but ideology or doctrine as well. Compared to these considerations, the assertion that “technocracy” functions as a condensation as well as a referential symbol for those either supportive or critical of it appears trifling. Nevertheless, the fact that it is employed in both a laudatory and a pejorative way provides an important insight into its origins and variegated meanings (Edelman, 1969; 1964). One way of approaching the task of analysis would include the construction of an “ideal type” paralleling Weber’s well-known formulation of modern Western bureaucracy (Weber, 1947: 239; 1946). The objective here would be not only to follow Weber’s advice on type construction in order to generate a comparative tool sitting somewhere between an operational definition and no definition at all (Weber, 1947: 92–93, 109–112). It would also permit “technocracy” itself to emerge as an

ideal type which could be compared on *substantive* grounds to Weberian bureaucracy and associated phenomena.<sup>1</sup> Another aspect of the analytical task relates to the already-noted fact that technocracy denotes both structure and process and ideology or doctrine. In effect, we need a complementary focus to that provided by the Weberian technique of type construction and the bureaucratic ideal type itself. The distinction in the study of the professions between professionalization as a process, profession as a structure, and professionalism as an ideology or doctrine either supportive or critical of the process of professionalization is a useful one for this purpose (Wilensky, 1964; Vollmer and Mills, 1966).

### I. *From bureaucracy to technocracy*

The continuing substantive value of Weber's ideal typical "bureaucracy" only serves to support further the comparative method for which it is ideally to be used. As an example, think of the ten key characteristics cited in *Economy and Society*, part of which Talcott Parsons translated in 1947 under the title *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. They reduce to the following three basic clusters. (1) *The scalar-authority cluster* (hierarchy, discipline, formal authority, rule orientation). (2) *The functional-technical cluster* (defined sphere of competence, selection and advancement mainly on the basis of technical qualification, "merit"). (3) *The career-professional cluster* (free selection and contract, separation from the means of administration with no right of appropriation, full time salaried career based on appointment and tenure) (Weber, 1947 [1918–20]: 330–334; 1946 [1910–14]: 196–204).

What we shall discover in this attempt to formulate a parallel ideal type is the extent to which technocracy continues to be grounded

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<sup>1</sup> Although the well known study *Technocracy* by Jean Meynaud (1965) has been consulted, it has not been employed in any direct way in this study. While helpful in some general respects, it is both too diffuse in its focus within the French situation, and too dependent on this very situation for most of its generalizations. Also see Jacques Ellul, *The Technological System* (1980), particularly his discussion of works by Henri Lefebvre, John Joli Bennet, Radovan Richta, Schon, and Habermas. While correctly noting his own priority to Habermas' subsequent discussion of the phenomenon of technocratic consciousness, he ignores Weber's priority to his own work, concentrating on Weber's discussion of technology rather than rationalization and de-enchantment (see Wilson, 1975).

in the tensions and accommodations addressed and/or worked out between these three clusters. Of course, this is not to say that no novel characteristics serve to distinguish technocracy from bureaucracy, even in its contemporary variant. Clearly we need to take account of several important society-wide developments if we are to assess the present and future role of technocracy meaningfully. They include the following. (1) The increasing role of the state and the virtual collapse of the public-private distinction in property, contract, commercial, urban and administrative law. (2) The ever greater role of large corporations, particularly multi-national corporations, in an emerging world economy. (3) The now central role of science and science-based technology in production, research and development, and administration and service activities. (4) The "socialization" of functional and technical modes of rationality. (5) The emergence of operations research, systems, and game-theoretical modelling as a complement to increased dependence on computers, automated-electronic and robotic technologies (Wilson, 1977b).

Let us look first at the now-central role of the state, either in terms of sponsorship, corporate regulation and taxation or the more ominous development of corporatism (Pahl and Winkler, 1975; McLeod, 1976; cf. Lindblom, 1977). Here we can see that the collapse of the public-private distinction so central to differentiating public from private functions in the common law merely confirms Weber's point about the relationship between bureaucratization and the so-called rationalization process in all industrial and urban societies. "This type of organization is in principle applicable with equal facility to a wide variety of different fields," he argues, including profit-making enterprises, charitable organizations and political and religious organizations (Weber, 1947: 334). The point here is that size, scale and complexity can only partly explain recourse to the formal bureaucratic model, since modern "rational" bureaucracy is a *cultural artefact*. This was the point of Weber's analysis of the relation between bureaucracy and money economies of all types. It confirms the close tie between his ideal type and all forms of capitalism, whether state or corporate in animus and structure (cf. Muller, Neuss and Offe 1975; Habermas, 1975: 50-60; Hodges, 1980; Lindblom, 1977; Chandler, 1977). Clearly, we must acknowledge the interdependence between bureaucracy as a form of organized functional rationality and the issue of legitimacy that surrounds Weber's discussion of the ideal type if we are to make sense of technocracy

as a structure favouring certain norms and behaviours (cf. Weber, 1947: 324–329; Habermas, 1975).

We would argue that the “socialization” of certain values associated with the growth of a labouring and consuming (but not necessarily an investing) class who find their separation from the means of administration almost totally unproblematic is one essential property of the technocratic elite as a class fragment. It is not that they are the hard-nosed producers battling the parasitic financiers and investors, as Veblen and his followers fancied when they first formulated the term technocracy.<sup>2</sup> It is rather their wholesale lack of interest in problems and issues surrounding the ownership and disposition of property that is of central significance. Another issue also arises out of bureaucratization and the emergence of technocratic norms of rationality in all sectors of organized activity in late capitalist society. Here I have in mind first the crucial distinction already suggested between class, class fragment, and elite (Mills, 1956; cf. Clement, 1978; 1975; Porter, 1964; Presthus, 1974; 1973). Here I purposely ignore the ideologically conflicting origins of class and elite concepts in a Marxian and a Paretian analytic respectively in favour of comparing and contrasting the two notions along the following lines. By elite is meant a fragment of a class, a fragment whose *secondary* socialization in this case has led them to favour certain goals for capital, certain approaches and techniques of decision-making and problem solving, and certain views about the nature of the ideal society and the role of the state and corporations therein.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The term “technocracy” was first formulated by W. H. Smyth of Berkeley, California in 1919, after reading several articles by Thorstein Veblen in *The Dial*, later collected together and published as *The Engineers and the Price System* (1921), discussed below. Technocracy is defined in the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1967 edition) as “the organization of the social order based on principles established by technical experts.” This definition highlights the two most important properties of technocracy as an ideology and a movement, namely, its reference to *society* rather than simply work and labour contexts, and the commitment to the idea of technique as concrete, objective, and impartial knowledge so central to meritocracy as the modern day version of the concept of “rational domination”—the key to legal-rational authority in Weber. Habermas’ (1971: 104–06) acquiescence to this notion is addressed in Chapter 8.

<sup>3</sup> Habermas (1971: 111–114) notes that technocratic consciousness is not, after all, *only* ideology, but is now supported by the performance of the substructure without recourse to either utopian hopes *or* illusory forms of legitimation. We think this



By class is meant a specific segment of the social structure related in one or another way to the means of production through their occupational, organizational or career status. Technocrats are tied to the production system, at the outer perimeter, by the law of value itself, if not in more direct ways. It is the technocratic defense of objective unbiased knowledge and the notion of "knowledgeableness" (no longer localized but society-wide) as an objective property of the well-trained and well-disciplined observer, however, which marks off technocracy's more specific base for domination. This base is achieved in and through the auspices of a formally meritocratic structure premised on training and certification rather than "experience." To the extent that the attitudinal, behavioural, and decisional attributes of technocracy build upon bureaucratization and rationalization so conceived, they participate in and express the reality of this development. But technocracy, while dependent in many important ways on the persistence of bureaucracy as a structure and bureaucratization as a process, means more than this. Technocracy as late capitalist ideology makes its most sustained impact in the claim to have overcome the tension still prominent in Galbraith (1973, 1967) between intellectual and managerial/professional modes of thought, rather than solely in and through its commitment to the notion of objective knowledge.

To the extent that this vision has been realized in practice through the ongoing linkage of instrumental and strategic modes of rationality and operational, systems, and game-theoretical frameworks in an organizational setting, it is no longer accurate to treat technocracy solely as an ideology with an inconsistent and discontinuous impact on managerial and bureaucratic decisions and actions. Technocracy as an elite class fragment appears increasingly to constitute a *structure* for socializing, reinforcing, and rewarding such behaviours and norms. As such, it is more than capable of tempting social intellectuals to acquiesce in the fiction of that very "rational domination" that should now ideally become the centre of a critical agenda for those who refuse such co-optation.

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itself may constitute a form of technocratic thinking no less problematic than the inverted worship evident in Ellul's view of technique and technology as a satanic phenomenon moving toward self-propelled totalization and closure (Ellul, 1964; cf. Dreitzel, 1972; and Wilson, 1975).

## II. *The functional-technical cluster and technocracy*

Let us now return in a more concerted way to the Weberian bureaucratic ideal type, in particular to the functional and technical cluster, in an effort to compare bureaucracy and technocracy. Following this, I shall attempt a similar comparison with the scalar-authority and career-professional clusters respectively. This exercise should serve to complement a focus on the role of the state and the belief in objective knowledge. It will direct our attention to the more specific continuities and discontinuities between bureaucracy as a structure and technocracy as an ideology seeking to embed its values and practices in permanent structures of power, authority, and influence. If, from the standpoint of the scalar-authority cluster, bureaucracy is best comprehended as a power and authority structure, from the standpoint of the functional-technical cluster it is best understood as a peculiarly modern form of division of labour seeking to reconcile authority and knowledge in a system of “*rational* domination” (Thompson, 1961).<sup>4</sup> Weber points to “a clearly defined sphere of competence” as one of the key elements of the functional-technical cluster. Here he alludes to the fact that the incumbent not only has a power of action but a requirement both to act and to take responsibility for his actions (Weber, 1947: 333, 339–40; 1946: 196–98, 212–16, 228–30, 235–39).

Even though bureaucracy as a structure has clear collective properties for Weber, he tends to downplay this collective and corporate character when discussing the central characteristics of his ideal type. Indeed it may be argued that Weber’s pattern of analysis is straightforwardly *individualistic* inasmuch as it addresses specific positions and the individual’s role therein. This is important in light of the emphasis on team and group decision-making and forms of “collective

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<sup>4</sup> Technocrats can be said to bear the same relation to society as a rational social organization that Weberian bureaucrats did to conventional organizations only if we acknowledge the continuing tension between professional-technical and administrative-technical activities. Perrow (1972) discusses these two types of specificity, while Wilensky (1964) addresses why only the former is in a position to secure public support as a professional or semi-professional occupation. Seen in this light, the alleged need for *collective* activity through *group* problem-solving in an organizational context can be understood to be as much a *compensation* for the lack of a collective occupational image in the society at large as it is a necessary response to the complexity of contemporary technology and science (Goode, 1957; Gilb, 1966).

responsibility” in the subsequent work first of Whyte (1956) and thereafter of Galbraith and Wilensky (cf. Follett, 1918). Technocracy comprehends a group and corporate dimension as both the instrumental basis of its claim to objective knowledge and the society in microcosm that rewards and sustains proper socialization. This is manifested in correct decisions and actions, and underscores the continuing dilemma posed by absentee ownership for both public and private property in late capitalist society.<sup>5</sup> Central to the idea of “a clearly defined sphere of competence” is not only the relation of the individual to group and collective decision making and responsibility, but the kind of secondary sector relationships that are “available” to incumbents. Today it is necessary to realize that bureaucracy on its own is simply not capable of integrating technical and professional competencies into a standard hierarchy of superior-subordinate relationships as Weber had suggested it might in the early years of the twentieth century. Thus, while the line-staff distinction characterizes contemporary bureaucratic structures throughout, it constitutes a solution with problems of its own (Thompson, 1968; 1961).

How does technocracy deal with either or both of these problems? The answer lies in the ideology of objective knowledge, group decision-making, and collective responsibility, and the socialization processes that both initiate and reinforce appropriate modes of decision and action in modern large-scale organization. By reconstituting the original problem for which the line-staff distinction was supposed to be a solution, technocracy obliterates formal individual responsibility in favour of the formal properties of group decision-making and collective responsibility. It no longer really matters to

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<sup>5</sup> The idea of individual responsibility for job activities is closely tied to the concept of private property in capitalist society. Technocracy completes the severance of activity and responsibility initiated by absentee ownership and the so-called managerial revolution noted by Veblen (1923), Burnham (1941), and Berle and Means, 1932. Thus, Veblen and Smyth were premature in their reference to technocracy in the period after 1919, since the other side of absentee ownership in both propertylessness and the decline of contract relative to status for these salaried groups had not developed so far (Gilb, 1966). The claim to objective knowledgeableness is all the more important with the emergence of a meritocratic status society where property and contract are less and less a principal basis of power in the societal division of labour. This also helps explain why aspects of collectivity and group process must appear in the organizational context of work and labour activities in the absence of a perceived collective character in the society at large (cf. Friedmann, 1961; 1955).

this elite class fragment's particular "social ethics" that in a conflict over "the facts" between a superior and a subordinate in a conventional bureaucratic structure, the subordinate is increasingly likely to be "correct" (see Wilson, 1973).<sup>6</sup>

As for the "solution" to this problem, numerous writers have noted that the line-staff distinction isolates staff specialists in all non-professional organizations in "second-class" statuses. Here supporters of professional specialists working in large-scale organizations are concerned with the absence of a hierarchy running parallel to that of the formal bureaucratic structure. They are also concerned that it is in these latter "generalist" positions that real decision making power and authority is supposed to reside (Thompson, 1961; Blau and Scott, 1962; Parsons, 1942). Technocracy's ideological commitment to smoothing over this tension is no doubt aided in the contemporary context by the sheer progress of societal specialization itself relative to the sort of specialization of tasks historically generated by the work organization. Indeed, it would be difficult to make sense of group decision-making and collective responsibility in the absence of the decline of a model of individual responsibility premised on property ownership, which in earlier times was transferred to work and labour activities. Paradoxically this is one way that the *absence* of election may come back to haunt those who support the revival of more individualistic models of responsibility for decision and action (but cf. Wilson, 2001).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Weber never specifically stated that this conflict might well be between two *types of expertise* rather than between the expert and the non-expert, while Thompson clearly opts for the latter interpretation sixty years later. In this sense, Thompson's approach, following Durkheim (1952), is meritocratic and even technocratic in some of its aspects. While Thompson fails to distinguish the multiplicity and complexity of salaried status occupations in large organizations combining properties from *both* managerial/bureaucratic and professional occupations, Whyte (1956) discusses the "social ethic," and Perrow (1972) addresses these jobs as two types of expertise.

<sup>7</sup> In the relevant sections of *Economy and Society*, Weber makes a great deal out of the fact that bureaucrats in his ideal type are appointed. From the standpoint of state and governmental apparatuses, this means a salaried career with no hereditary right of appropriation and/or responsibility, but it also means appointment *rather than election*. The fact that tenure places such positions outside the control of elected officials gives the notion of objective competence and merit such a hollow ring, one favouring collectivity and status over traditional individuality, contract and property. Technocratization has probably gone further in the state and government sectors in the West because of tenure, combined with the persistence of "the market," with its demand for non-technocratic decisional capacities, in the "private" sector (cf. Lindblom, 1977; Wilson, 2001).

Thus a strong case could be made for the argument that individual responsibility for the practices associated with occupancy of a bureaucratic "office" with a "specified sphere of competence" must be transcended for the contemporary conception of qualification and expertness to prevail at all. Expertise loses its distinctly individualistic stamp (Weber) and takes on a clearly collective character as a consequence of the pre-eminence of modes of training and education outside the ambit of organizational control in the societal division of labour at large. That this group process of "problem-solving" appears to have supplanted the more conventional top-down model of "decision-making" only speaks to what must be the basis for the established or emerging system of "collective responsibility," such as it is (Wilson, 1971).

This point is only underscored when we go beyond the distinction between task (organizational) and person (societal) specialization to ask how the discretionary properties of technocratic positions in the structure relate expert knowledge to decision and action (Wilson, 1977b, 1972). Here we encounter a major dilemma for the contemporary effort to make higher level positions "responsible," one which is perhaps insoluble within the present economic and social system. Thompson (1961) put the matter succinctly over forty years ago when he noted that the higher one goes in most bureaucratic structures, the higher the percentage of discretionary *role* responsibilities and the lower the percentage of routinized and fixed non-discretionary tasks (cf. Cyert and MacCrimmon, 1968).

"Specified sphere of competence" for Weber meant not only acknowledged expertness as attested to by certifications and degrees, but evidence of this competence in and through individual decisions and actions. To be sure, competence in this case was more than casually tied to the well-known rule orientation for which public bureaucracies in particular are legitimately notorious.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless,

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<sup>8</sup> Note Weber's appreciation of the dominant role of "rule orientation" not only in bureaucratic relations with clients and customers, but in the area of superior-subordinate relations inside the bureaucracy itself. Thus "rule orientation" comprehends not only the secondary group pattern-variable orientations cited by Parsons in *The Social System* (1951: 58-67), but also "formalism," "strict discipline," "control on the basis of knowledge," "technical knowledge," "knowledge of the concrete fact within its own sphere of interest," "clearly defined sphere of competence," etc. Weber realizes how central to "rule orientation" both administrative rules and regulations following from legislation or executive orders (or procedure manuals) and

it was the individual incumbents in their day to day decisions and actions who generated, or rather “built up” the bureaucratic structure as an organized group (*Verband*) (Weber, 1947: 124–132, 136–43, 145–57). This reflected the continuing central role of pre-industrial and pre-urban traditional values and modes of behaviour into the early twentieth century. In addition, there is the fact that formal organizational rationality at that time constituted both an exception to the rule and an as yet unrealized model for the further development of collective life.

Nowadays, the reversal of this situation, with bureaucracies obliged to keep pace with models of knowledge, process, and decision that are all too often generated extraneously to them, sets the contours for the desired and contemplated technocratic ascendancy over modern organization. This fact sustains the gradual erosion of individual responsibility for decisions and actions, and the dominance of a form of collective responsibility that is substantively meaningless though processually and “formally” impressive (Weber, 1954, 1947: 328–333, 1946: 216–39). The all too typical answer to the fundamental irrationality of corporate and state organized and managerial capitalism, characterized by ever increasing non-specific and discretionary role responsibilities as one ascends the hierarchy, is to widen the ambit of the tenure or security principle. In the event, it is now seen to comprehend everyone not subject to near-instant dismissal at *either* end. As tenure and the security principle (*de facto* if not *de jure*) have served to frame the problem posed for society by the very success of technocratic (or “technostructural”) ideology, a thoroughly irrational form of retribution has emerged as a poor substitute for responsibility. This retribution applies to the political, super-bureaucratic, or executive “chiefs” standing outside and above the system of collective non-responsibility. It is the price they must be prepared to pay in order to reconcile the interests of publics and shareholders as punishment for “alleged” incompetence, and society’s interest in preserving and extending the tenure and/or security principle (Weber, 1947: 335).

Originally generated in the public sector in order to protect “merit” by seeking to displace spoils, amateurism, or traditional administra-

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organizational rules relating to task performance and responsibility in bureaucratic organizations are (cf. Gouldner, 1952; Sharp, 1952).

tion generally, tenure and job security now express the commitment of neo-Keynesians to the priority of consumer over producer roles. The operative presumption here is that technical progress is given and that social welfare comprehends work and labour activities as well as unemployment, illness, and retirement (Wilson, 1977b: 171–99, Habermas, 1971: 50–61). Collective responsibility is clearly revealed to be just a fiction all the more when it is realized just how totally the tenure principle and job security generally express *the presumption* of competence attested to by prior training and certification. Here occupancy of a given position with a “specified sphere of competence” is a reward for exhibiting one’s intellectual capabilities in formal examinations and the associated paraphernalia of “secondary socialization” in a professional (or professionalizing) occupation (Weber, 1947: 240–44; Scott, 1973).

Discretion loses its status as a property of *individual* decision-making for higher-order incumbents, then, to the extent that its “other side”—responsibility—is itself collectivized and formalized through group processes reflecting proper socialization in *the idea* of objective and impartial expert knowledge. In this way, the fundamental distinction between the task-specific and the role-discretionary is substantially blurred since it is no longer possible to trace decisions and actions to individuals. This is not, however, a claim of conspiracy, but instead draws attention to how expert knowledge and technical qualification have become such important and central attributes of decision and action that they can no longer be meaningfully comprehended as the property of individuals, no matter how well trained and qualified.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Nowadays situationally specific applications are a central part of the managerial training required of technocrats themselves. This means that the world is seen as a place to apply what is “known,” ideally without needing to have recourse to ingenuity at all. Habermas (1971: 62–80) discusses how technocratic models are replacing decisionistic models of bureaucratic management, while Mannheim (1954: 9–191) addresses the possibility and desirability of a “scientific politics” (cf. Wilson, 1971; Perrow, 1967). The root association between ingenuity and engineer (Fr. *ingénieur*) is highly relevant, given the central role of individuals with engineering training in technocratic structures. This is only underscored by the post-war subordination of engineers to technologies which are often replaced rather than repaired, thus eliminating opportunities for ingenious, though incremental, improvements in productivity, not to speak of new adaptations. Managerial expectations regarding prior (and continuing) off-the-job training indicate how few exceptions they want to have to face. This is readily supported by their aversion to risks (like public sector

The irresistible logic of the commitment to objective knowledge completes itself in the notion that such knowledge can only be mastered through group problem-solving processes. It is absolutely essential to an understanding of technocracy that this distinctively corporate and institutional dimension be appreciated as the basis of its claims *as a collectivity* to the possession of objective and increasingly complex technical knowledge. This is the real reason that technocracy ultimately follows a *managerial* model rather than a professional one in its attempt to co-opt bureaucratic decision hierarchies. The idea that a given office or position exhibits a specified sphere of competence becomes substantively meaningless relative to the idea of decisions and actions based on knowledge in such an equation. What persists for the petty bureaucrat (or manager) is only a generalized and formalized orientation to impersonal rules rather than a specified non-formalized orientation to other technocrats. Their collective nature both permits and requires group problem-solving, whether within or in tandem with conventional managerial and bureaucratic structures (Weber, 1947: 337–40; Wilensky, 1967: 75–87, 110–29; Wilson, 1973).

Let us now turn to that aspect of the functional-technical cluster that is perhaps most readily called to mind by the merest mention of the word “technocracy”—technique, the technical, and technology. Weber’s emphasis on “selection on the basis of technical qualifications . . . tested by examination or guaranteed by diplomas certifying technical training, or both” has already been discussed as it bears on the “clearly defined sphere of competence” of bureaucratic positions. Here we are interested in Weber’s corollary point to the effect that “the role of technical qualifications in bureaucratic organizations is continually increasing” (Weber, 1947: 335–40; 1946: 214–16, 233–44).

While this claim is clearly implied by our argument regarding increasing societal specialization with the “progress” of the industrial and urban division of labour, we did not attempt to isolate what exactly are alleged to be the uniquely technical properties of technocratic capabilities. It is here, not surprisingly, that we discover the distinctly organizational and formal/functional character of technical qualification. Weber’s allusion to the superiority “from a purely

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bureaucrats) as evidenced in tests carried out in numerous MBA/MPA programmes in North America.



technical point of view” of “the monocratic variety of bureaucracy” is instructive in this regard (Weber, 1947: 337). So too is Mannheim’s discussion of functional rationality, in particular the conflict between its imperatives and the capacity for intelligent judgement in new or unexpected situations that is the essence of what he calls “substantial rationality” (see Chapter 4 above; Wilson, 1973). There can be little dispute about the prescience of both writers when they implied that real technical capabilities could be nothing short of collective and corporate in their ambit.

According to Weber, bureaucrats may combine their individual competencies to produce an organizational and formal/functional or structural effect, as he notes in arguing that “bureaucracy is superior in knowledge, including both technical knowledge and knowledge of the concrete fact within its own sphere of interest” (Weber, 1947: 339). The issue is less whether this combination occurred than the fact that the objectivity and neutrality of such knowledge appears increasingly to be externally (that is, *socially*) produced rather than generated predominantly inside the organization. This means that other societal members not only respect the difference between themselves and bureaucratic incumbents. They now see decision-making-cum-problem-solving processes in large organizations as more formally rigorous versions of what is required of all labouring and consuming denizens in late capitalist societies.<sup>10</sup> Technical qualifications, tied as they are to formal certification coupled with proper socialization in values, attitudes, and world-views, take virtual possession of key organizational positions from the “outside.” To be sure, this presumes the givenness of technical progress, itself increasingly dependent upon applied science and the science-based technology produced through corporate, state, and military R & D (Habermas, 1971: 64; cf. Chapter 8 below).

The way that technocracy trades on the clearly *scientistic* ideology of science in its relation to technique serves as an almost invincible basis for its claims about the objectivity and neutrality of its

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<sup>10</sup> Weber (1946: 240–244; also 1947: 335) discusses the tension between bureaucratization and rationalization given the increasing role of technical training and certification through “universities and business and engineering colleges, and the universal clamour for the creation of educational certificates in all fields,” which “make for the formation of a privileged stratum in bureaus and in offices.”

knowledge (Schroyer, 1970). The claim to objective knowledge gains credibility, as Veblen pointed out, the more readily it can point to its knowledge as “peculiarly matter of fact” and to its standards of reasoning as premised on “opaque and material cause and effect.” Public attitudes toward the technocratic control and disposition of human and material resources are undoubtedly rendered more positive by the public’s tendency to associate knowledge with hard-nosed technical rationality and technique with “science” (Veblen, 1906; cf. Weber, 1946: 215–16, 240–42).

Indeed it was precisely this association, originally formulated by Frederick Taylor and Henry Gantt, which led to the term “technocracy” first being coined by W. H. Smyth of Berkeley California in 1919 (see note 2). Smyth was a follower of Thorstein Veblen and Morris Cooke (1917, 1915) who had read several installments of what would later become Veblen’s *The Engineers and the Price System* (1921) in *The Dial* (cf. Layton, 1956). Smyth’s original definition of technocracy was “the organization of the social order based on principles established by technical experts.” Here, the backward reference to the work of St. Simon, Fourier, Comte, Enfantin, and the Ecole Polytechnique in the period between 1820 and 1848 is far more important than the brief vogue that the technocratic movement enjoyed in the United States between 1931 and 1933.<sup>11</sup>

Close scrutiny of the concept of technocracy only underscores an earlier point about the *presumption* of objective knowledge held by supporters of technocracy. Preference for a more critical, less affirmative, conception of technocracy can perhaps be better understood by turning to the question of just who these technocrats are and what it is

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<sup>11</sup> Wolin (1960: 352–434) provides a very useful analysis of the growth of technocratic thinking and its tie from the very beginning in St. Simon’s *predecessors* to the social sciences. Sociology emerges from the study far less as a creature of liberalism and the enlightenment than as a counter-revolutionary force seeking the *recollectivization* of human beings whose traditional pre-industrial bonds had been sundered in France by the Revolution and Bonapartism. In comparison to Veblen, Marx is far less fanciful, but then we need to be clear on what “revolution” means when we can speak of a “managerial revolution.” Both Veblen and Taylor, for example, had stressed the need, reminiscent in some ways of St. Simon and the Ecole Polytechnique, to bring the workers and engineers/technocrats together to confront and/or overthrow various ‘vested interests,’ whether the landed nobility (St. Simon; Comte), financiers and investors (Veblen) or, in the contemporary context, *managers* whose formal authority and overly-wide discretion puts them beyond performance assessment (Thompson).

about their knowledge (besides its alleged objectivity and neutrality) that is thought to be so valuable to urban industrial societies. As it turns out, supporters and critics mainly agree in their understanding of the rarely articulated *goals or objectives* of technocracy as the late capitalist ideology of objective knowledge (Dreitzel, 1972; Meynaud, 1965).

Probably the best way to attempt to identify who the technocrats are is to examine their present relation to other occupations and functions in advanced industrial societies. Here it will be necessary to keep in mind the already noted continuing role of the state and its increasing elision, along with large corporations, of the traditional distinction between public and private functions in the common law. Thus technocrats are an elite class fragment whose socialization, including "technical qualifications," is seen to equip them for group problem-solving in many or most types of formally organized settings where they often pool their individual capabilities and competencies. In this respect, the claim of technocratic applicability to a large number of organizational endeavours clearly parallels Weber's oft-quoted statement regarding bureaucracy's applicability "with equal facility to a wide variety of different fields," and in fact builds upon it in significant ways (Weber, 1947: 334; see note 9).

### III. *The scalar-authority cluster and technocracy*

Perhaps the most important matter to address at the outset is how technocratic domination differs from the sort of domination that Weber attempted to capture in his discussion of the bureaucratic scalar-authority cluster. Some would argue that technocracy is *apolitical* even while readily admitting that it constitutes a type of domination and control unique to advanced industrial societies. Here it is significant that technocracy's claim to being apolitical can only have meaning inasmuch as this claim is understood to be a property of the ideology of objective knowledge so central to the idea of "rational domination." When we turn to the scalar cluster in order to continue our comparison along Weberian lines, we discover that its properties can be reduced to four—hierarchy, discipline, formal authority, and rule-orientation (Weber, 1946: 196–98; 1947: 329–34). We also discover that it is not as easy to distinguish scalar from functional technical attributes as we thought it would be, as Weber

himself seemed to realize in characterizing “rational domination” as “control on the basis of knowledge” (1947: 339; cf. Beneveniste, 1973). Indeed, this very failure to make a clear distinction underscores the limits of the ideology of objective knowledge itself. Only by accepting central assumptions of this ideology would it be possible to defend the idea that the fully functional and technical, after all, stood on its own apart from domination in the form of hierarchy, discipline, formal authority, and rule orientation.

In the case of hierarchy, and, to a lesser extent, other elements of the scalar cluster, we are dealing with one of the most persistent characteristics of collective life—the idea of a pecking order. The scalar-authority cluster as a whole is cited by Weber as the most “traditional” one of the three, and is argued to be characteristic of all forms of collective activity. This even holds for rule-orientation inasmuch as such an orientation is absolutely necessary if we are to give any credence to the idea of an organized hierarchy as a collective enterprise “built up” out of individual office holders (*Verband*). More to the point is the observation that the functional/technical cluster itself can only be considered unique to modern bureaucracy in urban industrial societies to the extent that it too presupposes an ideology of objective knowledge.

Like Galbraith’s mistaken idea of “knowledge” as a newly emerging factor of production standing apart from land, labour, and capital, this view would have us believe that past societies possessed nothing that could be meaningfully understood to constitute technical knowledge relative to less specific capabilities in the culture at large. To be sure, such a tendency is evident in Weber’s discussions of competence, knowledge, and the technical in several parts of his analysis of bureaucracy. Nevertheless, it clearly contradicts his view, expressed in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* and elsewhere, that one can only seek to meaningfully understand other (and earlier) cultures by viewing them in terms of their own standards, understandings, and problems (Weber, 1958, 1947: 87, 94–96).

To meet this requirement, Weber would have to admit that competence, knowledge and the technical are a possession of all cultures, and one which is relative to commonsense capacities and traditional and customary understandings (Barnett, 1953; Wilson, 1984, and Chapter 8 below). The fact that he often does not do this when discussing bureaucracy points to his own ambivalence on the matter of the objectivity of knowledge and technique. It suggests that Weber

the sociologist was often more supportive of this ideology than many interpreters of his pessimistic rationalization thesis would have us believe. It was all the more incumbent on Weber to take the *verstehen* requirement seriously given his considerable knowledge of the origins of technique in religion and art at the dawn of human history. For these reasons, and others, it is difficult to ignore the presence of indisputable aspects of technocratic thinking alongside a generalized fear of technocracy in the work of Weber himself (cf. Jameson, 1973; and Chapter 1 above).

Perhaps it is the clear persistence of hierarchy throughout the history of human collective life that justified the emphasis placed upon it in Weber's formulation of bureaucracy. After all, rational domination is still a form of domination and the term rational remains the modifying element in the term. Does this tell us something about the meaning of contemporary rationality as Weber understands it? The answer would seem to be yes when we recall that bureaucracy constitutes the organizational expression of the legal-rational form of authority for Weber. Thus, "legal" authority or "legality" means impersonality, objectivity *sine ira et studio* and the idea that no person is above the law in its application and enforcement (Weber, 1947: 131–32, 328–33).

What follows from this is an argument for the collective rationality of the hierarchical structure that has been organized on the basis of individual offices, each with an allegedly fixed and specified sphere of competence. Weber's basic presumption in his application of the bureaucratic ideal type is that what is formally required of individual office-holders provides the parameters for their actual behaviour in the form of decisions and actions. Thus he emphasized the need for job and task descriptions to include not only the application of what he called technical knowledge and skills but strict discipline under a regimen of formalized superior-subordinate relations. Looked at on a systems-wide basis, then, we realize that virtually *every* "office" or position in a bureaucracy must include not only a task or technical component but an authority component if the idea of a collectively rational *structure* is to have any meaning.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Weber's model of action may be *decisionistic* inasmuch as it depends on a rigid distinction between facts and values, but "rational domination" premised on the idea of "control based on knowledge" is ideally supposed to make this gap not only

This also helps us place the issue of discretion and its unavoidable relation to authority in better perspective. Such a formalized system of positions in the form of statuses makes it easy to see how the “legal” demand for objectivity and neutrality invariably serves the interests of the structure as a collectivity. Only if each position couples responsibility for its own discretionary behaviour with strict discipline to superiors is the exercise of discretionary authority in each instance reconcilable with the interests of the structure as a whole.<sup>13</sup> The lynchpin in many or most cases is “rule orientation”: it provides the illusion of technical capability and equates the technical with that which is alleged to be neutral and “objective.”

More significantly, “rule orientation” provides a basis in bureaucratic *practice*, as well as theory, for hiding the clearly scalar properties of such a behaviour pattern. Weber, after all, often did treat “rule orientation” more as an attribute of the functional/technical cluster than the scalar one, and for good reasons. As a clear improvement over arbitrary bases of decision, it was problematic for him only from the standpoint of what we nowadays call “equity.” Thus, in his discussion of formal and substantive rationalization in the law, Weber seems to prefer certain features of what at the time was called “Khadi justice” on the grounds of its greater capacity for “individualization” (Weber, 1954: 198–255).<sup>14</sup>

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bridgeable, but nonexistent. It is at this point that a contrast can be observed between Weber’s analysis of politics and science as vocations (1946: 77–156) and his discussion of bureaucratic office holding as a vocation (1946: 196–244; 1947: 324–341). Decisionism in the strict sense really only applies to politics, and in an inverted form, to science, never to bureaucracy. Weber’s different treatments thus allow us to see how well he anticipates subsequent phases and levels of rationalization in the West when he implies that the rationalization of the functional/technical cluster can only be achieved by the emergence of collegial groups and even institutionalization (1947: 402–404, 1946: 235–242).

<sup>13</sup> In citing bureaucracy’s *technical* superiority, Weber states: “Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, *discretion*, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of *material and personal costs*—these are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic administration, and especially in its monocratic form” (1946: 214). His remarks on material costs, here and elsewhere, thus make evident how factors other than size and complexity could guarantee bureaucratization. He also indicates the way that ever *greater* social organization makes monocracy *vis a vis* collegiality less and less desirable.

<sup>14</sup> However, Giddens claims (1973: 275–76) that Weber was more concerned with administrative than actual technical expertise in his discussion of the functional/technical cluster. I have taken issue with this by noting the presence of both in Weber’s discussion, in order to indicate his awareness of their essential difference. At the

When organizational members can turn to rules, procedures, and records that *they themselves* have created and call this not only an exercise in objectivity and neutrality but one that evidences their possession of technical skills and specialized knowledge, they have laid a central part of the groundwork for a formally meritocratic order. Their own processes and decisions will now be claimed to constitute the essence of “rational domination” itself. To be sure, rule orientation means nothing if it fails to comprehend an incumbent’s approach to the rules governing *his or her own conduct*. Only a willingness to accept the responsibility that goes with discretionary action permits such an office-holder to favour a broad interpretation of job requirements over a narrow one in any particular situation (Wilson, 1972). Nowadays it is difficult to dispute the claim that this rule orientation, with its emphasis on objectivity and neutrality, and their alleged relation to technique and the technical, provides a model of secondary socialization that since 1950 has gradually become society-wide in its ambit. From the standpoint of technocracy and of the key components of its ideology-become-structure, what is most important about bureaucracy and the increasingly organized professions is what they have *in common* rather than what distinguishes them.<sup>15</sup>

Technocracy builds upon and simultaneously expresses this interdependence between scalar-authority and functional-technical clusters which was already apparent when Weber formulated his bureaucratic ideal type. Hierarchy relates individual positions and groups of positions to goals and sub-goals so that the bureaucratic form of division of labour can appear to function as a collectively rational *unit* whose work has a beginning and an end. Discipline relates each incumbent to someone above in order to compensate for the separate problems of discretion that each is invariably involved in (Thompson, 1961: 10–24; Weber, 1946: 228–29, 333–35; Raffel,

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same time, however, Weber was aware that scientific and technical knowledge is relative to time, place, culture, and circumstance, as when he discusses science’s *fate*—its tie to progress (Weber 1946 [1917/19]: 138–39; Wilson, 1977b: 51–54).

<sup>15</sup> Parsons realized this in *Essays in Sociological Theory* (1942) in his discussion of the similarities and differences between business and professional orientations, and in *The Social System* (1951). The real difference between the two is their (allegedly) different *motives* for objectivity, neutrality, and calculation—profit vs. performance—not the fact that only the professions ideally exhibit it (cf. Weber, 1947: 158–171, 181–202, 209–225; 1946: 215–216, 235; cf. Parsons, 1960).

1979). Formal authority, which invokes the idea of objective competence by equating prescribed, expected, and required behaviours found in job descriptions with technical capabilities, makes merit and tenure seem inseparable and “rational domination” the only desirable basis for organized decision and action.

The result is a structure made up of groups of individuals whose differences are so minuscule when compared to the matters on which they are like-minded that it only makes sense to treat them as a single collection. The idea that a rule orientation is needed if individual incumbents are to overcome their “natural” disposition to decide and act in particularistic and ascribed ways is dealt with in the following way. Proper secondary socialization in professional and managerial institutions now constitutes a guarantee that those trained in this way have internalized both the values and the “technical” knowledge on which their application is to be based (cf. Parsons, 1951). Therefore, the answer to Merton’s question in 1937 must be that bureaucracies are less places where secondary socialization moulds individuals and more structures which receive individuals already schooled and certified to be the possessors of the correct values, and the competencies or skills that go with them (Merton, 1957 [1937]: 195–224).

Related to rule orientation in important ways is the parallel issue of *jurisdiction* as the basis for delineating and denoting an incumbent’s fixed and specified sphere of competence (Weber, 1947: 330, 340; 1946: 198–96, 215–16, 220, 228–29, 237–39). Here also we discover how fundamentally scalar in character are the capabilities that an individual possesses as an organization member. What appears to “fix” the specificity of the occupant’s sphere of competence is not the training and socialization which he or she has gone through prior to (or during) his or her incumbency. Only the job description can claim to do this, and can only succeed in doing it to the extent that by specificity we have in mind not “technical” knowledge as we nowadays understand the term, but technical knowledge as Weber understood it, that is, knowledge of rules, procedures and files.

At the same time, the collective character of bureaucracy as a *social structure*, comprised in part of like-minded individuals who constitute an elite class fragment, makes the contemporary notion of technical competence comprehensible as a potential and actual basis for managerial decision and action in the first place. This is not to give technique and the technical anything approaching objective sta-



tus, but only to underscore the role of secondary socialization and training in the society at large. To my way of thinking, the obliteration of the tension cited by Mannheim in 1935 (discussed in Chapter 4 above) between functional and substantial rationality with the transformation of capitalist industrial societies into meritocratic and credentialist orders is supremely problematic (Mannheim, 1940; Collins, 1979).

What replaces this tension is a collective structure whose group processes underscore the extent to which the “technical” as we (not Weber) understand it has become unhinged from any single line position in the hierarchy of modern organization and management. As a consequence, a fixed sphere of competence now relates as much to the *limits* of decision and action imperatives, in the form of responsibility for the exercise of one’s own authority and that of others to whom authority has been delegated, as it does to bureaucracy as a *technically* superior method of dividing and organizing work and labour activities. Indeed, one might even argue that today the two are virtually indistinguishable. The very ubiquity and (alleged) objectivity of technical and technological considerations make the idea of their possession by individuals as individuals faintly absurd (cf. Thompson, 1961: 25–57).

Jurisdictional boundaries only underscore further the scalar nature of the idea of limit as a property of the structure as a system of authority and responsibility. To note the collective character of bureaucracy as an apparatus whose central characteristic is “control based on knowledge” today is to go beyond the secret knowledge of rules, procedures and files that Weber had in mind. Ultimately it means nothing less than the ongoing effort to reconcile this structure with the technical and professional values and knowledge that are the hallmark of technocracy itself.

In his discussion of bureaucracy, Weber clearly realizes that what is central to an understanding and appreciation of this new collective form of division of labour is precisely the way it appears to reconcile the three clusters, particularly the functional-technical and scalar clusters. Indeed, I have argued elsewhere, and shall take up again further on, that it is the career cluster above all which provides the basis for the illusion that formal authority and expert knowledge have in fact been reconciled. Weber’s great strength in this regard was to have brought together in one construct a whole host of factors that had been, and still were being, treated as if they were

not intimately related to and interdependent with one another. Thus, changes in the structure of capitalist economies, the increasing role of the state, technological advance, and the so-called “managerial revolution” are dealt with by Weber as factors demonstrating larger-order developments in which all are directly implicated in both a structural and a processual way (Wilson, 1977b: 145–170).

“Bureaucratic administration means fundamentally the exercise of control on the basis of knowledge” (Weber, 1947: 339). With this statement Weber summarizes what for him is prototypical of both the great achievement and the great problematic contained in the modern organization of work and labour activities. The idea, already noted, that “knowledge” is a unique property of modern or contemporary administrative decision-making is itself problematic. It is not just that “knowledge” is a value-laden term whose use in this fashion has the effect (if not the intent) of downgrading all other (and all previous) forms of decision-making as automatically arbitrary. Also important is the way that such a posture functions as ideological legitimation by leading us to rank order general and specific knowledge claims on the basis of the extent to which their assertions of objective status can be seen to possess a basis in technique and the technical.

Even more central than these considerations is the already-mentioned achievement of the appearance of unity that bureaucracy realizes by what is now a culturally ingrained view that it is *more likely* to constitute “the exercise of control based on knowledge” than any other social institution (*ibid.*: 118–120; 1946: 214). In point of fact, bureaucracy no longer stands against an order where its structures are an exception to the rule, even in the world of work and labour. Bureaucracy is now the established prototype of a society that has extended several of its most central attributes and the relations of interdependence between them to forms of life formerly subject to traditional modes of behaviour. The dialectical reflex of our highly organized society of labourers, consumers, and spectators back upon the now-conventional structures that earlier functioned as the prototype for societal development helps to explain present technocratic claims on management as an occupation and bureaucracy as a form of organization (Weber, 1946: 228–41).

The real question we must ask in light of the foregoing is this: What allows such large collectivities of persons operating as incum-

bents in bureaucracies to maintain the continuing illusion of conflict-free decision processes based on objective technical grounds, and what is their motivation for allowing this illusion to continue? Here it is necessary to disavow any notion of conspiracy by technocrats even while admitting that they constitute an elite class fragment in the advanced societies that seeks to revamp management as an occupation and bureaucracy as a method of dividing and organizing work and labour activities. The tentative answer to this question has to be that, for the most part, technocrats, either singly or as a collectivity, are simply unaware of the problematic status of their claim to objective knowledge and its equation with technique and the technical. This is the essence of the process of successful secondary socialization itself, is it not?

The essence of decision and action in a collective setting where general and specific "goal orientation" sets the organizational and occupational parameters of behaviour must be the claim to "rational grounds" or "rational processes" (Weber, 1946: 216–19, 229, 240; Parsons, 1960: chapters 1–2). In this sense technocracy, even though more the product of societal processes of specialization combined with the increasing role of applied science and science-based technology in production, administration and innovation, depends heavily upon the original claim to "rational domination" first articulated by Weber on behalf of modern (now "classical") bureaucracy. Even the technical or technological component that is a property of the widening ambit of applied science and science-based technology expressed in R & D activities becomes part of a technocratic claim to superior objective knowledge. But it does so only insofar as this doctrine seizes on aspects of the changing stock of commonsense knowledge in support of an ascending group.

I already noted the crucial contribution that scientism makes to technocratic thought. Scientism is an ideology that supports a deterministic linkage between science and technology, coupled with the idea that certain groups possess special knowledge of how to facilitate this linkage organizationally. As such, it enables technocracy to underscore the need for "professional" management trained in the potential or actual "concrete facts of the case". At the same time it maintains and improves upon the bureaucratic control structure that has been so central to managerial dominance over professional and technical specialists, particularly in staff functions, but in subordinate

line positions as well.<sup>16</sup> Of the utmost importance to technocrats have been the many and varied “overlays” on the formal bureaucratic structure like task forces, project teams, and matrix grids. These overlays have spoken less to professional needs for collegiality to complement hierarchy, authority, and discipline than they have to demands for objective knowledge given in the nature of the new scientific, social-scientific and technical/technological inputs to organized decision and action, as Weber himself anticipated (1946: 237–39).

The fact that technocracy has built upon bureaucracy, while at the same time developing a body of doctrine on its own in concert with professional and managerial training schools, often obscures what there is about it that is so central to the study of collective behaviour in the advanced societies. As a leading exponent of the idea and possibility of rational domination, technocracy presents its credentials as a basis for its “right” as a *group*, rather than an elite class fragment, to function as the central steering component of societies dominated by large-scale corporate and state bureaucratic structures.<sup>17</sup> The way that these structures increasingly seek to govern the pace and development of applied scientific and technological knowledge is especially important, as much because of the absence of (former) working scientists amongst the technocracy as because of the threat this development poses for both science and technology in the future (Wilson, 1980, 1977a, 1977b: 75–100).

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<sup>16</sup> Thompson (1961) would naturally exclude scientism from his list of ideologies since it lies at the heart of his own technocratic advocacy in the Veblenian tradition, rather than constituting a bulwark for the exercise of formal authority in the absence of objective specialized technical knowledge by managers. Compare to Wilensky (1967: 48–58, 175–78) on the alleged objectivity of professional and technical specialization as itself pathological (cf. Barnard, 1948; also Feyerabend, 1978, 1975).

<sup>17</sup> Galbraith admits this in both *The New Industrial State* (1967) and *Economics and the Public Purpose* (1973). Our difference with him is based on the far less cohesive character of his “technostructure,” which for him in fact embodies the sort of technical, scientific and managerial knowledge needed to run large corporations under conditions of high, and seemingly autonomous, technological change. But it is precisely his failure to link this group to the conditions of its emergence and sustenance which makes his position eminently technocratic. Its collective and group character thus lacks all points of reference in the larger society, and no interest is taken in addressing interpenetration and reciprocity, along with the absence of publicly acknowledged professional status and recognition, as an issue for this elite class fragment.

The view that technocrats constitute the leading edge of a socially based conception of objective knowledge allows them an ascendancy that is all out of proportion to what their socialization has actually made them. The fact that their form of thinking and talking is highly respected, albeit in the abstract, by lay members of the society at large allows their training and certification to function as more than just a substitute for “mere” experience. I would argue that what has supplanted a managerial model in technocratic thought and ideology is less a professional model than a *social*-scientific one. Their preparation, and the worldviews that it supports and sustains, takes the form of a more technically sophisticated version of the language of social scientism spoken (or respected) in the society at large. In so doing, it feeds the illusion that these individuals both differ fundamentally from and “represent” (in ways that owners, proprietors, even managers and professionals cannot claim to represent) key interests central to the good health of the system (Long, 1962; Habermas, 1979, 1971; Weber, 1946: 224–25, 242–44; but cf. Wilson, 2001; 2000). Experience, especially where continuing socialization and training is required, operates in the new equation less as a basis for changing attitudes, values and ways of doing things than as something to be *reconstituted*. Here, the assumption is that the incumbent is *already* in possession of the objective knowledge and group orientations that can be counted on to guarantee rational decision-making and problem-solving in any given situation.

#### IV. *The career-professional cluster and technocracy*

Weber’s third cluster—full-time salaried career, free selection and contract, and separation from the means of administration with no right of appropriation—is the basis for any understanding of the relation between bureaucracy and the subsequent emergence of a society of labouring, consuming, and spectating job-holders. Indeed, career is a key concept through which the fiction of a stable, conflict-free social structure expresses itself (Arendt, 1958; Schroyer, 1973; Müller, 1970; and Chapter 7 below).

Here the assumption that society is sufficiently stable and predictable, at least in its general outlines, coupled with the social *duty* of full-time job-holding as a basis of the right-become-duty to consume and spectate, is central to the idea of career. The notion that

someone's primary socialization is succeeded by a process which begins with secondary socialization and leads on into a temporal succession of positions, each linked logically and developmentally to one another, is only possible or conceivable for a minority of individuals. These persons only constitute a majority in highly organized work systems whose form of collective life is premised mainly on status rather than contract (Mannheim, 1953: 235–49; Gilb, 1966). It is no accident that sociology uses the terms “position” and “status” interchangeably in discussing social and organizational roles. The apparent reversion to contract, evident in contemporary neo-conservatism/neo-liberalism, far from displacing technocracy, co-opts it for the increasingly private uses of the capital sector against the public and especially the social sectors. In doing this, it demonstrates Society's titanic capacity for regression to earlier forms inherent in its very abstractness as a false totality (Adorno, 1969; Wilson 1977b, 2002).

The view that society is a form of collective life based increasingly on status rather than contract is thoroughly prefigured in the emergence of formal bureaucratic organization. Here what is important is the idea that a position with pre-formed task and authority/responsibility components *already exists* in advance of any particular occupant as well as in concert with one's incumbency. Organization tables and procedure manuals provide a basis for the fiction not only that positions “exist” independently of any particular occupant, but that organization itself possesses a formal existence as “rationally ordered societal action” and “societalized relations of power” (Weber, 1946: 228).

Even though commentators frequently resist admitting it, it is difficult to ignore the fact that for most individuals tables of organization and manuals of procedure function as normative and prescriptive ideals, or at least guidelines, rather than descriptions of actual states of affairs. The fact that non-formalized aspects of everyday life impart reality to organizations as collective entities does not fundamentally challenge the claim that formalization in advance makes sense. For purposes of analysis, Weber realized that such formal maps must be treated as heuristic devices regardless of their normative and prescriptive animus. Only if they are treated as a tool for comparative analysis can we in fact discover the extent to which the “real” organization differs from the formal model standing as a prescriptive ideal.

For Weber the theory and practice of "career" denoted a less than commonplace approach to what had earlier been sporadic administration by aristocrats and notables in what remained on the whole a traditional society. Today, however, we also use the term career to refer to anyone's work life seen prospectively or retrospectively as a succession of possible or actual statuses. And whereas for Weber it was bureaucratic administration that pioneered the idea of a succession of full-time salaried positions leading up to retirement with pension, today we realize how much more general in its ambit the career concept, in theory if not in practice, still remains.

For these reasons it makes limited sense to speak of bureaucracy as a model for the development of advanced industrial societies, albeit one presently in the midst of responding to processes of specialization generated in the larger society. To say that society has become a bureaucracy *writ large* has not just become a cliché, but an inaccurate picture of the advanced societies as well. At the same time, the still accepted notion that society should function as a *rational social organization* is absolutely central to technocratic ideology and practice. This notion also helps us appreciate the significance of the work of intellectual precursors like St. Simon, Fourier, Enfantin and Comte as well as the subsequent furor over technocracy in the United States (Wolin, 1960; cf. Hayek, 1955).

Thus there is a clear and unambiguous connection between: St. Simon's view of the ideal society as a rational social organization along the general lines suggested earlier by de Maistre and Bonald; the rise of the engineering profession in the United States and the importance of its differences with business as perceived by Thorstein Veblen and his followers and supporters; and present day affirmations and fears regarding technocracy in North America and in Eastern and Western Europe. The convergence of and conflict between large-scale organization and secularized occupations as joint bases for full-time salaried careers is particularly central to an understanding of contemporary technocratic developments in the advanced societies today.

The concept of a full-time salaried career based on free selection and contract, where the incumbent is separated from the means of administration, may have once been a unique property of bureaucracy, and may even today be principally found in organizational life. What has changed fundamentally as a result of the impact of the "free" occupations, particularly those with professional or scientific/

technological status, is the nature of career routes and timetables. The bureaucratic career that Weber described was played out mainly or exclusively in one organizational setting, while careers today often take shape over time in many different contexts spanning production and service organizations in both public and private sectors (Glaser, 1968).

Through a process of societal specialization never really controlled by large-scale economic and administrative organization, certain occupations-become-professions have been able to secure a base point independent of bureaucratic salaried employment, even though a large segment of their members depend directly upon such employment for their livelihood. This base point has allowed these occupations to generate their own notions of proper secondary socialization and their own ideas of career development, even though they lack the sort of public recognition and some of the controls typical of the established "fee-for-service" professions (Vollmer and Mills, 1966; Wilensky, 1964). Indeed, the very dependence of management in standard bureaucratic structures in the corporate and state sectors on professional and scientific-technological specialization and specialists has enabled these occupations to combine favoured status with considerable functional autonomy.

In the area of research and development activities we see what is perhaps the most current installment in the ongoing battle between bureaucratic management and the free occupations, with their independent secondary socialization processes, over control of the pace and character of specialized knowledge. Until several decades ago, technocratic elements were still mainly found in and represented by members of the free occupations. Today, however, the attempt by *management* to develop an occupational-become-professional base more independent of bureaucracy for the first time since the collapse of the scientific management movement points to the presence of an emerging technocratic bias here as well. Bureaucratic formal organization continues to combine a hierarchy of superior-subordinate relations with a functioning line-staff distinction. However, management's perceived need for *competence* in types of knowledge produced extra-bureaucratically, rather than simply *control* of those who are seen to possess it (and the status associated with it independent of bureaucracy), has led them to develop an extra-bureaucratic career orientation. It is not that management does not continue to operate out of formal bureaucratic organizations. It is rather the combined



effect of its changing career patterns and its increasing identification with specialized knowledge of a technical rather than a purely administrative kind that sets the contours for present day analyses of the role of technocratic values and ideology in the advanced societies.<sup>18</sup>

It is somewhat ironic that the occupation that has often been most ready to yield up its specialized competence to managerial careers—the engineering profession—appears in retrospect like the leading edge of a development that has more recently captured other specialized and professionalizing occupations. To be sure, here it is necessary to distinguish occupancy of super-ordinate line positions, where there is frequent and continuous reference to technical and professional training, from occupancy where no such reference occurs (Layton, 1956). While many engineers clearly meet the requirements of frequent and continuous reference to their knowledge base as functioning managers, bureaucrats, and executives, many have simply chosen to leave their training behind them in order to enter super-ordinate line positions. This was probably more true in the past than it is today. The only other major free occupation whose membership counts a large percentage of salaried organizational employees—accounting—provides a more recent example of a trend also visible among engineers. In both cases, it is their concerted movement into upper-middle and upper-level line positions in response to direct *managerial* dependence on such extra-bureaucratically produced kinds of knowledge. The perception that this dependence can no longer be dealt with within the line/staff format provides the strongest impetus moving public and private management in a technocratic direction (Feder, 1981).

Nevertheless, the basic tension between capital and the idea that hard, objective knowledge in the possession of scientists, technologists, engineers and other professionals is the key to a “rational” society still remains. The fact that management is “professionalizing,” and that professionally, scientifically and technologically trained persons are moving into high level managerial positions, simply means that this tension has taken on new forms. The clear success that

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<sup>18</sup> Thompson (1961: 12) could not see this, but would have been able to anticipate management’s eventual detachment from bureaucracy had he not dismissed Weber’s rationalization thesis as “dubious” in favour of an explicit commitment to Durkheim and a tacit one to Veblen and technocracy itself.

technocracy has achieved in its impact on traditional management and bureaucracy requires us to look carefully at its claims to objective knowledge once again. For only by doing this can we realize the real significance of challenging an updated version of Weber's argument regarding the superiority of administration based on knowledge in the contemporary context. The question of the role of special skills, training and competencies in "rational" decision-making cannot be decided unambiguously. No less than in the case of St. Simon and Veblen is there a peculiar ring today to the claim that a rational social order can only be achieved and maintained by the application of objective knowledge. It ignores the difference between goal setting and prioritizing on the one hand, and technical rationality in the efficient utilization of means *given goals* and their rank ordering on the other (Diesing, 1962; Wilson, 1981).

This assumption also makes too much of the idea of knowledge as a newly independent factor of production standing on its own apart from other factors as it (allegedly) never has before. As a consequence, it ignores the distinct possibility that knowledge has always been required for intelligent decisions, but that only as a consequence of its production and *proliferation* has it become distended from other factors to become the alleged property of specialists and professionals standing on their own. In effect, the theory of social specialization in the division of labour could be seen to account for those who are independently "knowledgeable" themselves (Thompson, 1961; Wilson, 1971). This point is all the more significant when we recall that supporters of technocratic ideology ultimately turn to metaphorical appeals to the superior concreteness of a knowledge of external nature in order to buttress their claims to the superior objectivity of scientists, technologists, and engineers.

While the distinction between goal setting and technically rational behaviour may appear facile in an age of organized systems of interdependence, it is still necessary to distinguish the rank-ordering of ends given scarce means (economizing) from the efficient utilization of means given ends. This distinction continues to have institutional and collective, as well as individual, significance, and it serves to underscore the priority within any finite decisional mode of the former to the latter. In fact, the tension between economizing and technically rational functions and activities expresses in decisional terms the tensions between the scalar-authority and functional-technical clusters within large organizations, as well as between bureau-

cracy and the free occupations as social institutions competing for control of organizationally relevant technical and professional knowledge. Just as the career notion is of central significance in resolving the tension between scalar-authority and functional-technical clusters, so also does technocratic ideology *and practice* affirm another distinct advantage for it. In this case, it is the unique capacity of the career orientation to achieve the sort of “control based on knowledge” which formalized (Weberian) bureaucracy lost with the emergence and proliferation of socially specialized technical and professional knowledge by both the free, and fee-for-service, occupations (Wilson, 2001; 2000).

Perhaps the best way of addressing critically the notion that objective knowledge on its own can provide society with a self-steering capacity is to point to the role of capital in economic allocation decisions and of politics and the political in governmental and public sector activities. While it is obvious that capital and politics are relevant to government in the first instance and to economic activity in the second, the idea of decision, and responsibility for decision, helps put the doctrine of group problem-solving in better perspective. The fact that discretion and the rise of group processes have changed operative notions of decision and responsibility in fundamental ways does not alter the fact that such processes and decisions must take place somewhere sometime. Our problem today is not that these processes and decisions have ceased to take place, but is instead our frequent inability to know where and when this is happening and to whom to assign “responsibility” (Wilson, 2001).

The “rudderless” character of any specialized knowledge claiming objective status apart from decisions, actions and policies is evident not only from the way that Marx and Engels refuted St. Simon and the Ecole Polytechnique, but from the fate of the technocratic movement in the United States between 1919 and 1933. Both in theory and in practice the idea of a social order based on the principle of “rational social organization” covers over the mainsprings of collective life itself. This is because at base it relies on an ultimately untenable distinction between business and industry, mainly in order to obscure “capitalism” as the dominant analytic.

Such a notion of social order fails to realize the way that rationality, organization and productivity so understood, express and promote the deepest values of the dominant classes instead of standing in opposition to them. By failing to see society as a totality, such a

notion simply serves the role of an ideology in practice for completing the existing socio-economic order rather than challenging it analytically or transcending it in practice (Marcuse, 1964; Adorno, 1969). The hoped-for alliance between engineers, scientists, and technologists, on the one hand, and the workers on the other, proposed by St. Simon, then Veblen a century later, alarmed no thoughtful member of the capitalist investing and controlling class, and for good reason.

A supreme indication of the hopelessness of Veblen's view of engineers as a potential "revolutionary" class resided in the following historical fact. American economic and business interests were more worried about attempts by the engineering societies to gain professional recognition by developing an image of "social responsibility" through public service than they were about efforts to displace owning and controlling groups through appeals to heightened efficiency and productivity (Layton, 1956). In the final analysis, resort to these values was regressive inasmuch as it relied on a distinction between industrial and pecuniary employment the empirical validity and normative relevance of which was thoroughly refuted by the real interests and experiences of engineers themselves (Adorno, 1967: 73–94).

It is to society as a totality that the student of technocracy must turn in order to mount a critique of its most fundamental cultural and historical properties and values. Only in this way is it possible to point to objectivity and neutrality as "observer's rules" in a culture where the observer, disciplined or otherwise, has displaced both theorists and practitioners (Bourdieu, 1976; Wilson, 1977b). As essential tools of the culture, objectivity and neutrality underscore the uniqueness of advanced industrial society as an historically specific cultural configuration whose essence as a form of life is the belief that there are objective, neutral, and independent facts of life. We thus make use of one of Wittgenstein's key distinctions without accepting his view that each side stands in a relation of mutual exclusivity one to the other, as for example in his attitude toward "progress" as a form *rather than* a fact of life. It must be clear that the doctrine of progress is both a "fact" of life and (as a consequence) a form of life (Wittgenstein, 1977; Drury, 1973: 1–4; Wilson, 1984).

Only by remaining conscious of advanced industrial society as an historically and culturally specific form of collective life rather than a synonym for it can we see how appeals to diligence and industry have served the interests of capital. The same can be said for "ratio-

nal bureaucracy”, which has often served as tacit support for states and governments, as well as large corporations in mixed systems (Adorno, 1969). Technocratic ideology and practice combine the appeal to diligence and industry with the commitment to organizational and systems models of rational planning and behaviour. They do this in and through a career orientation which tries to resolve the competition between bureaucracy and the free occupations for control of existing technical and professional knowledge and the processes of innovation that will produce new knowledge (Wilson, 1980; Chapter 8 below).

In both public and private sectors of the social economy technocracy functions as an elite class fragment aiding and abetting the interests of capital and a politics of notables.<sup>19</sup> Its reconciliation between the free occupations and large scale organization has not resulted in eroding the sort of subordination to groups and classes standing above and outside these structures that Weber noted in the case of both public bureaucracy and economic organizations. At the same time, it is increasingly difficult to refute Weber’s pessimistic rationalization thesis given the present combination of the ideology of formal meritocracy, coupled with neo-conservative attempts to downsize, privatize, contract out and deregulate (Wilson, 1977b: 200–30). Only heroic attempts to open out bureaucratic careers through affirmative action, pay equity and inclusiveness generally can defend the need for bureaucratic continuity, while complementing bureaucratic claims to superior expertise with the reality of superior representation of the marginal/working class majority. While it is easy to argue that the socially specialized knowledge provided by technical, professional, and scientific and social-scientific training is more and more central to rational problem-solving and decision-making in advanced industrial societies, this says nothing about what the reference for such knowledge is supposed to be. What exactly are the reasons why this is the case? To what extent can objective knowledge, and its organizational embodiment in technocracy, be seen to

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<sup>19</sup> The idea of stability through apathy is a fundamental characteristic of the political theory of technocracy, premised as it is on the idea of society as a functionally rational system. As the false whole becomes more and more technically complex and relationally interdependent, politics and the political must resign itself to redistribution under the doctrine of inevitable technical progress (Müller, 1970; Habermas, 1971; Almond and Verba, 1963; Crick 1960; cf. Chapter 7).

denote yet another phase of the mystification engendered by a form of life determined not to recognize itself as a culturally and world-historically specific false (abstract) whole? (cf. Wilson, 1984; Kroeber, 1944) An indication of how imperative the need for critique is is evident from the way that the social division of labour produces these continuing rationalizations of its own rationality in the face of the consequences of this false objectivity. Knowledge claims do not require a corollary assertion of certainty in order to be validated (Wittgenstein, 1977). Indeed this is precisely what reveals their partiality, inasmuch as only technical and professional knowledge seem able to make such assertions without embarrassment.

To the extent that advanced industrial societies remain committed to the idea of meritocracy as an objectively rational stratification order, they will fail to see the irretrievable damage being done to the possibilities for political and economic transformation still present in the culture. It is their devotion to objective knowledge, and to the idea of a unity of knowledge as a positive, or effectively positive, affirmation that is at the heart of this failure. To the extent that they invoke a technocratic ideology like that found in the work of Galbraith, Lane (1966), and Bell (1973), they will be unable to resist the argument that ours is, after all, a post-capitalist, even “post-modern” social structure. The fact that it is a social economy which has generalized secondary group statuses and observers rules so far beyond the confines of work and labour settings that capitalism only appears to be nowhere because it is everywhere receives no credence, especially in a period of neo-conservative ascendancy. In this sense, ours is a capitalist *society*, where the absence of several of the formal characteristics of a capitalist economy is a *prerequisite* for, rather than a threat to, this development.

The “open society” is increasingly contradicted by the emergence of a social structure whose essence is its generalization of that “closed body of office-holders” that Weber dreaded in his analysis of bureaucracy a century ago. The social levelling that bureaucracy initially helps to realize is stopped dead in its tracks by the very dependence on a money economy that made modern administration both possible and necessary (Weber, 1946: 204–09, 224–44; 1947: 340–41). The technostructure doubles as a legitimate version of technocratic theory in the final analysis because the “dispersion of power” downward can only go so far and no further (Giddens, 1973: 260–64).

As already noted, only an opening out of the opportunity for bureaucratic office holding can simultaneously reverse both the tendency toward closure and the neo-conservative response to it in the public, and especially the social field, namely, downsizing, privatization, contracting out and deregulation. That this response is not even-handed is increasingly evident from the fact that only public and social sectors are shrinking in the ways suggested, in clear contrast to the capital sector, where bureaucracy is actually growing both extensively and intensively (Wilson, 2002; 2001; 2000).

Technocracy thus turns out to be both a myth and a spectre. It is a myth because it cannot hope to keep its promises to itself and to 'objective rationality' for reasons that were suggested forty years ago by Crozier (1964) and Meynaud (1965). It is a spectre because its ideology is a more successful basis for claims on management and bureaucracy than at any time in its on-again, off-again past. It serves the interests of late capitalism while arguing for its independence from all partisanship but that of objective knowledge and its own power position, increasingly synonymous with formal, rather than substantive, meritocracy (Young, 1958; Wilson, 1977b: 200–230, 2001: 123–134). This illusion only appears to be contradicted by the disdain with which technocratic practitioners react to concern about their separation from the means of administration with no right of appropriation. Guaranteed, or virtually guaranteed, full-time salaried careers underwritten by a view of tenure as the key to meritocratic performance and capped by adjusted or indexed retirement pensions more than compensate for the absence of such irregular and undependable rewards. Commitment to objectivity in the absence of the object of all this objective knowledge becomes a central factor in the emergence of a culture where rationality, history, and progress are only facts of life because they are the essence of our form of life. Yet this suffocation of political possibility, combined with the decreasing likelihood of revolutionary transformation in the advanced societies, can only give the interests of capital and their technocratic henchmen temporary respite (Kumar, 1976; and Chapter 9 below). Their most pressing question now is whether the advanced societies can survive the last phases of modernization in the face of contradictory pressures on their claim to global leadership. These pressures come not only from the so-called "Third World" but from the internal contradictions of consumer capitalism itself, with its two-faced

attitude to debt, alongside the hypocrisy of privatization and the supreme illusion of 'free trade' (Levy, 1972; Wilson, 2002: 166–194, 2001: 108–116).

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### COMMUNICATION, DEPRIVATION AND MOBILIZATION: NOTES ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION AND RELATED DIFFICULTIES

In what follows, I look critically at some organizing concepts in political and social science in order to complement the preceding analysis of technocracy as late capitalist ideology with a look at some further examples that also display the ideological role of concepts. Efforts like these are essential to the goal of reconstructing social science inasmuch as concepts are nothing less than the tools, as well as the scaffolding, of all forms of thought, disciplinary and otherwise. The purpose of the exercise is to offer a somewhat different interpretation of the function such concepts perform as explanatory tools in these disciplines. I go on to suggest that *the source* and sustaining inspiration of these concepts is at least as important as the cultures and institutions they are alleged to be “about.” It is to the essential lack of a reflexive moment that we must turn in order to make sense of intellectual and professional practices like these. There is a vested interest in ignoring the source and continuing inspiration for such concepts, since this information might lead those with a newly acquired interest in them to be more sceptical and less willing to accept the practice of unreflexive disciplined observation. It would also underscore the extent to which these disciplines and Society, as a culturally and historically specific *form* of collective life rather than a synonym for it, “belong together” (Wilson, 1984; 1977).

The concepts which I have mainly in mind are *repressive communication* and allied notions of communicative competence and distortion, *relative deprivation* and its conception of need, and *social mobilization* as an approach to understanding social and political change, particularly in the Third World (Müller, 1970; Runciman, 1966; Deutsch, 1961).<sup>1</sup> Standing behind and rendering sensible the basic assumptions

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<sup>1</sup> Here the focus is on a few of the *earliest* formulations of these concepts in political and social science. Since Müller, Runciman, and Deutsch first wrote, of course, there has been lively discussion of these issues in a wide range of disciplines that have only partly overcome the problems identified here.

which these concepts make is Freud's idea that the price of civilization is the sublimation and channelling of the instincts (Freud, 1958). This overarching idea functions in the service of a view of human nature which, while not necessarily pessimistic, clearly resists all but the most incremental and non-violent conceptions of social and political change. Thus, it is hardly surprising to see late capitalist political and social science endorsing the view that humans are first and foremost "symbol makers," in much the same way that Franklin could argue in his own time that humans were tool makers by nature. In each case, what is important is how culturally and historically specific notions of human being are fetishized as timeless qualities of essential human nature (Marx, 1962: 81–96).

Fundamental to an understanding of the deeper significance of repressive communication, relative deprivation, and social mobilization is therefore the current emphasis in social and political thought on "symbolically mediated interaction." It is clearly the key notion used to reconcile much of what passes as Marxian and critical theorizing with peaceful incremental change as a practical ideal in collective life. This emphasis frequently serves to maintain a delicate equipoise between the ideal of a communicative community, and the possibility that this ideal may be achievable in and through the social and political sciences as exemplary enterprises. It is here that the idea of communicative competence and the concern with overcoming communicative distortion presents itself as the normative ideal (Habermas, 1970; 1979a; 1979b; Apel, 1980). In Chapter 9, I argue that this understanding of possible process fails to honour the priority of commonsense understandings as the basic starting point for *any* effort at collective self-enlightenment. Here I wish to examine the way that repression points to structural realities which are *not* seen to be subject to significant alteration in the near future.

The tension between this belief and a genuinely held terror of *revolution* as a vehicle for social and political change informs the support for and utilization of these concepts in political and social science. Thus the forceful claim, made in recent years, that while revolution may be likely in the so-called Third World it is no longer realistically conceivable in the First is employed to justify the present focus on incremental social change (Kumar, 2001, 1976; and Chapter 9 below). At the same time, allegedly value neutral concepts like repressive communication are being put forward in order to explain why no serious revolutionary activity has occurred in advanced industrial

societies. It is as if the fear of revolution is a luxury that middle class individuals in academic and professional pursuits can only have because it is so unlikely. Yet this attitude all too frequently seems to go hand in hand with a suspicion that, save for these structurally based repressive factors, there might be certain "objective conditions" which would otherwise make revolutionary disorder a distinct possibility. The economy, whether mature or "developing," is often pointed to here as the key element defining the contours of this possibility, since its problems can be seen to have such a heavy influence on our understanding of objective conditions themselves.

While I would argue that this fear is, for better or worse, misplaced, the increasing likelihood of *non-revolutionary* incremental disorder in the advanced societies is what really needs to be addressed. It may be that the destructive dismantling of the system with no hope of an alternative could conceivably become the order of the day precisely because the progressive development of certain objective conditions is being hampered through the aegis of repression and allied notions in practice. Present downsizing practices like deregulation, privatization, contracting out and related "strategies" about which citizens are often so ambivalent provide significant recent examples of an ongoing dismantling of the prevailing system to which heightened crime and violence is the clear response of many. Note that I am not suggesting that these concepts are empirically or experientially incorrect because utilization of them lacks a reflexive moment addressed to their presence in a world they claim to be configuring *sine ira et studio*. I am suggesting only that the very idea of a detached empirical basis for determining what is correct and incorrect violates practical experience when it occurs in the absence of reflexivity. An axiom of the critical theory of the society in its formative years was the refusal to accept the claim that concepts are neutral "heuristic" devices without roots and biases. The concepts that I want to examine only serve to underscore this "other side" by the very way they seek to make sense of such ambiguity and confusion (Horkheimer, 1972; Marcuse, 1968 [1937]).

In line with this attitude toward revolution in its relation to social and political change, there is a parallel understanding of all those "under-classes" who are the subjects-as-objects of such concepts. It is not without significance that subjects become objects of these concepts and those who utilize them precisely because they do not normally produce them in a search for collective self-understanding, but

are their passive recipients, not only in theory but often in practice. This is another aspect of the absence of reflexivity, and points to the unavoidable *societal* bias of all disciplines that produce and utilize such concepts. Related to this is the way that the concepts cited can be applied either to domestic or Third World under-classes with essentially the same results. Subjects become objects when their testimony is seen to jeopardize the research and conceptual undertaking rather than simply being inconvenient to it (see Chapter 9 below, and Wilson, 1984). Nevertheless, they remain the external constituencies to which these political and social concepts are necessarily oriented as their indispensable subject (object) matter. The way this tension is resolved in these disciplines has already been noted: disembodied disciplined observation between practice and reflection, where concepts are viewed as neutral "heuristics" for objective analytical purposes, and therefore as value-free for all intents and purposes.

### I. *Repressive communication and communicative competence*

On the basis of the foregoing, I would submit that political and social sciences clearly constitute "functional requisites" essential to the continuing legitimation of the formally meritocratic stratarchies that make "rational domination" possible and acceptable in advanced industrial societies (cf. Chapter 9 below). Concepts like repressive communication, relative deprivation, and social mobilization mark the advent of sociological civility as the other side of Society. At the same time, they show how essentially anti-political such concepts must be if they are to serve an agenda anxious to avoid activity rather than passivity, citizenship rather than consumption and spectating, and individual display rather than "mutual role-taking" (Thomas, 1960; Crick, 1959a; Almond and Verba, 1963). In Chapter 4, I contrasted the societal requirements of functional rationality and functional interdependence with sense of function and co-operation, the first thoroughly compatible with Durkheim's "normal" division of labour and organic solidarity, the second irretrievably opposed to it. This distinction is also the basis for my arguing that "symbolically mediated interaction" is itself intended to function solely in a heuristic and analytical way, rather than constituting a practical alternative to what is clearly an interventionist approach to social and political change in advanced industrial societies.



A careful look at Claus Müller's line of argument regarding the nature of repressive communication should indicate just how much it depends on the structural integrity of Society as a false, but nonetheless immovable, totality. Indeed, Müller's picture of advanced industrial societies at the time it appeared (1969–70) is even more stable than Marcuse's was six years earlier in *One-Dimensional Man* (1964). For both Müller and Habermas, writing in the same volume, "crisis capitalism" would appear to have been stabilized. Underpinning all of this stability, to be sure, was the presence of high and still-rising living standards accompanied by a growth rate satisfactory to mature industrial economies. Slightly later in 1975, Habermas' *Legitimation Crisis* appeared (though originally published in German in 1973). Largely as a consequence of his debate with the social systems theorist Niklas Luhmann, Habermas was now suggesting that advanced societies were perhaps more amenable to the threat of breakdown than he (or Müller) had earlier thought.

Interestingly enough, this assessment took the form of a discussion of four "crises" which could conceivably challenge the legitimacy of the state and the economic system in these societies. Thus Habermas spoke of four types of "possible crisis tendencies," then went on to adumbrate "theorems" of economic, rationality, legitimation (in the narrow sense) and motivation crises, in order to set the stage for his own view of societal progress. Here the concern to overcome "the suppression of generalizable interests" that ground society as a potential or actual "communicative community" was uppermost in his mind. In Chapter 3 and elsewhere, I argue that the very objective which a community of communicatively competent members is to realize is actually a *precondition* for any meaningful effort in the direction Habermas has suggested. While Habermas never mentions the possibility of societal *regression* in the face of these destabilizing crises, as for example the implementation of present neo-conservative strategies like those mentioned above, it clearly constitutes one of the strongest arguments against becoming overly concerned about the repression of communicative behaviour as Müller depicts it.

For Müller, linguistic, and therefore conceptual, deprivation is seen to be both the result of stabilization and a major vehicle reinforcing it. Domestic under-classes in the advanced societies are deprived of the opportunity to conceptualize their respective situations and to formulate options, he argues. Since sensible self-interested political

action presupposes some ability to conceptualize, and this in turn requires linguistic capability, this repression of potential communicative behaviour inhibits, and even nullifies, the ability of members of these deprived groups to act intelligently in the public sphere in the many ways available to others. "If, for reasons related to the structure of communication, it is not possible for groups and individuals to locate themselves in society and to articulate their interests, repressive communication occurs" (Müller, 1970: 103). Müller would claim that individuals can only make sense of the information to which they are exposed by interpreting it in line with the "stock of knowledge" presently available to them.

The deprived groups to whom Müller refers are not simply held in check by traditional categories, stereotypes, and ideologies, however. They are often not in a position to interpret the significance of what is being said for their own life-situation at all. As a consequence, they are unable to engage in any meaningful feedback of the sort which liberal political theory and practice consistently counsel and defend. "The common characteristic of repressive communication is that the internalized language system permits neither the activation of subjectively experienced needs beyond the emotive level nor the realization of maximum individuation, or thus, implicit autonomy formation" (*ibid.*: 105). Müller's concerns take their point of departure in Basil Bernstein's earlier work on class codes (Bernstein, 1964, 1962, 1960). Thus it should come as no surprise to discover that Müller's argument is addressed in large part to the impact of such repression on specific groups, but particularly *classes*, who are, it is claimed, powerless as a result.

The first thing to be said here is that the rationalist model of political activity and process assumed by Müller ignores the extent to which the political system requires the apathy and indifference of *practically everyone*, whether their interests are seen to be represented or not. Admittedly, many individuals in given status groups are represented, in spite of the fact that they take little or no interest in public affairs. But the argument has generally been made that such "representation" is less than authentic because it presupposes and requires apolitical or non-political individuals. If the problem of repression is addressed to classes rather than other groups, then it changes from an issue concerned with competition between interest groups in a pluralistic society to one focusing on long-term deprivation and near-total involuntary exclusion from the political process

as a whole. To the extent that economically, socially and culturally marginal groups are excluded from these processes as a consequence of poverty, ignorance, isolation, status, or language differences, the remedy may clearly challenge the "caretaking" approach of late capitalism. This on the grounds that it actually *perpetuates* tutelage by passing it on to ensuing generations (Banfield, 1976, 1968).

The issue would appear to be how a group could get into the position of *not* needing to be politically active because the large majority of its interests were now being automatically looked after by the system. The tentative answer—overcoming repression and distortion—may make sense in what is left of a late capitalist social welfare state if only because the disease, if left too long untreated, could generate attempts to undo the system through collective action lacking in reflection. Thus it may well be *group-specific*, rather than "generalizable," interests which must be taken into account in order to pacify a given group and return the system to a condition of stability (cf. Habermas, 1979a). Still, the bigger problem lies in the question of just how this effort to overcome repression and distortion relates to the matter of objective conditions mentioned earlier. I would submit that Müller's effort (like that of Habermas) is to erect an excessively rationalistic view of societal transformation and change in order to *obviate* these conditions. Thus change ideally becomes the prerogative of an elite leadership group possessed of enough of what the people can accept as objective knowledge, combined with persuasive rhetoric, to achieve piecemeal incremental reforms within the system. In the event, this allows them to avoid an outcome which might otherwise result from the working out of "objective conditions" in the absence of such intervention (see Chapter 6).

Note that I am not suggesting that revolutionary outcome is a likelihood, or even a possibility. Rather, I am addressing the nature of the cure proposed by Müller and, to a lesser extent, by Habermas. It is a system-specific cure based on a diagnosis that seeks to restore the patient to health, in much the same way Durkheim wanted to "normalize" the already existing division of labour. Generalizable interests are unavoidably reformulated as group (or class) specific interests whenever they are translated into the sort of rational-purpose political action whose object is to obviate objective conditions. In this event, the concretizing of these interests necessitates leadership and direction from individuals who are usually members of an elite fragment of some dominant group, rather than members of the

underclass in question. The basic conservatism of under-classes on the matter of revolutionary activity only serves to underscore the point that the *theory and practice* of revolution is bourgeois in origin and nature (Kumar, 1976). This has a lot to do with the nature of commonsense rationality as a *human* property of everyday life. From all that we know about human beings in possession of this capacity simply by dint of being human and without regard to institutional training and certification, they are more disposed to put up with the situation than subvert it. There is a *coping* capability inasmuch as it allows the process of sense-making to go on unabated. Objective conditions, on the other hand, for the most part occur and take shape quite independently of calculations and predefinitions (see Chapter 3).

Müller's cure for what he calls the repression of communicative behaviour is to improve the subsystems for distributing the very bourgeois and middle class concepts that are responsible for the problems he has allegedly identified. What is the sense of such a cure? How would things be improved *if it worked*? There can be little doubt that Müller would define improvement as the *achievement* of communicative capabilities and overall "competence." The question once again relates to whether we are talking about "groups" or "classes." If it is groups, then the result of this achievement would clearly lead to some sort of "representation" whose effect would be integrative. We would then have another set of interests represented in and through the governmental and political apparatus (cf. Lowi, 1969; Wolff, Moore, Marcuse, 1965). If it is classes, the consequences of "success" would be quite different, for it would mean that some individuals would be given the capacity *as individuals* to gain new social and economic positions through upward mobility as an *alternative* to continued underclass status. Others, in contrast, could be expected to acquire just enough capability and interest in these matters to become *more frustrated* than they were before.

Müller is thus encouraging a line of action which would serve to distinguish those members whose capabilities, defined in meritocratic terms, would render them upwardly mobile, from those who, regardless of age, would continue to be consigned to underclass status. Thus, his view of proper collective change is similar in virtually all its aspects to standard liberal rhetoric when faced with allegations that advanced industrial societies are not classless after all (Popper, 1957; cf. Wilson, 1977). My point is even more pronounced where

groups rather than classes are the proper collective unit of focus. Here Müller's approach would only serve to breathe new life into a liberal theory of interest group pluralism that many liberals no longer believe to be viable. Indeed, it is possible in each instance of interpretation to isolate institutions in the advanced societies which are performing many of the functions that Müller would deem salutary from the standpoint of overcoming distorted and repressive communication. Where groups are the focus, interest group organizations, political parties, and the governmental apparatus constitute the relevant institutions. Where the operative understanding emphasizes class rather than group, public education is the key agency (Macpherson, 1977; 1973; Wilson, 1984).

To be sure, an understanding of the subjects-as-objects of repressive communication in terms of groups has more advantages, if only because we are talking about people who are in a position to get into the political system and realize a representation of interests which are *already* defined. The second understanding appertains to the particular "socializing" function that all formally meritocratic institutions perform in the advanced societies. The problem from the standpoint of the continuing repression of communicative behaviour is not with those who are successful, first in acquiring these linguistic and conceptual skills, then with putting them to work in higher education, middle class employment, and subsequent "representation" by one, a few, or many interest groups. Rather, it is with the persistence of an underclass, presumably because they are either incapable of gaining access to such socialization, unable to act on the basis of it, or have made themselves too marginal through one or another form of "deviant" behaviour to hope to gain admission *regardless of commonsense (and other) capabilities* (cf. Eysenck, 1973; Herrnstein, 1973; Wilson, 1977: 200-30; Young, 1958; and Chapter 8 below).

These individuals can be expected to contribute to the pool of new underclass members, the more so where the blocking of aspirations for mobility is combined with the operation of *formally* meritocratic criteria as the basis of a new institutional *closure* in the advanced societies (Gilb, 1966; Chapter 6 above). My concern in the final analysis is with what happens to those individuals who are not beyond reach, but are incapable of utilizing the relevant skills even though they know what they are and what they mean. Their condition then becomes either a highly significant instance of the conservative nature of commonsense capabilities, if they are able and

willing to cope, or an intolerable situation which leads either to self-destruction or to piecemeal *non-revolutionary* destruction of small parts of the larger system, to no one's advantage. My point here is that Müller's picture of repressive communication and its overcoming is essentially a false diagnosis because it advocates a class specific notion of the relation of thought to action which is precisely *the problem* for the underclass rather than the solution to this problem (Adorno, 1969; Freire, 1971; 1979; Moore, 1973). Even if his ideal were to be realized, the results would be pretty much as I have suggested. Thus I would argue that successful overcoming is intellectually, culturally, and socially selective, has much to do with mobility aspirations and subsequent co-optation into groups (or classes) with status and representation, and does not leave either those who are reached or those who are not in the same condition as they were before.

Even if it were possible to point to instances where the effect of improved distribution would be to reach large numbers of excluded individuals with this linguistic-cum-conceptual capacity, the results would be only selectively liberating in the ways noted. There would be no mass undertaking aimed at collectively realizing "generalizable interests." This is nothing less than an updated version of Marx's and Lukacs' supposed fetishization of the proletariat as the only class capable of promoting general rather than special interests (Lukacs, 1971). As such it fails to take into account not only the predominantly conservative nature of much of underclass life and values, but what the effects of such an overcoming really would be. It also does not address how these effects would serve to *distinguish* one member from another; with mobility out of the underclass for some, but permanent consignment with all-too-predictable results like the ones mentioned for the rest.

## II. *Relative deprivation and human need*

Relative deprivation, and the notion of need implicit in its claims, may appear far less amenable to the sort of critique I have addressed to communicative repression, distortion, and competence. Yet the idea of employing its sense as a basis for explaining behaviour amongst certain under-class members in the advanced societies can be criticized in ways not dissimilar to what was said in the foregoing. In 1821 Hegel had stated that while an animal's needs are determined

by instinct, thus finite in extent, human needs are subject to consciousness, therefore virtually infinite in scope, nature, and complexity (Hegel, 1967: para. 190). Hegel intended this to apply to *everyone*, so the possibility that for the first time in human history humans could potentially generate a consistent and growing surplus as a consequence of the emergence and development of capitalism and subsequent industrialization carried with it some real difficulties. To be sure, neither he nor anyone else concerned about the plight of human beings (including Marx and Engels) would have advocated turning away from this modern undertaking, even if this were possible.<sup>2</sup>

Like repressive communication, relative deprivation poses a culturally and historically specific problem for the advanced societies, but fails to account for how the only conceivable “solution” to the problem is to extend to everyone the privilege of not being deprived relative to others. Even if the solution were to be discovered in trading off the exploitation of Third World “others” for domestic peace in the advanced societies, it would not be workable because of the very “relative” nature of deprivation itself and the elastic notion of need correlated with it. In *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice*, Runciman points out that his key concept is dependent on the notion of the reference group as a basis for defining the contours of such need and the perception of being deprived or satisfied. While it may appear from this study that relative deprivation is a more bourgeois, less revolutionary, concept than repressive communication, both have in common a dependence upon middle class values and norms as the basis not only of their problematic but of their hypothetical (rather than real) “solution.”

The institutional embodiment of the notion of need just cited is capitalist industrial society, if only because it is here, and here alone, that the equation of legitimate need with infinite desire has received a consistent and thoroughgoing justification (Macpherson, 1973; Wilson, 1977: 134–37). The human *potential* for allowing the conception of needs to be determined by consciousness has always been present, but only a continuous surplus, however well or ill distributed, made this potentiality actualizable. To be sure, deprivation was

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<sup>2</sup> But see Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1978) for an indication of how much a *proponent* of capitalism Marx was regarding its alleged origins in “primitive accumulation” rather than in institutions of charity, constraint and madness.

understood originally to be a property of institutions, practices, customs, and conventions whose legitimation was based on non-rational grounds of tradition, charisma, or a combination of the two. It is as a consequence of capitalism, and modernity generally, that deprivation came to be seen as the result of historically transitional arrangements which would in due course be overcome. The objective possibility of meeting the most basic needs of human beings was not thought to be a function of particular market and productive relations. Instead, it was viewed as a human historical event which could be worked out in time if only the initial institutions and practices allied with this possibility could be transcended, either peacefully or through violent revolution (Habermas, 1971).

It is in this matter in particular that Hegel would have to be counted a better judge of people and events than Marx. In contrast to Marx's failure to see the extent to which revolution was a bourgeois rather than a proletarian vehicle of political and social change, Hegel was better able to anticipate the consequences of an infinitely expansive conception of need tied more to consciousness than to animate nature. Once instituted, such a conception of need guarantees in a most perverse way that human beings will *never* meet their basic needs no matter what commodities are available to them in and through the system. Instead, infinitely expandable false needs appeal to the desire to emulate and eclipse, often in the most superficial conceivable ways, those people with whom one interacts or is compared with (Hegel, 1967: paras. 185, 190, 193). In this sense, I would argue, one must address the concept of relative deprivation as an appeal more to false needs than to basic ones.

To be relatively deprived may well be more superficially perceived by those who are so alleged the more they suffer from repressed communication. On the other hand, a careful analysis of those who are *not* supposed to be suffering deprivation all too frequently reveals that it is *false* needs created by the system to guarantee its perpetuation that are, on the whole, better met for such individuals. From the standpoint of the basic needs about which Marx and Engels were most concerned, the large majority of people, regardless of station and class, are often and regularly deprived. That this deprivation cannot always be termed "relative" only underscores my earlier point—that it is often a society-wide phenomenon which in no way constitutes the monopoly of one group or class. One significant and compelling example is the recent discovery of the adverse long term



health effects of a steady diet of "fast food" for middle and upper middle class American children in particular. To be sure, when such a clear discrepancy is found to be an objective property of class, group, cultural, or international economic and political distinctions, the deprivation is real and worthy of immediate concern and repair.

Of course this is precisely the sort of deprivation that is far *less* likely to get looked after, either within the advanced societies or internationally between these countries and the Third World. Seen in this light, relative deprivation provides what is at best an unclear and superficial image of a deeper problem that it is the system's objective function to cover over. This is not to say that relative deprivation is not important, or even to deny that there is often significant overlap between perceptions of being relatively deprived and real deprivation. I only wish to argue that we must turn to a careful analysis of the notion of need which prevails in given societies and cultures if we are ever going to make sense of the distinction, and the system's role in producing and sustaining it. The equation of human need with infinite desire, coupled with the conviction that ours is an objectively rational social order where democratic criteria prevail in practice, is making it all but impossible for individuals to see any realistic alternative to the form of collective life we presently inhabit in the advanced societies (Adorno, 1969).

Relative deprivation cannot even begin to address realistically the question of social justice as long as it is predicated on the concept of need that I have outlined. Even if we accept social justice as something to be realized within the present system, then the issue of true and false needs, and of the human and "natural" resources devoted to this project, must be confronted. Only in this way will it be possible to decide whether and to what extent the key factors of production available to our society will be socially allocated through political as well as market mechanisms (Lindblom, 1977). The idea that unending emulation is remotely conceivable, given the environmental and ecological limits of "nature" as a solution to the problem of relative deprivation, must begin to strike even the most cynical as bordering on the absurd. When this scenario is globalized to comprehend relations with Third World countries lacking the resources which industrial countries need, the realities become horrific (Goulet, 1971; Keir-Nash, 1970: 109-128; Schelling, 1971; Smith, 1972).

It is the limits of nature, rather than the limits of growth, which I have in mind here. We may be far too willing to dismiss this line

of thought and emphasis than present evidence and future projections warrant. Without denying the problems of credibility often posed by those loyal to a single-issue politics of ecological and environmental concern, or by members of the various groups that have benefitted from its recent attainment of centre stage status, we must reconsider the nature of growth within a well-defined set of parameters (Taylor, 1972; Schelling, 1971). The issue is central to advanced capitalism inasmuch as its equation of need with infinite desire is the basis of its capacity to sustain the growth on which its perpetuation depends. No-growth or steady-state capitalism, whether of the corporate or state variety, is inconceivable. Since this growth depends on the equation of need with infinite desire as a fully legitimate engine of the system's further development, any threat posed to such growth by the natural environment must be accorded careful scrutiny, to say the least.

The dilemma posed by this consideration makes an *alternative* to revolution as a possible vehicle of social and political change in the advanced societies all too likely. This is only made more serious by the lack of political interest and concern evidenced by most members of the public. Like repressive communication and concepts related to it, relative deprivation only reinforces this apolitical or anti-political approach to collective life. Indeed, one could argue that it is precisely the obsession with false needs produced by the system's commitment to unending growth, based as it is on the equation of legitimate need and infinite desire, which obscures the political dilemma that environmental, as well as military, parameters pose to continuation of our present form of collective life (Wilson, 1985). Just as repressive communication implies resolution through a better distribution of linguistic and conceptual symbols, so does relative deprivation suggest that justice is a matter of better distribution within the system.

This is precisely what underwrites the normalizing agenda in the advanced societies, an agenda that betrays a determination to avoid real politicization at any cost short of system breakdown. Relative deprivation has been accorded the status of late bourgeois profundity because it appears to constitute an advance on absolute conceptions of deprivation and need. But the sophistication that the concept possesses is largely a consequence of emphasizing redistribution without seriously taking account of the structural defects of the system. These defects are a function of the mode of production,

underwritten by state intervention, not only domestically, but internationally through the aegis of corporatism. It is not unlike the popularity which John Stuart Mill enjoyed in England by dint of his emphasis on improving distribution within the system (Mill, 1909). The very fact that relative deprivation can come forward a century later as a godsend to sociological intellectuals anxious to show good intentions, largely as an alternative to political action and political education, suggests how inadequate was the "solution" in its original formulation.

The issue is really whether such concepts are intended to be effective in any way other than as a basis for research that will allow established authority to intervene in a "normalizing" capacity in order to preserve the system. This point, while problematic in its own right, would be less significant were it not for the emerging constraints already mentioned. Shielded from the sort of heightened political consciousness which *should* have resulted from the surplus created by industrial capitalism, publics now find themselves unable to articulate politically any alternative to the present form of collective life (Adorno, 1969; Arendt, 1958). That this is not an endorsement of repressive communication can be seen from the fact that the problem is system-wide in its ambit, rather than confined to particular groups or a particular class. This means that the hypothetical problem posed by Müller could only take the forms I suggested earlier, and would not achieve system change of the sort he desires and anticipates.

Both repressive communication and relative deprivation imply the preservation of the system by underwriting political and social scientific research which serves the objective of piecemeal and incremental interventionism (Popper, 1957; Hayek, 1955; cf. Marcuse, 1973; Goldthorpe, 1970). The relationship between the political or social scientist and those in positions of authority and control in business, industry, and government is thoroughly legitimized as a consequence of the problem-solution fixes posed by such concepts as a basis for research operations. We have no choice but to turn to the role of political or social research if we are to understand the new basis on which large-scale organizations and occupational groups legitimize their "rational" domination in and through *formally meritocratic* structures and practices. Therefore, it should come as no surprise to discover how closely such linkages accord with Durkheim's scheme for system preservation through "normalization." This relationship is

intentionally rather than accidentally anti-political in its effects, and constitutes what can only be termed a regression, *even from the vantage point of early capitalism* (Durkheim, 1952; Mannheim, 1940).

All of this has much to do with the reigning dichotomies and distinctions which have been effectively “empiricized” by publics in the advanced societies, as I argue in Chapter 5 (also see Wilson, 1984; and Chapter 10 below). The result is that people see the thought-action, man-nature, mind-body, subject-object, ends-means and value-fact distinctions as empirically correct *descriptions* of their collective social reality rather than ways of addressing this reality. The most interesting upshot of this all-too-pervasive *cultural* tendency to empiricize topical dichotomies and distinctions is especially relevant to the charges I have levelled against political and social science as essentially a- or anti-political disciplines. All the dichotomies I have cited come politically to rest in the distinction between politics or policy and administration. Not surprisingly, one of the most powerful and influential ideologies in operation today is technocracy—the commitment to manifestly political administration as an alternative to representative electoral institutions and mechanisms.

The most readily definable persuasive activity of technocracy, let it be noted, is the unending effort to persuade the people that what they believe to be policy matters really are administrative in nature, therefore amenable to the technical virtuosity and objective knowledge of a formally rational meritocracy. The argument is that these decisions and interventions really are best left to individuals trained and certified in what Veblen referred to as “opaque matter of fact” (see Chapter 1 above). Sociological civility, epitomized in the sort of passivity and deference usually found in the priority that these societies give to audience and consumer roles, becomes a regularly achieved property of the socializing function itself. Social and political sciences serve these goals, and others related to them which I have already discussed, when they reason and act from concepts of the type exemplified by both repressive communication and relative deprivation. For it is here that we see the continuing persuasiveness of bourgeois rhetoric, more “available” to all of us than the purveyors and supporters of either of these concepts can ever afford to acknowledge.

### III. *Social mobilization and political participation*

In turning from repressive communication and relative deprivation to social mobilization, we address a concept in political and social science which is clearly directed to the Third World of developing countries as the relevant "other" to be observed and "understood." The initial situation was one in which non-members within the advanced societies could claim to speak for domestic under-classes in and through the conceptual armory of their respective disciplines. However, we now discover Western (or rather Northern) intellectuals and academics asserting the right-become-duty to speak about the meaning and significance *for others* of economic and technical development in faraway places (Frank, 1973; Milne, 1972; Rosenberg, 1976). I was struck by this controlling irony in my own teaching situation, where the subject was the relationship between economic and political development. My class was comprised of students from various Third World countries, who had presumably signed up in order to find out what was happening in and to their home countries and cultures.

To be sure, the idea that students from these countries would come to an urban industrial society to find out about such developments makes eminent sense, but certainly not in the way that most political and social scientists might imagine. My own determination to undermine the (alleged) objective expertise of the non-member as disciplined observer made it possible for me to address the real reasons why such a course made sense for the Third World students in attendance. They should have been there to discover how those who were largely "calling the tune" thought and felt. I was of the opinion that the course must therefore address what they might learn about *us* from studying these apparently sincere theories, frameworks, data and generalizations that had been formulated by us about "them." As a consequence of this new objective I decided to drastically revise the course content and approach in order to make it possible for me to inform them about concepts illustrative of our form of collective life as a culture (see Wilson, 1984; and Chapter 5 above).

In the event, it is important to see ourselves from the vantage point that we apply to them, for in such an "anthropological" approach our own values and guiding assumptions are brought to our attention, often in a way that challenges fundamentally the way

we thought we were. This is what reflection permits us to achieve when we investigate our concepts and ways of thinking rather than just accepting them on the assumption that they *must* make sense (Wilson, 1981). It makes no difference whether the concepts are addressed to our own or "other" cultures, because the real purpose of such an exercise is to demonstrate how much we can learn about ourselves from careful analysis of the ideas we produce about others. This is a line of thinking for which Marx's analysis of science as activity and industry is the prototype (Marx, 1962). The most important effect of all this should be to place our imperial remarks and "research" in a more realistic context. Here a greater understanding and sensitivity about how and why we get the right to study others who do not study us leads to humility and collective self-knowledge rather than to hubris (Wittgenstein, 1977; Marnham, 1980).

After all, it is really only the perceived power and "success" of the advanced societies, complemented by the desire for effortless modernization on the part of indigenous, often self-interested, elites that makes this asymmetrical relationship possible and sanctionable. Alongside the fact that we are "developed" relative to the so-called Third World, there is the parallel reality of disciplines like political and social science. They exemplify a central characteristic of our civilization as a culture, one that can be observed in numerous contexts in these societies. I have in mind our commitment to the belief that there are independently existing "facts of life" which can be observed and recorded with the right objectivity, detachment, and technical virtuosity. Indeed, I have argued elsewhere that this belief constitutes an essential characteristic of our "form of life" as a culture. Disciplined observation, standing between practice and reflection, has shown itself determined in numerous institutional settings (science, the market, capitalism, bureaucracy, law and the courts, political and social science, etc.) to repudiate reflection while reconstituting practice in its own image (Wilson, 1984; 1977).

Few conceptions, it turns out, have offered a framework more conducive to the empathic mask of Western political and social sciences in their effort to "explain" the behaviour of other cultures, for whatever reason, than "social mobilization." Originally formulated by Karl Deutsch as a *hypothesis*, it has gone the route that all such "ideal types" go when they cease to be hypothetical and are understood to constitute an empirically respectable *description* of actual events

(Deutsch, 1961; Weber, 1949: 40–47; 1947: 87–111). In effect, this is what happens to all concepts when they are no longer understood to be approaches to reality but a basis for describing and explaining it. Their one-dimensionalization, what I earlier referred to as their “empiricization,” necessitates suppression of the very reflexive moment that would properly situate disciplined observation so that it could keep its promises to practice rather than trying to reformulate it in its own image.

In Samuel Huntington’s *Political Order and Changing Societies* seven years later, Deutsch’s hypothesis reveals its newfound status as a description and explanation of actual events. Huntington’s comprehension of what happens to individuals who are undergoing modernization and development is significant, if only because it *begins* with the assumption that these people have no real choice but to be the passive recipients of externally *inspired* and supported activities. Like repressive communication and relative deprivation, social mobilization is a concept, approach, or understanding that gives the lie to anyone convinced that sublimation in its Freudian understanding is no longer relevant to understanding our root assumptions. It also demonstrates the manifold applicability and flexibility of disciplined observation as a self-justifying practice in its own right in the advanced societies, one clearly at the centre of our form of collective life as a culture.

The basic equation used by both Deutsch and Huntington looks like this:

$$(1) \quad \frac{\text{Social Mobilization}}{\text{Economic Development}} = \text{Social Frustration}$$

$$(2) \quad \frac{\text{Social Frustration}}{\text{Mobility Opportunities}} = \text{Emancipation}$$

$$(3) \quad \frac{\text{Political Participation}}{\text{Political Institutionalization}} = \text{Political Instability}$$

(Huntington, 1968: 55).

Thus formulated, the equation constitutes an “explanation” of the reasons for political instability in the Third World of developing countries, albeit one that takes issue with the standard approach to

political development in the process. The guiding idea here is to apply without cavil a Freudian-inspired conception of sublimation to the analysis of how to *avoid* instability. The tentative answer, later confirmed, is *participation*, and it functions as a device for channeling the potentially explosive frustrations being experienced by people in a condition not unlike that described by Durkheim in his studies of European industrialization at the end of the 19th century. Third World peoples, like Europeans before them, are in a situation where their traditional values and patterns of behavior are being undermined, but without any new set of values and behavior patterns coming forward to replace them.

Huntington views social mobilization as a process which generates frustration, but only as long as institutions of development are employed which make sublimation and channeling difficult or impossible. In order to avoid destabilizing behaviour, not excluding protracted violence, it is necessary to re-examine what we once thought to be the most efficient route, institutionally speaking, to achieving the sort of political development compatible with modernization as a whole. This route was bureaucratization, for it met the conditions of administrative organization and oversight, and functioned well as a vehicle for enforcing economic and technological development “locally” (Weber, 1947: 328–341; 1946: 196–244). The problem, however, was that its very efficiency in operation as the domestic intermediary linking international organization, national states, and multinational firms guaranteed that it would be incapable of handling the overload that results from intense frustration. Bureaucracy, after all, is alleged to be the pre-eminent *apolitical* tutelary structure wherever it is found, whether in the West, the East, or the Third World (but cf. Wilson, 2001, 2002).

Assuming that sublimation and channeling are necessary in order to avert circumstances in which frustration is converted into aggression, with destabilizing effects on the system, some institution is needed to deflect this potential into channels that are at the very least harmless to, and perhaps even beneficial for, development and modernization. Huntington’s answer is the political party in its American two-party variant, and its job is to operate as a complement to bureaucracy’s role in helping to bring about modernization. Both bureaucracies and parties are assumed to be *institutions* in the equation, and their purpose is to work side by side to the end of realizing stability and development. The idea of balance is crucial



here: parties offer us a unique and indispensable chance to *combine* participation and institutionalization. The belief that parties will reach a broader base of the population than bureaucracy, staffed as it is by elites representing dominant groups in the culture, supports such a proposal in the strongest possible terms. The development process may not be achieved as efficiently in the narrow sense of this term, but the likelihood of its completion is argued to be much greater than bureaucracy operating on its own can possibly secure.<sup>3</sup>

Huntington's argument in favour of the political party as the major vehicle for achieving both participation and institutionalization in Third World countries is rendered even more persuasive once we acknowledge the following point. Parties could conceivably function in ways conducive to the emergence of representative democracy, rather than simply as agencies for channeling potentially destabilizing behaviour into harmless channels. This argument is sensitive to the difference between the claim that there are *functional* requirements for societies and cultures, and the quite different assertion that the *structures* presently performing these functions must be accorded the mantle of indispensability as a consequence (Horowitz, 1968). Huntington knew that recognition of the first point would require a significant reformulation of prevailing assumptions and practices, thus a denial of the second point. Too high a price must be paid for meeting the requirements of a concept of efficiency that takes little or no account of culture and tradition for it to be a politically realistic solution to the problem. Political parties generate an infrastructure of participatory institutions which will allegedly build representative democracy into the development process as its political "other side" (Huntington, 1968: 53–59).

As an example, consider Huntington's invocation of Robert Merton's (1957) study of the "latent function" of the political machine in 19th and early 20th America. Here the clear (manifest) purpose of

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<sup>3</sup> It may also be important to see Huntington's reformulation as an attempt by some political scientists to halt the gradual "sociologization" of their discipline. Sociology is no more "neutral" than bureaucracy, and in fact constitutes its "other side" in advanced industrial society, as I have argued in *The American Ideology* and elsewhere. The acceptance amongst political scientists of the concept of "political culture" is perhaps the single most important instance of this tendency toward sociologization since the publication in 1959 of *The Politics of Developing Areas* by Gabriel Almond and James Coleman.

political machines was to establish and maintain the political party's electoral success by assisting newly arrived immigrants in ways that would lead them to vote for the party's candidates. The latent function, on the other hand, points to a largely unintended, but highly significant, effect of the manifest function. Partly as a consequence of this reciprocal need and interdependence, the new Americans in question were successfully integrated into the society and its political (and economic) system, to the point where they themselves began to field candidates for election. In the process of accomplishing both functions, stabilization was realized and the groups cited were absorbed. This often happened in ways that were at variance with conventional political ethics. Thus practices were engaged in and condoned which often violated the law, as well as custom, expectation and established standards.

Huntington's "defense" of corruption in the context of political and economic development in Third World countries relies heavily on Merton's analysis. The belief that corruption is a lesser evil because of its stabilizing and absorptive effects has inspired support for its functional necessity wherever participation and reciprocity are required to channel and sublimate frustration and deflect rage. Huntington applies Merton's understanding of what went on in nineteenth and early twentieth century America to Third World countries and cultures, often with very little qualification or alteration. The first thing to note in this regard is the fact that we really cannot avoid reconstructing Third World experience by reference to concepts generated to explain our own. A second point emerges largely as a consequence of this. Utilizing concepts like social mobilization allows us to predict accurately because they reflect and embody cultures external to the ones in question, cultures engaged in the act of understanding rather than the recipients of these efforts. The apparent accuracy of our explanations and predictions reflects not so much the prescience of these disciplines as our capacity to *make* things happen that we expect and desire to happen.

A related point bears on what is all too often overlooked in the utilization and deployment of concepts and frameworks. The experiences they allegedly depict and describe may no longer constitute an accurate picture of events *in the country of origin*. Thus the model of participation as balancing administrative rationality, in which both are seen as key institutions permitting stable development, may be a caricature of the way these processes presently work *in the United*

*States*. This is an important consideration because most development theorists see the Third World on a moving continuum with the United States, Western Europe, and occasionally Japan at the leading end. Third World countries, it is argued, can only develop if they emulate, at least in general terms, the experiences of those who have preceded them. At issue here is the assumption that the United States is a balanced political culture with participatory as well as administrative institutions (cf. Almond and Verba, 1963; and Chapter 6 above).

The fact that this is probably not the case today does not dispute the possibility that such a balance perhaps existed at an earlier point in the political development of the United States (Crick, 1959a). Indeed, this alone would be enough to justify support for the idea of development as a linear, sequential, and largely imitative set of processes on a moving continuum. I would argue strongly that Huntington's modification of earlier, more administratively biased, approaches to development is probably more indebted to this understanding of development than those in the grip of a narrower, less sensitive view. In the latter case, one could argue that practices and sequences are being recommended which did not occur earlier in the United States and Western Europe at all. Not only were parties stronger as institutions at the allegedly "same" point in the development process; bureaucratic administration was also less important as a public or social force in the nineteenth century than it is now (Wilson, 2001).

If we are to understand the reason for this latter difference, we must turn to the emergence of commercial, and later industrial, capitalism. As Max Weber pointed out, bureaucracy depended on the prior ascendancy of a full-fledged money economy in order to emerge in the West (Weber, 1946: 204–216). This was complemented later on by the displacement of class-based, traditional, or partisan criteria for staffing public administration in favour of "merit." During roughly the same period, the concentration of capital and centralization and specialization within the enterprise resulted in a not-dissimilar bureaucratization of firms and corporations. In contrast to this sequence of events, there is a rather different situation in the Third World. These countries are the result of colonially imposed partitions and boundaries which often violate cultural realities and sensibilities, now no less than when the nation-states in question were colonies or territories.

These and related considerations require us to redefine the significance of the central concepts and frameworks associated with political and administrative development. Rather than constituting independent explanations and predictions whose apparent accuracy bespeaks the precision of given disciplines, they should rather be understood as part of the structure of power and "success" itself. They are therefore vehicles for describing what will happen if stability and predictability are maintained over time in the ways indicated. When the expectation is not realized, unanticipated events are pointed to as the reason for failure, and the integrity of the concepts and framework is maintained.<sup>4</sup> The fact that the historical record does not now, and perhaps never did, bear out the claims made on behalf of the linear, sequential, and imitative understanding of development as a process is not considered at all. Yet this consideration is a crucial property of the theory to the extent that it accepts such a view of development. The failure to meet these requirements places the theories, concepts, and frameworks in question in a position which only underscores their real role as agents of pacification, normalization, and legitimation of the society and economy which is not only their source and continuing inspiration, but their indispensable resource as well.

#### IV. *Rational domination in a global context*

That "social mobilization" is more than simply a distant relation of repressive communication and distortion and relative deprivation and need should be clear from the hoped-for objectives it favours in modernizing countries in the Third World. If domestic underclasses are "understood" by reference to political and social-scientific concepts which effectively *reconceptualize* their difficulties in society as problems of the access to and distribution of linguistic symbols, Third World underclasses are accorded the status of "subjects" by being treated as feral children in their own culture. It is in this latter sense that

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<sup>4</sup> Sociologists typically cite this as a property of irrational cult and millenarian movements, when it in fact all-too-often characterizes their own enterprise. To be sure, political and social sciences can engineer their "research" so as to never "make mistakes," but when the odd mess-up does take place the theory usually wins out over the facts in a conflict (e.g., Festinger et al., 1964).

one could argue that the notion of social mobilization fetishizes their "socialization" by transforming them into the objects of late bourgeois secular charity. After all, the "institutional delivery systems" that are supposed to make the difference when it comes to pacifying under-classes in the advanced societies may need some "customizing" in order to work hand in hand with external agencies determined to modernize "primitive" peoples, often with the assistance of political and social science (Diamond, 1964; 1963: 62–114; Goddard, 1965: 256–276; Wilson, 1984: 133–143).

If the objective is to make it possible for domestic under-classes in the advanced societies to talk it out for fear that otherwise they may act it out, a not-dissimilar purpose is evident where the procedure encouraged by social mobilization is applied. The fact that these people constitute other cultures, with different languages, habits, and conventions demands that they receive a subtler approach more sensitive to the long-run interests of the industrialized countries. Not only are they members of the United Nations, with all that this implies in terms of instant media coverage and the less than selfless support of one or another of the world's regional and supranational powers. Their value is also plainly heightened when their ownership and control of some scarce resource needed by the advanced societies is thrown into the balance. This fact further exacerbates problems raised by the threat of political instability, and encourages interventions of a political and social kind to complement economic and technological modernization.

The contrast with domestic under-classes could not be more plainly drawn, fundamentally lacking as they are in such opportunities for autonomy, and committed to coping within the existing system. Long since persuaded by political and social science that they really do not exist at all, these individuals, families and groups find little solace in a mobility system which encourages identification with the "overdog" rather than the underdog, and rewards individual alienation from "class" problems and a class-based identification. The political and social sciences show convincingly, it is argued, that the concept of class cannot stand up to the empirical scrutiny of their professional practitioners. Ever since Max Weber, sociologists in particular have been indebted to the notion of status groups and to the idea of a ubiquitous middle class allegedly spilling over in every direction, thereby invalidating the "us-and-them" rhetoric of the poor losers. Ever since Bentley and Wallas, political scientists have offered

an equally persuasive litany around the idea of interest-group pluralism as the essence of liberalism (Bentley, 1935; Wallas, 1929).

The concepts that I have isolated for discussion in the foregoing simply reassert fundamental approaches to the relation of thought and action already implicit in earlier defenses of mobility, individualism, and a society based on shifting majorities where everyone gets at least a small piece of the pie (Dahl, 1961; 1971). In the case of these three concepts, however, there is a more concerted effort to address linguistic and conceptual capabilities and properties, at least where domestic under-classes are concerned. Concepts even come to one another's assistance by providing mutual legitimation. One example can be found in the idea that what makes a heightened communicative competence among these people imperative is precisely the presence of relative deprivation, with its expansive notion of need threatening to outpace the most sincere endeavours of the late capitalist social welfare apparatus. The issue with Third World peoples is somewhat different, so the subtlety that is demanded takes account not only of cultural differences and access to resources, but of the *power* that arises as a result of this autonomy and relative independence, even apart from the support of various power blocs.

Social mobilization is necessitated in general, and may need to take the form encouraged by Huntington in particular, because Third World peoples are not directly the product of the all-pervasive secondary socialization processes found in the advanced societies. Even if domestic under-classes escape some of its effects, the mass media, stereotyped role models of success, and the odd instance of upward mobility out of underclass marginality and status are always available to reaffirm overdog identification and quell any possibility of intra-class identification. Solidarity based on racial/ethnic identification, while of central importance, has often been little more effective to the group in question where it has been a minority (U.S.) than where it is a majority (South Africa), or a concurrent majority (Canada; Switzerland). Liberal institutions make the process of mobility coincident with a norm of individuation which successfully alienates people from their most immediately relevant "reference group." Underdog identification in such an equation simply holds the "competent" individual back. What is equally important, however, is the fact that all too often communicative competence and the overcoming of repressive communication most clearly distinguish the upwardly mobile individual with his or her overdog identification from everyone else in the relevant reference group.

This point also holds for Third World individuals, to be sure, but here it is much more a question of class or caste providing the opportunities for *reaffirming* status, power, and possession than anything else. Mobility implies that someone achieves upward (or downward) *movement*, and this holds much more clearly for members of domestic under-classes. The improved competence of the sort suggested by Müller might make the Third World persons I have alluded to *internationally* mobile. Since they are already at or near the top of their country or culture, they would not necessarily benefit from, or even need to improve upon, their communicative competence at home. Indeed, they would in all likelihood find the externally inspired social mobilization of their own people anathema, or at the very least threatening, to their present position. In all likelihood, the process of global modernization, if successful, would be the sort of world hierarchy of cities envisaged some years ago by the late Stephen Hymer (1972).

To be sure, there is in all of this a more than equal process of discrimination in the opposite direction as well. Thus the social mobilization dreaded by established elites in the developing countries would be no more readily accepted as process by elites and the classes they “represent” in the advanced societies (Wilson, 1985; Taylor, 1970). Here one can see the truly asymmetrical nature of this conceptual construction, and its practical embodiment in what is clearly a culturally and historically specific *form* of collective life—Society. Social mobilization, plainly too threatening to established elites, who are often clearly from a pre-bourgeois background in the developing countries, might rock the boat of political apathy and indifference too much for the dominant societal groups, including political and social scientists, in the advanced societies as well. As a consequence, it is hardly surprising that social mobilization is applied by us to them, while communicative competence and the overcoming of repression is designated as the appropriate vehicle for “local” under-classes internal to our own societies.

The notions of relative deprivation and an infinitely expandable conception of need, on the other hand, fuel capitalism globally wherever they are found. They are applicable in a way that allows them to stand behind all forms of “understanding” managed by all overdogs over all under-classes. Subjects plainly become objects, as noted, where this understanding is dedicated to encouraging talk and discussion. In addition, it only supports mobility and individuation for a few who simultaneously comprehend and embody the central

concepts discussed here. They *exhibit* these concepts in their activity, whether within or between countries and cultures, but they also understand their meaning and live it on a day to day basis. Nevertheless, it would be unfair not to add that the perception of what relative deprivation means in the two contexts is quite different. Political and social scientists seem to recognize the asymmetry already noted, as well as the hypocrisy evident in the desire to produce a “responsible” two-party system in Third World countries while keeping this very process in check in their own countries. In the event, their preference in the latter location is clearly one that favours communicative competence—a phenomenon realistically available to only a small, select subset of the relevant underclass in the final analysis.

Another indication of the desire to take stock of the situation in a way that is available only to the disciplined observer rather than to his subjects-as-objects is the two-faced attitude to growth among some groups in the advanced societies. They claim to have tried industrialization, and on this basis counsel against Third World countries too enamoured of growth in general. What makes this two-faced is the real reason behind the consternation of the Club of Rome and their “socially responsible” henchmen in the industrialized countries, even if they are not aware of it (e.g., Meadows, 1974; Taylor, 1972). They equate growth and development with capitalist, or state capitalist, industrialization, then assert in a diametrically opposed vein that since this is the only way to grow and develop, we must “all” seek a steady state no-growth situation. What this really does is to effectively foreclose other means of growing and developing, while consigning Third World countries to either imitate and integrate if they can pay the joiner’s fee, or take their rightful place at the bottom of a world hierarchy of cities or a one-crop agriculture characterized by permanent tutelage if they cannot.

My concern is not to criticize this point of view, but rather to argue that it fetishizes existing notions of growth and development as if they were the only ones possible when they clearly are not. A similar notion is apparent in the way that Western thinking construes nature. Here the argument is that if nature is not dominated by humans as external agents imagining themselves to be “outside” it, and thereafter acted upon on the basis of this image, then the only option will be a reversion to “primitive” and “mythical” notions guaranteed to bring about permanent backwardness. Marion Levy may well be right in stating that modernization can never expect to



achieve its hope of global reach, but he fails to give proper consideration to the role of the globally expanded zero-sum game first fully comprehended and articulated by Marx (cf. Marx, 1962; O'Neill, 1981). Newer alternative forms of collective life may emerge from the Third World, as well as from our own societies, *precisely because* this "global reach" already constitutes what is in many cases a fantasy-become-reality of criminal proportions (Levy, 1972; Goulet, 1971).

Max Weber's favourite sop for pessimism was the idea, as popular today as it was when he wrote, that the only alternative to any of the present institutional arrangements staring him in the face then was a reversion to less advanced forms. This is nothing more than the bourgeois conflict between the love and hatred of order expanded to global proportions (see the Introduction and Chapter 1 in this volume; and Kumar, 1976). When one recalls that members of the bourgeoisie have almost always been the successful revolutionary thinkers *and actors* on the world stage, their abhorrence of revolutionary violence as bad form becomes both comprehensible and reprehensible, no matter where we find it or how much it is in the debt of linguistic and conceptual legerdemain. I have tried to show how and why the concepts of repressive communication, relative deprivation, and social mobilization tell us far more *about ourselves* than about those whose values and behaviour are allegedly captured through the sort of disembodied and unreflexive disciplined observation sponsored by political and social science.

The civilized version of exotica found in these concepts, whether addressed to domestic or Third World under-classes, legitimizes the scope and ambit of "rational domination," thereby generalizing the formal meritocratic model already found in the advanced societies to global proportions (Wilson, 1977). There is a fundamental caveat that needs to be entered here, however. It appertains to the relation between social structures (society) and concepts legitimizing hierarchical systems of power and privilege on the grounds that they are the result of the application of value-free criteria embodying objective rationality. The world that many political and social scientists think they might like to help their governments and corporations produce is one in which they might be the first to lose their present erstwhile monopoly as "disciplined" observers in possession of "the facts." If they are themselves the continuing product of the present power arrangements in the advanced societies, then might they not be putting their present pre-eminence in jeopardy? The proper

response is to note that society is increasingly sociological at (and to) its core, rather than being a commonsense formation of a traditional kind, or a form of life of which such disciplines and modes of thinking and intervening are only super-structural manifestations (see Chapters 8 and 9).

It may well be that we are coming to the point where there is no more room in the world for us and our concepts and categories to sit down together, even (and perhaps especially) if the objective is “only” to talk. This suggests a rather different version of the population problem that has been part of our intellectual stock-in-trade since at least Malthus, to be sure. The trouble with what we think we know is that knowing it is seen to have no practical (ethical and sensible) relation to action, given the arguments from complexity and change we have imprisoned ourselves in in order to avoid the problems posed by real complexity and change. Life now means projecting ourselves through our concepts and categories into a landscape that increasingly mirrors darkly our presence as thinkers and doers at the end of our tether. Whether the world and its humankind can recover the sense of the whole as the science that we gave up in order to appropriate and transform it and them is, at the very least, a provocative question, one duly recognized in all quarters where such recognition precludes its own enterprise as activity.

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

### SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION: REFLECTIONS ON CAPITAL AND COMMON SENSE

Deterministic claims linking science with technology or technology with science can only be defended on an *ad hoc* case by case basis. While such claims often make sense, we must not allow the possible correctness of such specific assertions to permit us the luxury of reification. Two points help us see the sense of addressing these problems with care:

- (1) the central role of what are often euphemistically termed “mediating factors” in showing us the supremely contingent character of the large majority of linkages between science and technology and technology and science.
- (2) the continuing foundational role of commonsense capacities, dynamically conceived, in providing a historical and cultural grounding for efforts to explain what in fact constitutes the human cement linking science and technology together as interrelated yet autonomous institutions and practices in a larger whole.

By mediating factors is meant those overall concerns of an economic, political, social-cultural and military/strategic kind that can be observed to operate and take shape at several levels. They run the gamut from general concerns about direction, discovery, invention, innovation, and diffusion to more specific examples of capital allocation decisions which, for better or for worse, heavily influence the actual development of technology, and even science itself. Since World War II, there has been a wholesale commitment in industrial societies to wedding science to industrial and governmental concerns in the form of Research and Development (R&D). This has led to the growth of substantial and highly significant infrastructures accounting for a massive percentage of contemporary discoveries, inventions, innovations, and diffusions. The key vehicle for this particular revolution has been the *applied scientist*, trained in scientific research in the universities, but interested in using science to solve specific or general problems of technology in an industrial or a governmental setting.

This contrasts with the key vehicle of the first such revolution occurring between 1880 and 1940—the engineer—a point well documented by David Noble in *America by Design* (1977; see Chapter 6 above). An emphasis on commonsense capacities not only helps us see why contingency is a more sensible strategic presumption than determinism in such investigations; these capacities are also what ultimately ground scientific and technological progress themselves.

Enough controversy has been generated over the issue of linkages between science and technology to warrant a careful look at what the various claims are and whether any of them can be sustained. On the one hand, it is often argued that there exists clear evidence of the dependence of modern technology on scientific theory and experimental method. On the other, it has been argued with equal force that technology has played, and continues to play a dominant, if not a controlling, role in the development of scientific knowledge.

Clearly, careful scrutiny of these claims will require me to disentangle the “sense” both purport to make, to the end of showing that categorical assertions in either direction must be examined on an *ad hoc*, case by case basis. In addition, terms and concepts that we tend to use interchangeably or in tandem such as “cause,” “determine,” “asymmetry,” “inherent,” and “instrumental” will need to be unpacked. This will help us to assess whether and to what extent it is appropriate to see any necessary direction whatsoever in relations between science and technology.

The objective of the exercise is to underline the need for “fine tuning” by showing the theoretical *and practical* commitments that are given in categorical claims in either direction. Indeed, I shall suggest that “mediating factors” assume a disproportionately significant role relative to such claims, particularly factors of a broadly economic, political, and military-strategic kind. Perhaps more important, I shall attempt to suggest that our continuing dependence upon “commonsense capacities,” dynamically conceived, is still real enough to seriously imperil any explanation of science/technology linkages foolish enough to assume that such capacities can be ignored.

The fact that assumptions in either direction are made by those engaged in decision-making and prioritizing activities in governments, industrial, and business organizations, and in universities and research bureaux underscores the practical value of such an exercise. At the same time, I do believe that a useful corrective encouraging a more



*ad hoc* approach can in fact be provided by a general theoretical analysis like this. The idea is to see a constructive tension, and not simply an objective clarification function, in the role of logical form relative to any and all real and possible worlds (Elster, 1978).

### I. *The social nature of scientific theories*

At the outset I acknowledge that categorical claims in either direction are made both by those who approve of what they argue is the case, and by those fundamentally critical of it. Indeed, a useful introductory exercise for classifying various views on these matters might begin with a matrix generated out of the following questions: What is the general direction? And is it on the whole thought to be beneficial or problematic? Karl Popper, for example, treats the relationship between science and technology as one in which science is increasingly the instigating force and technology the outcome (Popper 1958 [1934–35]; 1963; 1972).

Given Popper's view of science as man's highest achievement in the realm of truth seeking, it is hardly surprising that he thinks this general direction to be on the whole a salutary one. At the same time, the paragon status of the science/technology linkage is not one that can safely be emulated by theoretical efforts in the social sciences similarly aimed at truth and committed to an integrative direction. The absence in these latter disciplines of what he calls "critical rationalism" leads him to fear for the practical outcomes that such "utopian" theoretical efforts all too often generate.

Popper's argument on this matter is well enough known in its general outline not to need extended discussion here. It has been scrutinized carefully elsewhere, and in several of the previous chapters, and requires only passing mention given its subsidiary role in the present effort (Adorno et al., 1976; Marcuse, 1973; Wilson, 1977: 101–121; and Wilson, 1973). Popper provides not only the (alleged) historical and philosophical foundation and its tie to Twentieth Century totalitarianism in *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1945), but a general epistemological argument backing it up in *The Poverty of Historicism* (1957; cf. Hayek, 1955). What is important about the latter study for our concerns here is its view of the social sciences as social *technologies* that ought to be committed to problem-solving rather than utopian theory.

In effect only science can be trusted with a free hand in the realm of theory because of the supposedly self-policing function performed by critical rationalism among members of the scientific community. The way this “community” corrects the verificationist concerns of its individual members with collective falsificationism and organized skepticism serves to underscore science’s unique status relative to the technology which is increasingly dependent on its progress, an argument which distinguishes Popper’s position from Kuhn’s (Kuhn, 1970 [1969/62]; Wilson, 1977: 75–100). As problem-solving technologies, the social sciences can be permitted to emulate science only with regard to its general method—the “piecemeal” approach and (ideally) falsificationism—not its objective (truth) or its general direction (integration).

Instead, the social sciences must be content to aim at success rather than truth and to pursue a differentiating rather than an integrative direction. Science thus functions as a distant model for the social sciences, distant in the sense that these disciplines are restricted to emulating the general method alone. Popper put the matter concisely in *Objective Knowledge* when he said:

Admittedly the growth of applied knowledge is very similar to the growth of tools and other instruments: there are always more and more different and specialized applications. But pure knowledge (or fundamental research as it is sometimes called) grows in a very different way. It grows almost in the opposite direction to this increasing specialization and differentiation. As Herbert Spencer noticed, it is largely dominated by a tendency towards increasing integration towards unified theories (Popper, 1972: 262).

It is therefore highly significant that Popper groups the social sciences with technology rather than science. Given adherence to the general method which all modes of responsible inquiry must share, applied knowledge of all kinds (including applied science presumably) is unreservedly oriented to problem-solving rather than “idle curiosity.” Popper’s reliance not only upon science as man’s paragon achievement in truth-seeking, but upon the science/technology linkage as a paragon instance of the proper theory/practice relationship, is at the root of his conception of permissible theorizing in the social sciences (Wellmer, 1971: 18–25; cf. essays by Habermas and Alpert in Adorno et al. 1976).

This becomes all the more significant once we realize that Popper’s view of technology in general sees it as a *neutral* set of instruments

and artefacts whose utilization will be determined in the main by human interests and values lying outside them. Indeed, this is the only way we can make sense of the social sciences' restricted theoretical role in Popper's thinking. They must orient their concerns to solving problems of a relatively specific kind generated in the society at large or its (democratic) government, rather than addressing more holistic concerns expressing an (alleged) commitment to "laws" of historical development. This implies that the piecemeal or technological approach refers both to the "size" of the problem and to the method of solving it. The social sciences are therefore to function as neutral techniques and technologies, guided by science only with regard to their commitment to the general method.

The difficulty suggested by this commitment is that, according to Popper, technology is increasingly dependent on science rather than trial and error "experience" and rules of thumb. Thus the neutrality and openness of applied knowledge to independent uses aimed at reform in the societal sphere would appear to be effectively foreclosed by the overwhelming importance attached to this tie between science and technology. Even material technology seems to lose the independent open-ended status demanded by this approach. Popper's attempt to justify science without recourse to technological "works" fails to account for the way its paragon status as a truth-seeking activity depends on the already noted preferential value attached to the science/technology linkage as the consummate example of the theory/practice relationship in operation (Wilson, 1977: 231–53).

In what follows, however, I shall argue that it is absolutely necessary to disentangle the issue of how applied knowledge is generated ("science"; professional or institutional knowledge; commonsense capacities) from whether its actual application is in any way "determined" (beyond a general instrumental orientation to nature). Popper's analysis makes sense because it points to the science/technology linkage as an ideal where "uses" (and consequences) are *not* necessarily determined in advance. I shall argue that in order for this claim to be made: (1) applied science must be distinguished from technology; and (2) technological know-how must be distinguished from the emergence of actual processes aimed at realizing specific outcomes.

While the first distinction has been dealt with fairly extensively in the literature, the second not only tends to focus on individual cases, but does so in very different areas of research and scholarship. The problem then becomes the role of economic, political, and military-

strategic considerations in allocation decisions. The upshot of my analysis will show that science in general and the social sciences in particular (or rather certain of their practitioners) share something more in common than support for the piecemeal method. The fact that *all* of these scientific pursuits are heavily influenced by these sorts of factors suggests an imperative need for the very “utopian” theoretical postures in the social sciences that Popper believes to be so irresponsible and dangerous.

In effect, it is to *social* scientific theories of the relation between science and technology that we necessarily turn in trying to make sense of contemporary developments in advanced industrial societies. To the extent that these social theories are restricted to certain commitments regarding method, direction, and objective, they fail to provide us with a full range of possible understandings regarding the nature of scientific and technological activities in these societies.

It has often been noted how readily the study of science/technology linkages ignores or downgrades the central role played by allocation decisions and functions in virtually defining the pace and character of these activities. It is increasingly clear that more holistic approaches definitely have a role to play in showing how such considerations influence the kind of knowledge developed by *both* science and technology, and do so whether a significant directional relationship can or cannot be shown to obtain between them. This is not, let it be noted, an argument against either hypotheses or their testing, only one addressed to the need for a more holistic approach as a *complementary* basis for generating fruitful hypotheses.<sup>1</sup>

In short, claims for exclusivity regarding science’s right to a monopoly in the realm of theorizing (truth-seeking) give aid and comfort to a truncated mode of societal analysis. This mode is unable to show how the pace and character of both science and technology, taken separately or together, is affected by economic, political, and

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<sup>1</sup> Popper has confirmed aspects of this issue by changes in his own thinking. The concept of World 3 found in *Objective Knowledge* and elsewhere violates his view that social theorizing should take its point of departure in concrete problems rather than in a more general interest in speculation. Given Popper’s undisguised rage toward Hegel in *The Open Society and its Enemies*, it is more than ironic that an earlier version of World 3 is to be found in Hegel’s *The Philosophy of Right* (1967) at paragraph 43, on “alienation of mental property to totality.”

military-strategic considerations. The very fact that these factors can be construed as “mediating” only underscores the strength of the bias rather than disputing it. Perhaps it is our very inability to get a clearer grip on the societal whole, particularly given the reality of ever-increasing systemic dependence and interdependence in advanced industrial societies, which accounts for our failure. In effect, we must achieve a higher level of constructive articulation between these allegedly disparate collective and individual activities *precisely because* we clearly desire (and need) it.

## II. *Determinism and control in science and technology*

The “other side” of the argument for a determinate asymmetrical linkage between science and technology does not distinguish between the production of potentially applicable knowledge and the more sweeping claim of determined outcomes as I do (and as Popper implies). Indeed, it is precisely this lack of fine tuning which serves to underwrite a negative assessment of the allegedly “determined” relationship between science and technology. This position is evident in the work of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, from Marcuse and the first generation through to the formulations of Habermas (Marcuse, 1964, 1968 [1964]; Habermas, 1971). The difference between Marcuse and Habermas is that the former was far more ambivalent about the nature of the linkage between science and technology. Indeed, Marcuse often viewed economic allocation decisions, and “capitalism” generally, as *more* central to the emergence of *both* science and technology in advanced industrial societies than either one was to the other (see Chapters 2 and 3 above; Wilson, 1976).

It is significant that Habermas is considerably less ambivalent about asserting this linkage in a relatively straightforward fashion. The idea that this linkage could pre-empt economic factors more readily associated with a Marxian analysis of advanced industrial societies suggests a view of these societies as post-capitalist. Habermas’ analysis in *Legitimation Crisis* tends to bear this out, as is evident from the following:

To explain the world-historically cumulative character of scientific and technical progress, knowledge of empirical mechanisms is necessary but not sufficient. To understand the development of science and

technology, we must also conjecture an inner logic through which a hierarchy of non-reversible sequences is fixed from the outset (Habermas, 1975a: 11).

Nowadays, it is Habermas' analysis, particularly here and in the earlier *Toward a Rational Society*, rather than that of Marcuse, which needs to be scrutinized carefully. Not only is he the leading second-generation figure of what remains of the Frankfurt School. His analysis of the relationship between science and technology has benefited from the general disrepute into which operationalism, as formulated by Bridgman (1927) in particular, has fallen. Both operationalism and the allied view of science generated by logical positivism favoured a naive instrumentalism of ends-means determination. It argued that in order to understand the meaning of a term we must know the operations it implies (operationalism) or the procedures needed to determine its truth or falsity (logical positivism).

Marcuse's critical analysis of modern science in *One Dimensional Man* is addressed to this view of scientific research in its relation to possible (and actual) lines of application, something obvious from a close inspection of the book. The fact that such a position had fallen into disrepute long before publication of Marcuse's study in 1964 suggests the importance of Popper in particular, as well as his differences with Thomas Kuhn (cf. Radnitsky, 1976; Lakatos and Musgrave, 1970; Wilson, 1977: 75–100). I hope to show in what follows that Marcuse's ambivalence on these matters was fully justified. Not only do some of his studies focusing on economic allocation processes and decisions (capitalism) still make sense as a basis for critique in advanced industrial societies. The more straightforward assertion of a determinate linkage by Habermas, however much it is based on "current" philosophy (and sociology) of science, is also difficult to sustain. In effect, I hope to demonstrate by my example that a more holistic analysis need not lead to what Popper calls historicism (Addis, 1968). Apart from the questionable validity of turning the charge of historicism as he defines it against the Frankfurt School, there is the more important point that historicism nowadays appears to have become as central a characteristic of Western *liberal* social thought as it is of Marxism and socialism (Goldthorpe, 1970).

The way that terms like control and determination in particular are understood and used in discussions about relations between science and technology demands our attention. Here I have in mind

the difference between defining a problem, controlling various research settings, stating desired technical outcomes, and stating desired societal outcomes. Even if it could be argued that a problem, or range of problems, in basic scientific research were to some extent predefined by the fact of an individual's location in time, space and membership in an intellectual and professional community, this does not justify a view of problem definition as "determined." Not even an argument based on economic determination will support this claim. We can certainly point to problem definition, and can stress collegial *predefinitions*—particularly in the case of what Kuhn calls "normal science"—and perhaps even a generalized societal commitment to the "domination of nature," but this is neither a question of control nor one of determination (Wilson, 1977: 51–121).

On the other hand, control is an appropriate term to use in discussing the way in which laboratory experiments are designed. This also holds for the way these experiments are carried out, as long as the activities of "nature at work" captured in the experimental procedure are not similarly characterized (Jonas, 1963). We cannot even assume that corroborative experiments are "controlled" in their activity. This does not, of course, mean that we cannot interfere with or intervene in the allegedly "natural" activities and processes set in motion by experimentation while they are taking place. It only draws our attention to what the distinction between humans and nature compels, namely, recognition of the difference between human agency and "natural" activities and processes themselves (Von Wright, 1974; 1972).

This is not, incidentally, a defense of the human/nature distinction as one having "objective" status, only a commitment to placing terms like define, control, and determine in their proper context—Western rationalism. The central assumption of laboratory experimentation—that it only catches nature at work by recreating her activities under "controlled" conditions—may be problematic where it can be shown that humans create "new" conditions. They thereby reaffirm, rather than dispute, their membership in nature, a point captured nicely by Marx in his early comments on science as a form of human industry and activity (Marx, 1964: 142–43; cf. Schmidt, 1974).

But this hardly justifies reliance on terms that imply closure. On the contrary, the effectiveness of critique depends heavily on the possibility of system openness and the capacity for change, as Marcuse made clear in his critique of Popper's *The Poverty of Historicism* (Marcuse,

1973). This point is highly relevant to the issue of causation and its relationship to determinism. From the standpoint of the man/nature distinction, causality is a property attaching to natural processes alone, not to human agency and intervention through (for example) laboratory experimentation. The problem of causal explanation as both ideal and real resides precisely the fact that it presupposes, among other properties, repetition and regularity. Thus in the same circumstances, the presence of a natural object or process is expected to bring about the "same" effects which it did earlier.

There would clearly be an element of *de facto* closure in this fact were it not for the very activity of experimentation itself. It is laboratory experimentation, after all, which provides us with the possibility of experiencing the (Humeian) failure of necessary connection. Only the *refusal* to accept what is thus discovered through experimentation would then be problematic. No real assumption of necessity (or rather sufficiency) is required, if only because even the most presumptive bias favoring the occurrence of an alleged cause can always be challenged by its failure to bring about its expected effect, in the activity of laboratory experimentation no less than in life itself.

In passing to technical control we shift away from the research and experimental situation to address what specific outcomes may be anticipated in and presaged by scientific work. To answer that a general "instrumental" bias of modern science is sufficient to establish the deterministic claim must be considered unacceptable. The same thing could be said of numerous institutions from the past. What supporters of this position argue, however, is that this function of technical control is *inherent* in science rather than being a side effect produced either accidentally or as a consequence of human will, and thus whether alternate possibilities can be imagined in the *absence* of determination (cf. Elster, 1978).

Seen in this light, such an argument would be understood to possess an element of inexorability absent even in an analysis based on the mode of production and resulting class relations under a "capitalist" system. What is all too often ignored is the fact that it is really only during the last 80 to 100 years that any *consistent* articulation between science and technology, and technology and science, has taken place in industrial societies. While Habermas would see science as the instigator, Ellul would point to technology's central role. Habermas' (and Marcuse's) stress on the nature of experimental knowledge as a basis of potential and actual *technical* control is



more than matched by Ellul's emphasis on artefacts, processes, and facilities (telescope; electron microscope) prior to his reification of the so-called "technical phenomenon" in *The Technological Society* and elsewhere (Ellul, 1964 [1954]; 1963; Wilson, 1975).

### III. *Capital allocation decisions and causal explanation*

What is missing in both cases is a sense of how this articulation was originally achieved, how it has been sustained, and why. Today we can appreciate that modern technology is science-based almost by definition, as long as we do not use this point to argue against the persistence of commonsense capacities, dynamically conceived. At the same time this fact, far from supporting deterministic claims, challenges them directly by showing that such claims must ignore the very element of human agency which is so central to contingency in human affairs.

Any argument about the deterministic character of science in its relation to possible and actual technical control not only ignores allocation decisions and the contingency given in their indeterminate status *vis a vis* specific outcomes. It also fails to take account of the *cumulative* claim reaching back through the experimental setting to problem formulation and definition. Real determination and closure must take causal explanation beyond its limits, and thereby transform it into a thoroughly regularized and repetitive affair admitting of no contingency whatsoever. Outcomes ought to be predictable in advance then, that is, specific outcomes, and they ought to be predictable all the way back to their alleged point of origin in problem formulation and definition, what we earlier referred to as theoretical "control."

Perhaps the already noted contingency which is unavoidable in human affairs can be side stepped as a problem by referring to what should occur in the absence of "intervening conditions" (Gibson, 1960; Nagel, 1961). The difficulty with this is that such an admission cannot help but seriously undermine claims regarding the *presently* overdetermined nature of advanced industrial societies. As it turns out, those who hold this negative version of an inherent and determined link between science and technology must finally jettison causality as a mode of sense making altogether. They would then have to admit that theirs is a species of *genetic and/or teleological* explanation,

a combination of Aristotle's material and final causes, where what is produced really must lie latent in its origins and be structurally related to them rather than constituting an independent "effect" at all (Bunge, 1979 [1959]; Harre and Madden, 1975; Mackie, 1974; Von Wright, 1974; Wilson, 1991).

The question that arises for such a position is whether it really can be said to constitute an explanation at all, as opposed to simply a *definition* that has been provided with historical and empirical credentials. What else could determinism and inherency mean but a genetic and/or teleological claim for the formative power of origins and their persistence in "structures"? This is clearly the purport of Habermas' remark quoted earlier (Habermas, 1975a: 11). Even an argument for the cumulative effect of science and the science/technology linkage as a reason for still further determination than in the past must necessarily fall back on the genetic and/or teleological claim, and its continuing validity and significance.

If the issue of *social* determination regarding "uses" appears to be a different order of problem from that of technical control, this perhaps indicates how thoroughly we have accepted the claim of inherency and determination under examination here without realizing it. In point of fact, the issue of determined outcomes in the area of technical and technological applications is no less contingent than the issue in its application to societal uses of scientific knowledge. What we can note is the different nature of the contingencies in each case, yet even here it is easy to overstate the difference.

*Direct* concern for the social "effects" of technical knowledge and its applications in the form of instruments, artefacts, and processes usually lies with governments and the military in connection with governments. After all, much of the "social responsibility" debate regarding good corporate conduct is addressed to the *failure* of economic organizations to exhibit direct concern of a positive kind for problems like automation and resulting "structural" unemployment, discrimination in the areas of hiring and advancement, and environmental despoliation (Beesley and Evans, 1978; Preston and Post, 1975; Walton, 1967). Economic organizations are required increasingly to compromise (or perhaps only revise) their profit-making, market-sharing, and long-term growth goals by allowing what have been traditionally designated as non-economic criteria to influence the capital allocation function of firms.

What tends to undermine the claim of technological determination regarding social uses where the technology itself is alleged to be inherent in scientific research and knowledge is precisely the historical and contemporary initiatives taken by firms themselves. Before World War I, firms began to take control and effectively domesticate research and development activities by appending them to existing organization structures. In addition to responding to the requirements of military production during World Wars I and II, this was clearly directed to minimizing uncertainty in market, technological, and task environments. All-too-often, then as today, new ideas and processes were simply appended to the existing structure without allowing them to have a more total impact throughout the organization (Jacobs, 1969: 49–84; cf. Boland, 1971; Noble, 1977, Thompson, 1968).

It is precisely because the outcomes of scientific research and development *cannot* be predicted in advance that R&D is seen to be necessary in the interests of long-term comparative advantage. What is achieved by the effort would appear to be a greater element of control for each individual firm, and for large economic organizations with in-house R&D facilities generally, than would be the case were such activities carried out exclusively by groups and individuals external to it. At the same time, however, this concern for control is made necessary precisely because there is *no determinate linkage* between science and technology, at least no linkage anyone can specify. The real question would be whether the new conditions thus created by firms behaving in this way were any *more* predictable.

Here satisfactory proof would require consistently successful predictions of technological outcomes given scientific problem definitions and knowledge of experimental procedures to be used. Any careful look at societal outcomes shows that they are invariably related to the goals of organizations. Economic organizations are (understandably) mainly concerned about uses of their products and services rather than structural characteristics of the production process and its human and environmental consequences. It is for this reason that *social* “costs” and their possible long-term consequences must remain an indirect concern for firms, in contrast to both governments and the military (Schelling, 1971). Social costs are therefore not a reflection of any technology that is itself determined by the nature of scientific problem formulation and experimental procedure.

Again this does not mean that there are not persistent efforts to achieve control by organizations and governments, as well as groups and individuals. On the contrary, *only the absence of determination* in the science/technology linkage could make such efforts necessary and sensible to us. Profitability, whether short or long term in character, functions as the goal which not only justifies these efforts, but acts as a standard for allocation decisions whose net effect may be to do any or all of the following. (1) Thwart the initiation of a research project given adequate problem definition. (2) Halt the continuance of such projects during experimental tests. (3) Preclude further development even in the face of experimental "success". (4) Stop the production of prototypes, and further down the line, of trial marketing and sales. (5) Decide not to release the finished product on the market. Clearly, I am speaking mainly of non-military production here.

The important point, only underscored by specifying the various spots (among others) where the capital allocation function can intervene in in-house R&D activities, is to show how undetermined, how contingent, such efforts at control are, *however successful they may turn out to be*.<sup>2</sup> It also helps us see the absurdity of an inverse determinism like Ellul's, where reification operates to preclude any possibility of discussion, deliberation, and change. In all cases where determination is alleged, we need to be aware of the fact of openness even in the presence of efforts to achieve control and closure. Perhaps most important, we must remind ourselves that our society could have been significantly different from the standpoint of its present technological and organizational endowment had given allocation decisions judging estimated comparative advantage been different.

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<sup>2</sup> From the standpoint of causal adequacy, we are involved in the problem of having to assume here that we can identify the specific cause given a highly complex world where even factorial relations are difficult to isolate with any real confidence. Max Weber addressed this problem in social explanation in *Economy and Society* (1978: 1-31). Also, Von Wright (1974) addresses causality claims as sensible because possible and conceivable rather than certain, while Wittgenstein (1977) discusses of the deeper meaning of the quest for certainty.

#### IV. *Instrumentalism and "know-how"*

This only serves to underscore the fact that there is, after all, no objective "state of the art" where technique or technology is concerned. Not only is it a mistake to assert a determinate directional linkage between science and technology without reference to specific instances. The idea that technology has its own independent direction presumes the totally unwarranted claim that "know-how" established through R&D experimentation is *automatically* converted into processes generating economic, political, and military outputs for the society at large. While it is easy enough to dispute straightforward claims like Ellul's which tend to effectively reify technique and technology, we may be less ready to acknowledge how much we presume the general validity of more subtle arguments which promote or presume technological determinism. Indeed such presumptions are often manifestations of the phenomenon of liberal historicism alluded to earlier (Galbraith, 1967; Goldthorpe, 1970).

This makes it all the more necessary for us to remember that technique and technology, broadly conceived, express a human interest in as well as a capacity for instrumental externalization in the world outside. Unlike science, the ambit of technique and technology is coterminous (at the very least) with all of human experience, past, present, and to come. Thus it is a double error to assert a claim of determination between technology and science. Science is clearly a culturally and historically specific institution, however much its values, methods, and activities have been "generalized," but not technology. That is, only by reference to specific artefacts, instruments and processes would it be sensible to attribute such a status to technology.

As we shall see, however, this understanding falls short of what is needed, and is consistently invoked, it turns out, mainly by those who accept deterministic claims following from science. At the other extreme, it is precisely the tendency to mystify technique and technology that empties categorical claims concerning the relation of technology to science of any possible credibility beyond aggregated specific cases. True, we can point to instances where science influences both applied knowledge and technical outcomes by dint of the way given hypotheses organize the range of *possible* applications. But we must also acknowledge that it has all too often been the discovery of some tangible invention, artefact, or instrument which has had

the effect of *directing* scientific attention to one set of research tasks *rather than to others* (Conant, 1950; Doig, 1950; Dreyer, 1953; Kuhn, 1957; Partington, 1951).

Another problem that frequently arises in discussions of technology, in contrast to science, is the quite different tendency to concretize technology and treat it as if it were *only* artefacts, instruments and processes rather than knowledge or “know how.” This is more likely than not the result of viewing science as the instigator and technology as the determined outcome (cf. Arrow, 1962; Fellner, 1970). It underscores the difficulties attendant on treating this alleged link as the paragon instance of the proper theory/practice relationship in operation. In fact, the theory/practice relationship is effectively mediated by *both* science and technology. This is evident from the *active* character of efforts to design and control through the operation of laboratory experimentation in science. It is also clear from the fact that there can be “know-how” established through trial and error experimentation which never realizes itself in sedimented processes for one reason or another. Thus, the relation between science and technology may be between one type of knowledge and another, not only between scientific knowledge and sedimented technical outcomes. However, in *neither* instance are deterministic claims warranted.

In the case of technology, we are no more justified in assuming that technological “knowledge” more closely approaches an objective state of the art in comparison to actual technical processes than we are in viewing technical outcomes as necessarily less contingent than social costs and their possible long term consequences. As for science, it is imperative that we resuscitate Marx’s realization that it is, in the final analysis, a form of *industry or activity* as well as an institution possessing a knowledge component (allegedly) distinct from practice. This suggests how fundamental to our thinking has been the (false) split between knowledge and activity given in the distinction between thought and action as it is alleged to have taken shape in relations between science and technology (Marx, 1964: 142–43; cf. Habermas, 1975b).

Another way of highlighting this problem requires us to return to the issue of instrumentalism mentioned at the outset. I would agree that it is indeed reasonable to characterize modern Western science as an institution and set of practices having a general instrumental animus. This is embodied perhaps most significantly in its commitment to an empiricized version of the distinction between human

beings and nature and to experimental method as a way of “catching nature at work.” For purposes of scientific activity, nature is presumed to exclude human beings, its processes discernible by reference to a different organizing concept (causation) than is the case for human action (agency; intervention) (Von Wright, 1972). Nevertheless, it is imperative that science be understood to constitute as much a response to our prior dependence exclusively upon rules of thumb, trial and error, and “experience” generally as it was an effort to provide a more instrumental orientation to external nature than scholasticism could possibly inspire.

More than anyone else, Francis Bacon captured the essence of science as a “middle way” between traditional techniques and contemplation unrelated to the mastery of external nature. His commitment to *experimenta lucifera* as well as *experimenta fructifera* first established the idea that experimental procedures aimed at catching nature at work were justifiable and needed support even if they only “shed light” rather than “bore fruit”. To be sure, it was hoped that the light shed might eventually bear fruit, but this in no way undermines the claim that in science a general instrumental interest is seen to *demand* some form of “idle curiosity” given socialization into the scientific “community” (Bacon, 1968; Dubos, 1961; Glacken, 1970; Prior, 1964; Jonas, 1963; Leiss, 1972).

The real question then becomes the extent to which the sort of knowledge of external nature achieved by science bears within it specific transformational possibilities. I stated that critical arguments can not meet any adequate criteria of proof as long as they fail to delineate specific outcomes, and do so by returning to problem formulation (theoretical control). Here it is necessary, however, to underscore science’s institutional status by affirming that the link between problem formulation and the design of experimental procedures is likely to be *more* predictable than is the case of the relations between *both* taken together and efforts to control *either* technical or social outcomes.

This would seem to follow from the nature of science as a collective and corporate endeavour with a specific programme of training and socialization (Kuhn, 1970: chapt. 4; Hagstrom, 1965; Merton, 1957: 537–61; Storer, 1966; Wilson, 1977: 75–100). Indeed, it would be a mistake to call science an institution if (among other things) this were not the case. That technology, properly understood, is more “open” than science in this regard provides us with some idea of

how "natural" technology is as an expression of our humanness. Thus studies like Ellul's which contrast what is natural to what is "artificial," and include the technical phenomenon (in contrast to "traditional techniques") under the latter designation. In this case, Ellul must be seen to have committed an error not dissimilar to what happens when knowledge is construed as a passive enterprise and action as such is viewed as thoughtless (cf. Wilson, 1970; Wilson, 1975).

All this bears very importantly on the issue of whether and to what extent it is reasonable to treat "applied science" as an enterprise distinct from both science and technology. It would appear that it is this term which is perhaps more relevant than any other to our discussion of research and development efforts in the large corporations. I would submit that it is precisely the *lack* of determination between science and technology that has necessitated the emergence of this type of occupation. Applied science could be described in the following two ways. (1) A particular *activity* carried out by individual scientists knowledgeable of those (as yet) unfalsified hypotheses thought relevant to their (and their employers) concerns. (2) The sort of *knowledge* which functions at any given time and place to link specific unfalsified hypotheses to possible and desired technical outcomes (Kornhauser, 1962; Mansfield, 1968, 1964; Marcson, 1961; Pelz and Andrews, 1966).

Closer inspection, however, suggests that this latter distinction is a species of the dichotomy between thought and action that I found problematic in an earlier section. Applied science is not a distinct kind of knowledge, but rather constitutes a specific form of active orientation to science given an interest in technical outcomes. While its purpose is (ideally) to overcome *the lack of determination* in the relation between science and technology in given circumstances, its role in research and development activities is ultimately subordinate to the capital allocation and oversight function in economic, political, and military organizations (Fellner, 1970; Boland, 1971).

In contrast to "pure" science, whether theoretical, mathematical, or experimental, applied scientists are neither engaged in efforts to falsify, nor are they consciously concerned with the production of new basic knowledge. Rather, they rely on the ongoing activities of those individuals who provide an existing warehouse of hypotheses in good standing. From these such scientists choose the ones they believe to be most (or more) relevant to realizing desired possible outcomes. While the objective is discovery, their efforts in research



and development activities are directed to the discovery of *technological rules* rather than basic scientific knowledge. It is therefore the *nature* of their active orientation to existing scientific research given their organizational or occupational position that marks applied scientists off from both pure scientists and technicians.

Trained in some speciality (or sub-speciality) of the sciences (unlike the technician) applied scientists try to generate technological rules which will be relevant and efficacious to organizational interests, subject always to the open-ended character of the type of control realizable through the operation of the capital allocation and oversight function. Here we must direct our attention to the notion of technological rules, and the idea of technique and technology *as knowledge*, whether sedimented in organizational processes and practices or not. Whatever else this intervention achieves, it in no way challenges the fact that technology is knowledge no less than processes or practices, and that this knowledge is best construed not simply as rules of action but as the more pragmatic knowledge base from which these rules of action are derived. (Diesing, 1962: chapt. 1; Kotarbinski, 1965; Perrow, 1967).

Although there are numerous points of managerial intervention along the R&D continuum, as already noted, perhaps the most telling indication of how pervasively it is monitored is provided by the contrast between “know-how” and its sedimentation in organized processes and practices. Evidence of technical virtuosity as confirmed by applications-oriented experimental research in an R&D laboratory setting permits us to make no assumptions whatsoever regarding possible or even probable sedimentation. Only if we know the profit maximizing, market-sharing, and/or overall growth interests of the organization, as well as its specific products and product mixes, can we conjecture the possible fate of *technically feasible* inventions and innovations.

That they are technically feasible means nothing more than the fact they are the *property* of the organization (or state) in question, and that this organization (or state) has an exclusive right to determine whether and to what extent this knowledge or capacity will be converted into organized processes. This is especially true where the technically feasible “property” in question has military or strategic importance, and also holds for research of any kind carried out under government contract. Perhaps a more extended discussion of science and technology as both relate to knowledge and application will

make these points clearer. It should also provide us with a useful way of conceptualizing the role of common sense reason *vis a vis* both science and technology in invention and innovation.

### V. *Technology as applied science?*

Even though applied science does not constitute a particular, qualitatively distinct, kind of knowledge, it nevertheless needs to be seen as an activity standing apart from both science and technology in the ways indicated. This is the major difference between the analysis here and that provided by Mario Bunge, whose line of thought will be summarized briefly in what follows (Bunge, 1966). Bunge says that once we have a warehouse of available hypotheses we may seek either to increase “our knowledge of the external and internal reality” or enhance “our welfare and power.” In the first case science is obtained, while in the second it is technology. Bunge distinguishes substantive from operative technological theories in order to highlight the fact that there is, as noted, a knowledge base standing apart from specific technological rules of action (*ibid.*: 331).

Substantive technological theories might seem to support the idea that there is a distinct kind of knowledge called applied science, but this appears to be the case only because technology has already been (wrongly) assumed to be *predefined* as action in the absence of knowledge. A shift from substantive to operative technological theories is often, but not always, an attempt to turn this knowledge base into working rules of action in the interests of efficacy, always conditioned, however, by the capital allocation and oversight function. Whereas substantive technological theories are, Bunge argues, “always preceded by scientific theories,” operative technological theories are “born in applied research and may have little if anything to do with substantive theories” (*ibid.*). This point is highly significant, since it directs our attention to the fact that there is clearly a common sense component present in technical activities which may turn out to be efficacious even in the absence of a knowledge of substantive technological theories.

Bunge addresses science-based technology in particular when he claims that a scientific theory may bear on action either “because it provides knowledge regarding the objects of action” or “because it is concerned with action itself.” According to him, in *both* instances

we are speaking of technological theories, the first substantive and the second operative (ibid.). The parallel between these two types of theories and Bacon's *experimenta lucifera* and *experimenta fructifera* must be clear. The problem here has already been alluded to. An individual or group can conceivably generate operative technological theories in the absence of knowledge of the relevant substantive technological theories, as noted. Yet the implication of the above is that: (1) science is the pre-eminent component in the generation of technical know-how and its *possible* application to organizational processes and practices; (2) the capital allocation and oversight function must be downplayed significantly as a consequence.

Even at the point where R&D activities generate technical "know how," the scientific component varies in its importance and in any case can only be presumed to be uniformly pre-eminent where commonsense rationality is viewed statically and one-dimensionally rather than dynamically and historically. Bunge's conception of technique is sufficiently dependent on the role of scientific knowledge that we may be warranted in arguing that his claims are true *by definition* because they appear in relations between science and *science-based technology* only (thus his equation of technology with applied science). Again, however, even this clarification fails to reach the second issue raised here, the fact that regardless of the mix of knowledge components present in any particular case of linkages between science, technology, and commonsense capacities, no account is taken of the allocation function in such analyses.

This seems to be confirmed by Bunge's claim, correct as far as it goes, that any compromise in the basic theoretical, even speculative, role of science will hurt not only science but technology, given science's pre-eminent *technological* relevance (ibid.: 329–30, 345–47). As long as even this sort of scientific endeavour is seen to contain a dynamic component of commonsense knowledge and capacity which reflects the absorption of new knowledge and new values over time, such a claim is easy to support. The central role of these considerations in any adequate comprehension of substantive and operative technological theories is only underscored when Bunge argues that technological theories of *either* kind are "richer than the theories of science" *per se*. It is precisely because technological theories and rules of action address what *can* be done that they are unavoidably involved in value issues relating to what *ought* to be done (ibid.: 332; cf. Marcuse, 1964).

This is important if only because it reminds us that there is an *ethical* component that is central rather than peripheral to practical decisions. The issue then becomes the institutional or organizational values being promoted (and not promoted) by particular economic, political and military/strategic decisions. It is precisely the perceived *value* of science to economic, political, and military/strategic interests then, which helps explain why applied scientists have become, along with engineers, the central occupation defining possible science/technology linkages on behalf of these interests. Reference here to what is “possible” points once more to the fact that experimental “successes” resulting from technological try-outs may tell us little or nothing about whether, when, and how these outcomes will be sedimented in already existing activities and processes in the absence of more specific information.

A highly significant basis for contrasting science and technology is Bunge’s distinction between validation and success. While practice may show the *social value* of scientific theories resulting from their capacity to function as substantive technological theories in the way indicated, this in no way serves to validate them. Bunge’s argument here is reminiscent of Popper’s distinction between truth and success (Popper, 1972: 262). Like Popper, he argues that “the practical success of a scientific theory is no objective index of its truth value.” Indeed, a scientific theory could be, Bunge argues, either successful and false or unsuccessful and true (Bunge, 1966: 334).

Bunge cites four reasons in defense of this claim: (1) a theory may contain only “a grain of truth” while being on the whole false; (2) “the accuracy requirements in applied science and in practice are far below those prevailing in pure research”; (3) scientific theories have a “deep ontological root” and are efficient only by accident; and (4) “in real situations, the relevant variables are seldom adequately known and precisely controlled” (*ibid.*: 330–36). The fact that successful practice is in the final analysis irrelevant to the truth of scientific theories in no way disputes science’s possible and actual importance for technology. But it does underscore the fact that deterministic claims in either direction are unwarranted, and that it is precisely *the lack of* determination which helps us make sense of organized research and development efforts in large organizations.

Bunge captures nicely the consequences of this line of thought in his discussion of the difference between scientific theories and technological rules. Rules, he argues, are neither true nor false, but more

or less efficacious. But it does not follow from this that the truth of a scientific law will insure the efficacy of the technological rules associated with it. In the first place scientific theories are true only in a provisional sense since they have not yet been falsified, according to Popper. Though *truth* rather than more instrumental concerns remains the real object of scientific work for both Popper and Bunge, this in no way contradicts the tentative character of scientific theories and the responsibility of the scientific community for falsification (Popper, 1958).

The closest Bunge will come to asserting a deterministic claim is when he states that “a law is consistent with more than one rule, *but not the obverse.*” This means that “whereas given a law we may try out the corresponding rules, given a rule we are unable to trace the laws presupposed by it.” Thus, Bunge argues:

We see there is no simple road from practice to knowledge, from success to truth; success warrants no inference from rule to law, but poses the problem of explaining the apparent efficiency of the rule. In other words, the roads from success to truth are infinitely many and consequently theoretically useless or nearly so; that is, no bunch of effective rules suggests a true theory. On the other hand, the roads from truth to success are limited in number, hence feasible (Bunge, 1966: 340–41).

The first thing to be noticed here is that the asymmetrical relation between scientific theories and technological rules asserted by Bunge is not determinate, but based on generalizations from past experience. It is not, in other words, a scientific claim at all, but rather a “technological” one.<sup>3</sup> A second point concerns the problems inherent in equating the admittedly provisional character of theoretical truth claims in science with “laws.” Clearly Bunge’s argument here needs to be moderated by recognizing the *generally* instrumental and nature-transformational orientation of science standing between the extremes of experiential/incremental techniques and contemplation unrelated to the mastery and domination of external nature.

A final point concerns the notion of efficacy in Bunge’s argument and elsewhere. It means not only capability or “know-how” realized

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<sup>3</sup> Here we have in mind the more generic notion of technique and technology as a manifestation of human commonsense capacities for reasoning directed to the transformation of external nature, rather than science-based technology on its own (see Wilson, 1975).

as a result of successful technological try-outs, but capability relative to some already established way of doing the same (or similar) thing. To the extent that by efficacy we mean *efficiency*, we are concerned with technical rationality in the utilization of means where relevant ends or values are given and/or unproblematic. This seems to be the meaning intended by Bunge. It points to values beyond those reflected in its very presence as considerations and priorities external to technique. In contrast to technical rationality, the economizing function addresses directly the need to rank-order, and continually scrutinize, already established rank-orderings of values, because there are more ends than there are means to realize them (Ayres, 1961; Diesing, 1962; cf. Ellul, 1964).

The element of *scarcity* here *should* perhaps encompass capital allocation decisions made by firms but all too often does not. Scarcity is treated mainly as a constraint on the comparative advantage of one firm relative to others, not as a concrete value that acts to condition maximizing efforts on a continuing basis. We already noticed how firms operating in what is in the final analysis a capitalist system have not traditionally been expected to concern themselves directly with these matters. This suggests that there is a yawning gap between a capital allocation function premised on a notion of scarcity emerging out of an inflated conception of need created by corporate, state, and (overall system) growth requirements, and the more absolute notion of scarcity based on the historical struggle between human beings and external nature.<sup>4</sup>

## VI. *The institutional and commonsense rationality of innovation*

I am now ready to bring together my observations in order to see what they imply for the role of common sense activities, particularly as this role bears on invention and innovation. First, I argued that

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<sup>4</sup> Hegel anticipated this development as early as 1821 in *The Philosophy of Right* (1967: paragraph 190). The need for some producing unit to *recover* the original conception of scarcity which firms no longer take seriously remains the best argument for socialism. I have discussed these issues in "Values: on the possibility of a convergence between economic and non-economic decision-making" (Wilson, 1981). It may also be important to note that nowadays it is less producers (firms) than *consumers* who perform the economizing function of rank ordering desired ends on the assumption that means are scarce.

technique is a trans-historical manifestation of the human interest in transforming external states of affairs, and is therefore not meaningfully comprehensible as an “institution” like science. There is therefore a sense in which technique must be seen to precede science, since the location of science is both culturally and historically relative to it. In effect, science, among many other things, is also a general technique for gaining knowledge in its own right. At the same time, it was only the nature of technique as itself an expression of human capacities for *commonsense* reasoning based on experience, trial and error and rule of thumb which allowed us to make this claim.

By commonsense reasoning I understand a *dynamic* activity which both absorbs and is modified by new knowledge and ideas produced by various institutional modes of rationality like science, scholarship, and professional competence. The point here is that the distinction I am arguing for between institutional and commonsense forms of rationality only makes sense if the two are seen to be in an ongoing relation of dynamic interdependence. The issue would then be whether fundamental (as well as incremental) changes in the stock of commonsense knowledge are in fact increasingly dependent upon science, science-based technology, and other professional and scholarly modes of knowledge and knowing. If this were discovered to be the case, then the growth of commonsense knowledge could no longer be realistically be understood as a process generated in the main out of earlier commonsense knowledge (Schutz, 1964).

Besides the issues of temporal priority and persistence, I also need to acknowledge the matter of the *component* role of commonsense rationality in scientific and science-based technological activity and elsewhere. I have already made this point for technique in its generic meaning. To argue for the component role of commonsense capacities not only in institutionalized modes of scientific research, scholarship, and professional fact-finding, but in economic and allied forms of reason and decision as well, only underscores my preference for a focus on *interdependence* rather than dependence. At the same time, my view of commonsense capacities as humanly distributed competencies suggests that “absorption” and “sedimentation” may be incomplete notions to use in describing interdependencies with institutional, professional and scholarly-scientific modes.

My point here is that these institutional modes of training, certification, and socialization would be incomprehensible in the absence

of some human faculty which not only produced them historically but which sustains them as a permanent *cultural* feature of everyday life (Garfinkel, 1967). What capacities, for example, would have to be present and “available” in order to make subsequent socialization into these modes of training and reasoning possible? Absorption and sedimentation are terms that imply a static and one-dimensional asymmetry rather than a dynamic capacity interacting over time and space and within and across cultures. Indeed, I would argue that invention and innovation are themselves incomprehensible where commonsense capacities, including but not exhausted by a technical interest and intent, are not seen to be actively producing and sustaining, as well as absorbing and sedimenting, institutional modes of training and socialization (Barnett, 1953; Kroeber, 1944).

Relations between science and technology, particularly where invention and innovation are concerned, tend to bear this out. We realize that a case-by-case approach supports the idea that prior (and continuing) scientific knowledge may, and often to regularly does, influence the course of technology. But we can also employ this approach to show how technology has helped set the physical and observational parameters of scientific possibility by helping define its research tasks, often in competition with others. Indeed, it is precisely the dependence of both pure and applied scientists on extremely expensive and scarce facilities which nowadays demands that they either be salaried employees or have a right of access in order to carry out these research tasks. In addition, however, we are also compelled to acknowledge the persistence of technical interests and intentions that (presently) lack a consciously held base in scientific knowledge even today.

Ellul is too ready to consign what he calls “traditional techniques” to the past or the Third World. Even contemporary “technical operations” are alleged by Ellul to be determined by a concrete technical phenomenon standing outside and beyond these operations (Ellul, 1964: 23–24, 64–78). My point is that even if either science or technology so understood were reified in such an alienated mode in order to make deterministic claims in either direction, the dynamic and ongoing role of commonsense capacities would still have to be acknowledged. This would hold whether the scientific knowledge, or the technological knowledge either provided by or responsible for it, were consciously held or unconsciously acquired as a consequence



of membership in the culture. The contribution that my perspective on science, technology, and commonsense capacities offers for an analysis of innovation is that it directs our attention to the likelihood not only that our so-called “rational mode of life” (Weber) is a culture after all, but a more open-ended one than Weber was willing to acknowledge (Wilson, 1984).

Having said this, however, the fact remains that Weber’s assessment remains significant to the extent that the increasing role of derived forms of knowledge in furthering their own growth and development independent of commonsense capacities on their own holds true. But when have commonsense capacities ever truly been “on their own” totally independent of some form of derived knowledge claims, however unscientific or unprofessional in the modern and contemporary sense they may have been? A useful approach to the role of commonsense capacities in scientific innovation in particular would stress the role of such capacities not only in formulating the problem but in the design, intervention in, and interpretation of the experimental work which it calls for. This also holds, of course, for technological try-outs in research and development settings by applied scientists. In this case, a central aspect of invention and innovation would be the decision as to which scientific theories in good standing to deploy and which technological concerns or problem contexts to apply them to (Wilson, 1980).

That these two types of research activity and process involve similar types of issues bearing on the role of commonsense capacities in invention and innovation only underscores their interrelationship. From the standpoint of origins, the laboratory experiment in science is clearly an attempt to reconstruct (and catch) “nature” at work based on a commonsense capacity for (and interest in) technical manipulation which even today constitutes a central feature of everyday life. Institutionally speaking, however, it must be equally clear that technological tryouts in R&D settings take both their basic form and their example of “success” from laboratory experimentation in science (Jonas, 1963; Von Wright 1972: chapter 2).

It is imperative that individuals involved in *successful* research in *both* pure and applied settings be understood not only to possess but to consistently utilize this commonsense component quite apart from their institutional training, qualifications, or experience (cf. Kuhn, 1970; Popper, 1958; Lakatos and Musgrave, 1970; Wilson, 1977: 75–100). Their possession of scientific and/or technological knowledge,

in other words, depends upon precisely their ability to go beyond its established confines if they are to make innovative contributions to science as an institution and/or to economic and related kinds of organization as applied scientists (Wilson, 1980). Far from being mutually exclusive then, scientific, technical and commonsense capacities must be seen as dialectically interpenetrating and mutually reinforcing *even (or especially) in these settings*.

Innovation is therefore at one and the same time “rational,” and more than simply the possession of specific institutional, professional and/or scholarly-scientific modes of training and experience. This latter is too truncated a conception of rationality for us to countenance if we are really as interested in innovation as we claim to be. In any case it is too much oriented to prediction and anticipation. While this may not appear problematic, it does underscore the degree to which science is presumed to determine or control technology, albeit only where the proper facilities and personnel can be brought together. Even if technology is therefore not determined by science, or science by technology, it is the scope and scale of the effort by *economic* organizations (and the state) to bring their “progress” more and more under an organizational umbrella which may prove to be most consequential. It may, more than any other single factor, bode ill for the continuing (and necessary) contribution to innovation provided by commonsense capacities relatively unhinged from and independent of more derived modes of knowledge and knowing (Jacobs, 1969; Wilson, 1989; Wilson, 1992).

An example of what I have in mind is provided by Donald Schon’s view of innovation as dependent in the main on the “displacement of concepts.” Like the question of which theories among the reservoir of those in good standing one decides to turn to for possible applications, and where one decides to apply them, this equation of innovation with the displacement of concepts from one context to another overlooks the rational component. In other words, what accounts for the choice of which concepts to displace and what problem-contexts to displace them to? (Schon, 1973, 1968, 1963; cf. Wilson, 1980; Wisdom, 1966). Processes thus turn out to consist of concatenations of clever people, as Nigel Calder claimed in response to deterministic arguments asserting technological determinism like Ellul’s (Calder, 1968: 83–99; cf. Ellul, 1964: 64–78).

Far from functioning as a “cover concept” in my thinking in this essay, a focus on the role of commonsense capacities has been neces-

sitated by my interest in the nature of innovation as a *human* capacity which appears in specific institutional practices, but no more readily than in everyday life as a whole. We need to understand a great deal more than we do about the way innovation, properly comprehended, is a *manifestation* rather than a negation of the common human pattern (Barnett, 1953; Bourdieu, 1977). I suspect that the most sensible way to address what innovation must mean for us is to argue against the possibility of its possessing any describable empirical content whatsoever, apart from specific instances. After all, if we could know it “generically” in a nameable, describable way, what sense would it make to call it innovation at all? (Wilson, 1984). If this appears to both reveal and preserve the mystery of creativity in discovery, invention, and innovation, then the question must be whether any other rendering could be faithful to this concern, and to the role of science, technology and economic and political organization in providing contexts for its proximate and ongoing expression.

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## CHAPTER NINE

### ESSENTIAL PROCESS OF MODERNITY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH PRACTICES AND AN ALTERNATIVE

Both the apparent collapse of the possibility of social revolution and the increased likelihood of substantial violence and upheaval, if the present situation should further erode living standards, require us to think seriously about the scope for and limits of change in the advanced societies. This statement only appears paradoxical for those who equate any kind of disorder with social breakdown. As Krishan Kumar has pointed out, however, there is much more to revolution than violence and disorder. Because it shakes the established system to its roots, revolution threatens much more than the established government. The fact that revolution now appears almost inconceivable in the advanced societies provides Kumar with a way of addressing the historically and culturally time-bound character of revolution as a nineteenth century phenomenon whose time has passed (Kumar, 1976; Marcuse, 1964; Müller, 1970). To support such a claim, one necessarily points to Society itself as a specific historical and cultural collective rather than a synonym for collective life itself. The purpose in doing so is to argue that in the tension between structure and process, structure threatens to be victorious because the process that we can observe appears more in pursuit of the *completion* of Society than its transcendence (Adorno, 1969; Wilson, 1977).

Let me draw this distinction between revolution and disorder out a bit further. The fact that a social revolution is unlikely because inconceivable in the absence of what might be argued to constitute “objective conditions” is precisely what helps make a case for the argument that violence and disorder *will* take place if inflation, unemployment, and the perceived (relative) deprivation that follow further jeopardize the living standard (Runciman, 1966; and Chapter 7 above). Prime candidates for such upheavals would have to be Germany, Italy, France, England, and possibly even the United States and Canada. The coping capacity of urban populations in the advanced societies, the element I am most directly concerned with

in this discussion, may no longer be as readily channelled into leisure activities and entertainment given the dependence of such pursuits on a surplus standing apart from what is needed to sustain the present standard of living. The fact that only the most overwhelming "objective conditions" will lead to social revolution should help us realize how increasingly possible (even likely) either violence and upheaval, or tacit support for them among the general population, in fact is in the advanced societies. Thus the refusal of these unorganized publics to participate in or endorse social revolution should not necessarily serve to reassure but must be counted a matter of some concern (Moore, 1973, 1967). We have "company" in the world now, and it is increasingly unlikely that we will be able to solve our problems without recognition of the existence, if not the cooperation, of the so-called "Third World."

What I propose in the discussion that follows takes its point of departure in the belief that the social, behavioural, and administrative/managerial sciences have become part of the *institutional structure* of the advanced societies. That is, they no longer simply constitute (if they ever did) a mere response in the field of "culture" to certain effects produced by the substructure. Nowadays these disciplines serve as a model for social practice rather than simply a way of studying the nature of commonsense activities that take place independently of their interests and values. In effect, they have become a veritable force of production in their own right, all the more successful in this endeavour where the fact of their influence has been muted by internalized acceptance of their commitment to observe, record, even intervene *sine ira et studio*. For me, the social sciences thus *reveal* their auspices in the effort to hide them. Along with capitalism, science, science-based technology, the rule of law and bureaucracy, these disciplines constitute not only a significant element in the institutional structure, but also a force which simultaneously seeks to legitimize this structure as "rational," in the narrow, meritocratic sense of this term, while standing in its midst (see Chapter 3; Wilson, 1976). Two arguments are particularly germane to this point of departure, and should be kept in mind throughout the discussion. The first is Marx's point regarding the *substructural* character of systems of knowledge production once they cease to be a mere reflection of productive forces that determine them and so become a force of production in their own right (Marx, 1971). The second is Max



Weber's largely unacknowledged admission that the social sciences' "rationalistic bias" really does have *substantive*, rather than simply "methodological," significance, as I argue in Chapter 1.

I have tried to explain the sociological character of collective life in the advanced societies at considerable length in *The American Ideology* (1977). This entailed arguing that sociology and Society quite literally "belong together" in the ways already suggested. In effect, once capitalism has extirpated the last vestiges of a pre-bourgeois element in the form of a threat from landed power, the process of solidification can begin. The resulting *organization* of capitalism coincides with its spread outward to encompass areas of collective life heretofore subordinate to tradition, convention, and commonsense modes generally. Increased articulation between the economy and the state, complemented by an ever greater articulation between scientific research, its application, and technical progress, generates a seamless web in which the benefits of ever greater functional interdependence are more than matched by the system-wide impact of the failure of one or a few elements to properly articulate in the desired way. Although economics maintains its pre-eminence as the central legitimizing discipline for those *at the top* who control the process of functional rationalization, pacification of unorganized publics, concentrated in high density urban areas, requires the presence of the social, behavioural, and administrative/managerial sciences. In addition to the promise of incremental intervention in the interests of "reform," these disciplines function more significantly as agents or instruments whose commitment to "socialization" is central rather than tangential to their very content as systems of knowledge-production (Wilson, 1977: chapters 2, 6, 7, 8).

The social sciences and related disciplines are therefore best comprehended as an indigenous, even central, element of the modern institutional landscape rather than as a repertoire of methods and techniques for studying this structure in a neutral and detached fashion. The maturation, solidification, and organization of capitalism thus creates and sustains a dilemma which arises out of the very success of its initial pacification enterprise. As more and more areas of collective life come under the sway of its influence, a parallel extension of legitimizing activity is necessitated (Habermas, 1975; 1971; Wilson, 1984: chapter 5). Crudely expressed, economics is to early capitalism as the social sciences and related disciplines are to

mature capitalism, what I have called in this discussion, perhaps too automatically, the “advanced” societies. But this relationship between the earlier and later disciplines as legitimating forces is not one of mutual exclusivity. Rather, there is a cumulative effect which indicates mutual interdependence between economics and the social, behavioural, and administrative disciplines. This very legitimizing function has allowed both economics and the social sciences to become institutionalized in the advanced societies much faster than this process might otherwise have been expected to take place. Indeed, when I speak of institutionalization I address not simply Weberian “rationalization,” but the process (and effects) of *sedimentation* to the point where basic values and orientations at the level of everyday life have been transformed. In this sense, commonsense capacities are best understood as a continuing *resource* subject to variegated influences given the circumstances generated by Society’s dominant institutions as they relate to and express “the mode of production.”

As a matter of fact, when I refer to the rapid pace of institutionalization, I am really only addressing the social sciences and allied disciplines, not economics. Economics is still considered a specialist discipline whose initial legitimizing role was *not* extended after capitalism’s successful transformation, first from the exchange of commodities produced in non-capitalist ways to control of the industrialization process, and thereafter to the organization of collective life conceived as Society. The impact of economics as a specialized discipline reflects the continuing elitist character of its legitimizing function, while the social sciences go far beyond this strictly top-down impact. Their piecemeal intervention is, after all, increasingly *mirrored* in the properly socialized “subject” (including the individual of neo-conservative economics) who has internalized the correct norms and perceptual cues to make sense of such activity as being the only rational way of approaching and engaging in reality. Thus the “individual” is a *societal creation* in the specific sense in which we understand Society as a “rational social organization” (Marcuse, 1964; Adorno, 1969). The organizational principle is always primary; even the individual’s goal-rational behaviour must be subordinated to it when this behaviour is not seen to reflect specific and general role requirements and societal goals. This must remain one of the most important messages to subsequent generations hidden away in Max Weber’s “formal” sociological categories and concepts. It is precisely this equation of rationality and organized collective goal-rationality

which points to the reciprocal, and mutually reinforcing, character of the social sciences and allied disciplines as a more central part of the institutional fabric *because* of this internalization by unorganized publics. In effect, what is taught in the universities is by now little more than the tip of the iceberg in what we have called Society as a sociological collective. Rapid absorption and sedimentation has meant that these disciplines both create and sustain the seamless web while standing in its midst, and constitute an institutional force which benefits conspicuously from the extension of its values both to other institutions and to organized publics at large (Wilson, 1984: chapters 2, 4).

### I. *Social science as a microcosm of Society*

The social sciences' signal pre-eminence in North America in particular leads me to argue that any approach to social and political change there must *begin* with this fact as a given and attempt to modify already existing research practices. Given the near-unique absence of pre-bourgeois vestiges functioning as a constraint on the growth of the urban middle class and its central institutions, the United States is the country in which it is simultaneously more possible *and more necessary* to generate such an approach. The social sciences and allied disciplines have, on the whole, achieved a higher and more consistent level of sedimentation into commonsense patterns of behaviour and belief there than in other urban, industrial societies. In the absence of residual vestiges of the sort noted above, at least after 1865, the United States' development was more readily prone to curing what Durkheim would have called the "pathological effects" of its industrialization process by an unimpeded turn to the social and behavioural sciences as technologies for reform rather than solely as vehicles for esoteric investigation (Durkheim, 1952; Wilson, 1977: 171–99). This tendency could have been aided and abetted by the fact of relative isolation and the immensities of space. Space was necessary both as a prerequisite to social and political experimentation and as the always available residual for escape, an attempt to repair failed efforts, and future mastery and domination. Jay Forrester has argued forcefully that space has been a key variable in the American commitment to experimentation, and in its preference for "technological" solutions of all kinds. He cites the

enclosure and subsequent settlement of much of this space as evidence for a crisis in American development as a whole (Forrester, 1970; see Chapter 10 below).

The social, behavioural, and administrative sciences thus constitute a central institution of the seamless web of an organized, corporate, and managerial capitalism heavily dependent on state intervention. At the same time, they function as the key legitimizing agents as well as the “producers” of the ideological cement which is necessary in order to make a full-scale commitment to “integration” palatable. They do this by one-dimensionalizing both history and culture as central characteristics of human being in the world. It is only as a result of this effort that Society comes to be seen as the only kind of collective life “available”; indeed it is effectively fetishized by being equated with collective life itself (Wilson, 1978; and Chapter 2 above). The equation of reason and rationality with rational organization in the form of the organizational principle is central to “integration” as the ideal for those who view collective life in terms of the idea of system. Thus, it should occasion no surprise to discover how central to this emerging agenda is the need to treat individual efforts at goal-rational behaviour as non (or ir)rational where such efforts, regardless of the intent of the actor, fail to realize “objective consequences” in harmony with the societally (or organizationally) desired goal of “functional interdependence.” However, it is important to notice that the decision as to whether this goal has or has not been achieved resides with those who direct the process of development and integration itself. Thus, such a goal cannot be meaningfully understood as an “objective” determination, particularly in light of Mannheim’s observation that only those who direct the process of functional rationalization benefit *substantially*, in terms of increases in *their own* goal-rational behaviour, from increases in rationalization (Mannheim, 1940: 49–60; cf. Weber 1947; and Chapter 4 above).

My critique of meritocratic norms, thus of legal-rational authority, needs to go beyond simply attacking prevailing research practices in the social, behavioural, and administrative/managerial sciences as a form of domination given their origin and goal, however. Weber had left the fact of the increasing pre-eminence of these norms in something of an ambiguous position, even though he had implied that such legal-rationality, in common with other types of authority, was clearly a form of domination. This is because his attempt to

confront the “legitimate” generalizing objectives of such disciplines placed only the criterion of actor intent between their origin and their goal. When Weber consigns his own critique as a social theorist to the empirical dustbin of values by acknowledging that “the concept ‘substantive’ is in a certain sense ‘formal,’ that is, it is an abstract generic concept” (1947: 186), he makes his own doubts apparent relative to his overwhelming commitment to staying at his post and “doing his damned duty in spite of all.” In his typology of action, it is significant that it is value-rational or principled action which fails to make the transition to his later discussion of types of authority. This reflects his own view, quite correct in most of its aspects so it would seem, that this particular type is *necessarily* consigned to the status of either affectivity or goal-rationality with the progressive organization of capitalism expressed in the heightened articulation between its institutional elements. While this no doubt holds for “traditional” types of behaviour, with disastrous consequences from the standpoint of a theory of social *change*, Weber’s analysis fails to be sufficiently clear on the similar fate which such developments ordain for goal-rationality as a characteristic form of action by which the negative bourgeois individual stands against the prevailing, or emerging, order of things (Wilson, 1984: chapters 4, 5).

All of this has great significance for the social sciences and related disciplines. Methodical practices in search of the empirical particular, however indicative of the extent of the commitment of these disciplines to knowledge as graspable and appropriable, provide what is increasingly a thoroughly “correct” rendition of societal practices among that amorphous, and still expanding, category—the urban middle class. Moreover, it is now necessary to acknowledge that such activities have gone beyond their earlier role as a “model” for commonsense practices in these settings. They now constitute what is increasingly a *reflection* of ongoing practices in the settings indicated, to the point where it is inaccurate to see their allegedly detached “findings” falling on audiences whose members are unprepared to receive them. Therefore we must go beyond simply noticing how unreasonable it is to view social-scientific evidence as the result of a detached observation function *sine ira et studio*. In addition to the institutional position these disciplines increasingly inhabit as a consequence of their central legitimizing function, nowadays they often encounter students and other “interested parties” who meet their

concepts, approaches, and categories with a high degree of familiarity and knowledge. Such students frequently offer parallel systems of knowledge based on correct socialization coupled with (and tempered by) experience as an antidote to an overly detached “sociological imagination.”

What all this means is that the peculiarly American interest in and commitment to the social, behavioural, and administrative sciences becomes problematic precisely to the extent that it perceives its own “functional interdependence” in the advanced societies to be a microcosmic version not only of the ideal, but also of what is actually taking place in the urban secular contexts cited. Further, and quite at variance with the nature of its socializing and norm-internalizing agenda, it views the “subject” it encounters, whether in the classroom, the boardroom, the picket line, the welfare office or (last and least) the home, as individuals whose behaviour “makes sense” because it agrees with, or is at least thoroughly compatible with, its own constructs and understandings. The very success of the sociological undertaking is revealed for what it truly is when the adjustment function originally undertaken can ever so subtly be transformed into a caretaking one. At this point we are well advised to contemplate Everett Knight’s concluding statement in a study now over forty years old. Knight underscores the point I made earlier regarding the real scope and limits (thus the “sense”) of an interventionist and reformist posture when it no longer has any vestiges of a pre-bourgeois past (or even its phantom) which it can point to as evidence of the need for what it says we require. Referring pre-eminently to Karl Popper, as I shall do in subsequent pages, he states:

It is this dialectic between occurrences and the objective meaning which man’s subjective intentions attach to them that makes historical movement. It is the job of the academic to see that these intentions are at once sufficiently inspiring and sufficiently practical to give our lives a meaning entirely apart from reference to status and possession. This is something that the reformism of people like Karl Popper can never do; for what it gives with one hand, such as improvements in standards of living, it takes back with the other by allowing the accumulation of historical refuse such as social castes. We have had a century in which to recognize the futility of reformism, which only accomplished as much as it did thanks to the existence of a well-defined political philosophy in irreducible opposition to the one prevailing. What, therefore, is to be hoped from a reformism priding itself on a ‘refutation of Marxism’? (Knight, 1959: 133).

## II. *The social sciences as vehicles for reflection and change*

In previous chapters, I have devoted considerable attention to the issue of the present and possible future role of the social, behavioural, and administrative sciences in advanced industrial societies. To be sure, most of these arguments are preoccupied with critique and the need to address the present, largely “scientific” view of *theory* held by these disciplines. My point of departure is necessarily in an analysis from North American conditions, given both the cultural pre-eminence of these disciplines there, and the fact that the United States is still a world leader in the development of the social sciences, particularly in the areas of method but elsewhere as well. With the exception of the studies on the critique of both theory and method by the Frankfurt School, I have addressed myself almost exclusively to theory on the grounds that changes here constituted the key to changes elsewhere. Here I argue that this judgment was perhaps incorrect and excessively pessimistic, especially in light of the slight likelihood that these disciplines will adopt a view of theory which clearly threatens their entire enterprise as it takes shape in the form of (and commitment to) methodical practices generally.

At the same time, the “switch” in emphasis from theory to method also seems necessary because of some of the problems associated with the work of Jürgen Habermas and his students addressed to the ideal of emancipation through dialogue and improved “communicative competence” (Habermas, 1979; 1970). In Chapter 7 and elsewhere I discuss these critically in some detail, but not because I want to see social change stymied in the interests of defending theory as a reflexive negative dialectics standing aloof from day to day participation in social and political processes and institutions. Rather, I want to point out the inappropriateness of Habermas’ proposals to countries which not only already possess a “tradition” of social science in the guise of empirical research, but have institutionalized the protocols of these disciplines to such an extent that unorganized publics increasingly formulate their notions of common sense on the basis of them. Habermas’ overriding concerns, thoroughly understandable when applied to West Germany and Italy in particular, seem distinctly less sensible when addressed to North America and Scandinavia, and possibly Great Britain as well. It is rather to the social fact of the social sciences as simultaneously an element of social reality and a means of comprehending it as such that we must

turn. Thus my point of difference with Habermas on this score is that, in the interests of change in North America and perhaps elsewhere, *the fact* of this pre-eminent role on the part of the social sciences must be addressed not only in terms of their prevailing conception of theory but also by reference to operative notions of method. In this latter case, I want to go beyond critique to address the possibility of alternate approaches from “inside” the research enterprise itself (see Chapter 3; Wilson, 1976).

The fact that social science research practices themselves constitute an important form of *social interaction* leads me to focus on these practices as a vehicle for reflection and change *given their pre-eminence* in the countries indicated. Thus while I agree with Habermas that there is no point whatsoever in acting as if these disciplines were not pre-eminent where this is in fact the case, I argue that in North America a quite different tack is required to make their practices serve reflection and change than would be appropriate to countries where institutionalization is either lacking or has not gone anywhere near so far. Though I appreciate Habermas’ view regarding the need for the social sciences as a buffer between what he considers to be an irresponsible intellectual Marxism on the one side, and a dangerous and ill-informed anti-intellectual attitude in governments and corporations on the other, precisely this fact of institutionalization and increasing sedimentation into the values, habits, and common-sense practices of urban populations in North America requires different ideas and recommendations. While certain countries in Western Europe may be ripe for violence and upheaval for the reasons suggested by Habermas in his discussion of “radical reformism,” an argument in support of this point of view in the case of North America would rather need to address the apolitical character of the social sciences as a mirror-image of the sort of formal rationality embodied in bureaucracy’s parallel commitment to the principle of *sine ira et studio* (Habermas, 1971: 48–49).

It is therefore to a pre-eminent version of the “administrative” and “technocratic” solution to properly political problems that the social sciences and related disciplines address themselves when they presume that an instrumental conception of reason in the form of ends-means rationality is the only concretely “real” basis from which to approach their tasks, as I argue in Chapter 6 (cf. Dreitzel, 1972). Given in this formulation is an all-too-convenient view of the societal division of labour which necessarily hypostatizes its “objectivity”



as synonymous with prevailing conceptions of “functional interdependence.” The upshot of this approach finds the social sciences implicitly accepting the existence of the societal division of labour as evidence for the ends/means dichotomy itself. Increasingly well established as the always-available light infantry of an organized, managerial, and corporate capitalism heavily dependent on state “intervention,” the social sciences view their own activities as a “means” to political “ends” determined elsewhere in Society. To the extent that the negative individualism of nascent capitalist development is supplemented by the sort of “positive” individualism which equates its possession with “functional” role performance in the societal division of labour rather than resistance to Society, the social sciences and allied disciplines are required to complement the mode of production (thus economics) by providing additional ideological legitimation.

This suggests that any movement away from an individuated ends-means schema is itself a reflection of the organization of capitalism and the consequent emergence of the social sciences as simultaneously a part of this seamless web and an indispensable resource for the knowledge-producers who will “make sense” of this development by reference to system, function, and relation (see Chapter 4). An additional consequence will, of course, be discovered in the way that these disciplines describe what they claim to observe *sine ira et studio*. The substantive side of Weber’s infamous “methodological convenience,” given in what I have called his “rationalistic bias” favouring instrumentalism in the person of ends-means rationality, is all too clearly in evidence in the way the social sciences argue that capitalism has been superseded, even transcended, rather than fully realized, with the emergence of its organized, managerial and corporate form (Weber, 1947: 87–123; and Chapter 1 above). “Value-freedom” is no less readily seen through by a focus on the active, world-building (negative) individual of early capitalism (Weber) than it is by an emphasis on the individual as a “positive” embodiment of the type (Durkheim) who realizes him or herself occupationally through the maximal performance of stipulated functions. The rhetorical character of the former becomes a necessary afterthought (value-relevance) which underwrites the “empirical reality” of the latter rather than fundamentally disputing it. And the invocation of “system” seems to complete this idea of function in how it is embodied in various sorts of idealized relations between “parts” of an abstract, concatenated

whole. Society as such receives its sociological sanction when the disciplines standing in support of its truth equate what is in fact an historically determined cultural totality with a whole which is abstract relative to both its empirical “individuals” (parts as facts as events) and the reality from which we make such a judgment *sine ira et studio*.

One can thus delineate three basic concerns which have taken shape in the analysis of the relation between the social sciences and Society: first, there is “negative dialectics” at the level of the critique of metaphysics and epistemology; second, the more specific critique of *both* theory and method in the social sciences and allied disciplines; and finally, the attempt to provide a “counter-structure” in the form of an “anti-method” which *begins* by recognizing that social research is first and foremost *a form of social interaction* in its own right. These three concerns do not, as has often been implied, constitute successive and mutually exclusive foci manifesting our “progress” in addressing the fundamental relation between the social sciences and Society. On the contrary, such a claim contradicts what I am doing in this essay, for it falls back on a causilinear conception of development as “progress,” when such a conception is in fact central to the disciplines I am addressing critically (cf. Weber, 1949: 34; Wilson, 1984). Neither critique at the first level nor at the second can be allowed to come to an end because now we have a more “constructive” notion in the form of either “radical reformism” (Habermas) or an anti-method (as I propose below). Indeed, the proposal which I shall make only makes sense if critique in both its general and specific forms becomes a *more significant* intellectual force in Society’s basic institutions than it is at present. The mutually exclusive character of most interventionist strategies relative to thought and thinking, coupled with their tendency to play down or ignore altogether the fact that social science is a form of *social practice*, one whose basic features are being “generalized” to vast populations in the urban centres of the advanced societies, constitutes an essential feature of the problem rather than its solution.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> While Habermas has not explicitly stated that general and specific critique should come to an end in favour of his more programmatic concerns, he has never made the claim I make here—that such activity must continue and even increase for this approach to bear fruit.

The matter of theory in the social sciences needs to be addressed briefly before moving to method and to the proposal. It is precisely because the two are so thoroughly intertwined in all intellectual pursuits that I have spoken of them as two sides of the same coin in the social sciences and allied disciplines. The problem that theory faces in almost any discipline where an instrumental (ends/means) conception of reason as rationality prevails is virtually given in the status necessarily assigned to it as a *means* for producing knowledge which has either immediate or eventual intervention value. Theory's role as the "light infantry" of the social sciences in their commitment to the generation of probabilistic generalizations directed (or potentially of value) to intervention and reform constitutes a highly significant parallel to the role of the social sciences generally in the advanced societies. What the social sciences do to theory only serves to mirror what is done to the social sciences themselves. The instrumental status of theory all too often requires theory to justify its right to exist in these disciplines by not only allowing, but actually assisting in, its structural decomposition into testable/falsifiable hypotheses. As a central vehicle in the effort to accumulate data, theory has little choice but to flatten out its reflexive concerns and commitments and to put itself fully at the disposal of Society. This holds as much for those who defend the rigid distinction between the natural and social sciences as for supporters of the so-called "unified science" position.

As Popper has pointed out, the commitment of the first group to an overall "unity of method" *guarantees* that it will be as hostile to reflection and critique as the second. Indeed, it is Popper who brings the real consequences of arguing for a customized and humanized social science with its own special methods and concerns (e.g., *Verstehen*; interpretation) most clearly to light.<sup>2</sup> He does this by contrasting the different directions and objectives of the natural and social sciences

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<sup>2</sup> Thus Popper's attack on an instrumentalist conception of theory only applies to theorizing in natural science, where the presence of critical rationalism through collective falsifiability renders its concern for truth (rather than success) legitimate (Popper 1958; cf. Wilson, 1981/1983). Elsewhere, Popper (1972: 252ff.) does, however, refer to science's movement as in some sense *duplex*. It moves toward integration of its theories, yet serves specialization and differentiation through its societal impact on "technology" of all types, including social technology. This is precisely Weber's point in "Science as a Vocation" (1946: 134-40, 150-55).

given their reliance upon a generalized unity of method. In the process, he underscores his commitment to the idea that the objective of truth belongs pre-eminently to the natural sciences, while the social sciences are consigned to “success” as their goal. The consequences for the status of theory can be readily seen from the way Popper’s self-correcting doctrine of “critical rationalism” allows the natural sciences to theorize freely, while just its absence requires the social sciences to abjure all “utopian” historicist and holist theoretical constructs. The fact that this constraint goes hand in hand with a direction favouring differentiation and specialization rather than integration for the social sciences underscores my earlier point regarding the duty of these disciplines to “normalize” the societal division of labour while legitimizing it from a secure position inside it (see Chapter 3; Wilson, 1976).

### III. *Anti-method as a counter-structure in social science research*

I am now ready to address the idea and practice of an anti-method as an antidote to some presently existing researcher/subject relationships in the social sciences. That it may have more than an isolated “local” impact and significance over the long-term should be clearly evident from the nature of the proposal. It takes its point of departure, as noted, in the fact that social science research practices constitute a form of social interaction rather than just a repertoire of techniques and methods by which “external” observers carry out their investigative tasks in a detached and neutral fashion. What makes this fact of signal importance is the central (and increasing) role of the social sciences and allied disciplines in legitimizing existing institutions, practices, and methods *of change* in the advanced societies while standing in their midst. This legitimizing function makes these disciplines and activities a force of production whose indispensability would appear to be given in the way they simultaneously “make sense” of this seamless web while helping to *produce* a picture of these societies as orderly and rational systems in need of nothing more than occasional “tinkering.” My use of the word “sedimentation” to describe the impact of these disciplines and activities, *wherever they are carried out*, is addressed to the way they are reformulating traditional and commonsense patterns of behaviour and response in their own image, one which reflects their full-scale commitment to

“normalization” of the societal division of labour in a manner not unlike that suggested by Durkheim (and Popper). As a consequence of this particular normative agenda, sometimes consciously engaged in, other times without such awareness and commitment, social research is forced into the business of classifying and labelling those who are normal on the one hand, and abnormal, pathological, or deviant on the other.

Perhaps some idea of the less than fully human aspects of “normal” social research can be gleaned from recalling Popper’s view of social science as ideally “social technology.” Here, commitment to success through differentiation and specialization leads invariably to an endorsement of what he calls “piecemeal social engineering.” Once “normalization” becomes synonymous with such “tinkering,” the result is highly likely to be a “technological” solution whose processual aspects make a mockery of Popper’s alleged support for the “open society.” In Chapter 3 I argued that such a view of the proper objective and direction of the social sciences, when coupled with his condemnation of reflexive, dialectical, and holistic thinking as “Utopian,” all too often consigns social research to the role of surrogate and handmaiden.<sup>3</sup> Problems are effectively (or quite explicitly) defined by agencies external to those who wish for one reason or another to engage in such “methodical practices.” This might appear to contradict an earlier point about the central legitimizing function of these disciplines, which implies an initiating and directive role rather than a subordinate one. Yet it is precisely through either responding to externally defined problems, or effectively accepting such direction as a consequence of access, funding etc. dependencies, that the social sciences carry out some of their most significant legitimizing activities through the aegis of social research as a form of social interaction and practice (Wilson, 1999). Here what counts is not whether institutions, processes, and structures are left intact

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<sup>3</sup> Instead of supporting the idea and practice of the “unity of method” as Popper does, and thereafter arguing for different, even exclusive, directions and objectives for the natural and social sciences respectively, I instead suggest that truth is indeed a legitimate concern of the social sciences, and that this objective demands that present theoretical approaches in these disciplines not exclude dialectical and reflexive thought because of some spurious “social effects” argument like that promoted by Popper (1957; 1945). There is also, of course, the question of the concern for “success” on the part of natural scientists, particularly in applied work, but elsewhere as well.

or subjected to criticism, but rather *the way* in which criticism is formulated, if it is formulated at all. Further, it is the way that social research as social interaction functions as an idealized version of proper “process” in many contexts. The most significant substantive aspect of the notion of propriety alluded to here requires that responsible research restrict its ambit to a single institution, agency, or activity, thereby ignoring the societal whole from which it derives its real meaning, and go on to recommend largely technological (e.g. tinkering) solutions to problems and difficulties whose source and ambit may be far more general and complex. Only a *holistic* critique could justify such a piecemeal and incremental research procedure, albeit with the modifications I shall suggest.

The problem for the Durkheimian and Popperian view of the social sciences as technologies ideally engaged in tinkering in the interests of normalization is that these efforts are not mere “side effects.” Indeed, this notion presumes the possibility of that neutral and detached pose of observing, recording, and intervening which I have been at pains to address critically here. The fact that such alleged “side effects,” even if initially localized in their ambit, eventually aggregate into “centre effects” disputes the idea of *sine ira et studio* as anything other than rhetoric, objectively speaking. This does not, of course, mean that such a commitment is not something which the social scientist aspires to. Indeed, my point is that it may well be a commitment not only aspired to but *actually realized* by the social scientist. The effective institutionalization and sedimentation of his particular view of the nature and the purposes of collective life explains how detachment and neutrality are thoroughly compatible both with the process referred to above and the “seamless web” that results on the one hand, and with the performance of a legitimizing function whose success is to be discovered in the ever-increasing receptivity of his or her erstwhile “subjects” on the other. This is what I meant earlier when I stated that the social sciences only reveal their auspices in their effort to hide them. It also helps one understand how a piecemeal tinkering effort like that carried out by both theory and method in these disciplines would eventually generate not just incremental “local” reforms of the sort envisaged by numerous administrative scientists, but a new holism in the person of Society as a false totality as well (Wilson, 1985: chapter 8).

Finally, as a result of this outcome, one can see the real consequences of Popperian thinking as a working rhetoric that combines

the empirical and the normative in an ongoing societally sustained frame of reference. Apart from how this shows up the strategic function of the fact-value dichotomy as a central pillar of this rhetoric, we can also see how the intellectual commitment to, or “behaviour” in support of, normalization effectively reverses the scenario. Popper’s fear that utopian theoretical postures of the holistic (totality) and historicist (laws) variety could generate, or give aid and comfort to, a totalitarian political and social reality had encouraged him to favour an incremental approach *in theorizing* whose upshot in the social sciences would (ideally) be differentiation and specialization on the one hand, and a success rather than truth objective on the other. A careful look now reveals that the combination of differentiation and specialization *and* success *means* normalization, including a “normal” division of labour, given Society as the only “available” form of collective life. To argue for successful specialization as Popper does when he makes it *the real objective* of the social sciences as social technologies is to underwrite what is in effect not only a new holism of practice (Society) but what Goldthorpe (1970) has labelled a liberal historicism. In the face of such practical realities, it is the theoretical holists in the person of critical theorists who become the real incrementalists. This support by Popper for Durkheim’s earlier stated “programme” for the social sciences must be considered of more than passing interest. It was Durkheim, after all, who encouraged us to engage in value-neutral practices not for their own sake but rather as an instrument for sorting out those social facts conducive to the new industrial and civil solidarity from those which were inimical to it. Once this had been accomplished on a piece by piece “local” basis (e.g. “occupational organization”), it was incumbent on the social scientist to intervene in support of the former facts and against the latter. Were he incapable of such an intervention, then presumably his “research,” along with parallel developments, would make for a division of labour sufficiently “normal” to allow *someone else* to step into the breach as intervenor and to normalize in his place (Durkheim, 1952; Wilson, 1977: 171–199).

What I have argued thus far supports the idea of a more local and internal approach to communication and change along with Habermas, but does not adopt the view that this should be carried out in the absence of a continuing, even heightened, general and specific critique. Perhaps the different background and intended country(ies) of application explains why for Habermas the programme of

increased “communicative competence” favours support for the emergence of a “sociological” collective (Society), while for me it necessitates using the already existing and all-pervasive reality of this sociological collective as my point of departure for an effort to oppose prevailing norms of rationality. Because meaningful social and political change must be *both* local and incremental and “revolutionary” within the specific framework chosen I have fixed on the social research situation as a form of social interaction which will best combine communication and change. Society is too caught up in the idea of speech as a vehicle, a means, when it must be more than simply a basis for a form of enlightenment which leads to and precedes change. The clear *institutional* split between thought and action ensconced in the societal division of labour, which present efforts (e.g. “normal” social science) only aid and abet, must be overcome, albeit from *within* the existing structure itself. Instead of being simply the prelude, however necessary, to social and political change, communication ought ideally to be synonymous with change given universal intelligibility, and reason as a human capacity and characteristic rather than a societally undistributed possession (e.g. “rationality”).

Emphasis on the research situation, and specific researcher/subject relationships therein, carries the points already made about social science, and theory in social science, to something of a logical endpoint. The idea that this situation is merely a neutral means by which detached sociological observers gather and record information preparatory to intervention is all-too-typical of the view of speech and language as a vehicle. The tendency to emphasize the “uses” to which this information is put, while totally ignoring the interaction situation in which it is gathered, all too readily exhibits the present, largely liberal, misunderstanding of technology as a mere means which we can direct to good or ill purposes depending on our “values.” It is precisely the repudiation of a dialectical, in favour of a causilinear, conception of social interaction and change which is largely responsible for this misunderstanding. Becker, following Mills, has shown how this attitude created a scandal even in orthodox social research circles with the emergence of a subordinate area called “methodology,” inhabited by a substantial percentage of individuals committed to the idea that available methods should define the problem rather than the problem defining the methods (Becker, 1970; Mills, 1959). Because the two “sides” of this research situation are picked out of, indeed *produced in advance by*, the existing societal divi-



sion of labour, any proposal both ought to begin here and be radical in its effect if it does.

The dilemma of “distorted communication” which Habermas quite properly addresses as a macro-structural problem of Society as a particular historical and cultural totality is therefore given in the idea of social structure itself (Habermas, 1979). Even a meritocratic social structure premised on legal-rational authority only reveals how collectively “subjective” its objectivity usually is when it “works.” What makes a particular collective a social structure, I would argue, is the fact that it *actually produces* the communicative disparities to which Habermas addresses his critique and suggested reconstruction. The combination of theory and method in the social sciences, which simultaneously *reflects and produces* the communicative disparities alluded to, has been “generalized” in the form of “normal” problem-solving procedures and objectives throughout the central institutions of advanced industrial societies.

“Distortion” is thus endemic to this activity as a whole and in its specific aspects, and is not merely an upshot of the uses to which the resulting “findings” are put, whether by social scientists themselves or by others. The very idea that at this stage of development in the advanced societies we could justify treating social science research more as something being applied from the “outside” than as a reflection of Society as it takes shape in social structure and the societal division of labour only underscores the present difficulty given in disciplined observation and causilinear forms of thought and reasoning (Wilson, 1991). At the same time, the dialectical alternative I pose as a necessary development both in theory (holism and historicism) and in practice (anti-method) just as totally abjures the sort of social determinism found in the work of some of Durkheim’s interpreters (though not Durkheim himself). It is because I refuse to see the present social structure and social division of labour as closed to the possibility of real change that I view such a posture as no less problematic than one committed to value neutrality and intervention from the “outside” by the disciplined observer.

#### IV. *Toward a radicalization of the “postulate of adequacy”*

The heart of the “anti-method” with radical possibilities that I support as an antidote to present research procedures and practices must

begin with (and in) the following suggestion: *radicalize the postulate of adequacy from phenomenological philosophy and social theory*. Alfred Schutz originally formulated this postulate in his attempt to create a phenomenological social theory which would counteract straightforward social science positivism by providing a more *empirically* correct description of social reality. According to Schutz:

Each term used in a scientific system referring to human action must be so constructed that a human act performed in the life-world by an individual actor in the way indicated by the typical construction would be reasonable and understandable for the actor himself, as well as for his fellow man (Schutz, 1964: 85).

My proposal is addressed to the urgent need to politicize this postulate by using such a requirement not simply to show the limits of a scientific epistemology in the social sciences. Radicalization also means turning the social research situation into a “counter-structure” which will effectively subvert the hierarchical and asymmetrical character of the professional/lay distinction as it works itself out in the procedures and practices of normal social science. As a version in microcosm of significant aspects of both structure and division of labour in the advanced societies, this “anti-method” underscores the way in which the professional/lay distinction functions as *a form of domination*, albeit “rational” domination. Indeed, this distinction is a cornerstone of any legal-rational or meritocratic order (Wilson, 1977: 85). Its survival into the present points to the role of modern science and technology as bases for legitimizing professional practices formerly dependent on other sources of knowledge and belief.

Radicalizing the postulate of adequacy must begin by underscoring the subject’s rights as a real subject and the researcher’s obligations. For example, it would require subjects to understand not only what they were being asked to respond to (presumably part of normal sociological practice), but the “knowledge claims” which the researcher formulated as a consequence of observing, interviewing, or surveying them. Any description or explanation of the subjects’ behaviour not comprehensible to them must be made comprehensible to them in such a way that they can articulate it intelligently from within their own class code (Bernstein, 1962; 1960; Muller, 1970; cf. Chapter 7). A permissible alternative to this might be to allow them to learn the specific sociological code, or the less compact class code, of the sociologists themselves, but this alternative

could only be attempted with the consent and support of the subjects to the research. A second requirement proceeds out of satisfaction of the first, and demands that, once understood and in whatever code, this description or explanation must be *acceptable* to the subjects as an interpretation of what they are doing, thinking, or believing. If it is not, then a continuation of the dialogue already undertaken in the first requirement must take place. What looks like a mere “means” to some sociological, political, or institutional end which allegedly justifies a detached attitude toward its subjects thus becomes the central event of the research act itself. Dialogue has to take place at at least one stage, and the promise of real process with it, especially given what conditions are stipulated when agreement cannot be reached.

My reference to continuation above would not, it is hoped, function as a mere “cooling-out” technique or procedure perfected by investigators and “applied” to the research subjects. To this end, the scales would have to be balanced by giving subjects the right not only to resist descriptions or explanations of them produced by social scientists, but to write a counter-description or explanation of their own wherever they found it impossible to accept the sociological rendition. This “counter-structure” would have to be published alongside the professional version, and accorded the same status and recognition in every other way. These suggestions, I believe, should become a formal requirement of social, behavioural, and administrative research, and ideally should be enshrined in professional codes of ethics. The usual problem of enforcement here would hopefully be less problematic because of the awareness of subjects that such formal requirements existed. The ironic upshot is that human subjects might as a result receive treatment at least equal to that received by some non-human research subjects. More significantly, it would overcome the means/end split as it has been institutionalized by professional social science. As noted, to a large extent this is the result of professional invocation of a scientific, or rather a scientific, ethos for legitimating their esoteric and more activist concerns and interests.

What enables social scientists to glide over the research situation enroute to “getting the facts” is precisely the caretaking, and often even hostile, attitude which the public permits the professional to exercise when “in role.” This is echoed in Paolo Freire’s critique of the “banking” conception of knowledge, where the public views (and is encouraged to view) the professional (or scientist) in almost any

field of endeavour as a repository of “objective” knowledge. As noted, this follows rather understandably from the socialization processes of a meritocratic, or meritocratizing, social order, with its commitment to legal-rational authority exercised *sine ira et studio* by its central institutions. Professionalism and scientism also help explain why subjects so readily become “means” in the production of information which may even be intended to “help” them. Though the statement which follows by Freire is addressed to the political consequences of the literacy requirement for “illiterate” Brazilian peasants, it all too readily applies to the often problematic relationship between social science researchers and their “subjects” in the advanced societies as well.

The central problem is this: how can the oppressed, as undivided authentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation? Only as they discover themselves to be “hosts” of the oppressor can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy. As long as they live in the duality in which *to be is to be like* and *to be like is to be like the oppressor*, this contribution is impossible. The pedagogy of the oppressed is an instrument for their critical discovery that both they and their oppressors are manifestations of dehumanization (Freire, 1971; cf. 1973).

While oppression may admittedly be too strong a term to employ in describing professional/lay relationships in social science research in the advanced societies, Freire nevertheless makes several important points. First, he addresses the fact that most people identify with the overdog, whose status they wish to occupy, rather than the underdog. Second, they do this by internalizing as many values, attitudes, habits, and forms of behaviour as they can enroute to such identification. Third, any change in the prevailing relations of domination must go beyond “helping” individuals where this implies a professional (and bureaucratic) caretaking function performed on mute, passive objects. Fourth, the need for change illustrates nicely how ludicrous it is to treat “real world” *actors* as “respondents” whose main task is to confirm or disconfirm sociological hypotheses about them (Blumer, 1969).

What emerges from the critique of all such professional/lay distinctions is not that we do not need professionals and specialized competence *per se*. It rather underscores how derived and subsidiary such modes of knowledge and knowing are when compared to reason as a common resource shared by all people by dint of their being human. Specific modes of secondary socialization, followed up

by formal certification, depend for their meaning and significance on a foundational human capacity to think and reason which is reflected to some extent in the desire to express ourselves through speech and language. This commonsense or substantive reason is prior in every conceivable way to professional, scientific, and intellectual competencies because it alone is a substructural feature shared (and needed) by all participants in and to the human condition (O'Neill, 1977). As I argued in Chapter 8, however, this is not an argument in support of a static and frozen "rationality," but rather points to a grounding which functions as a continuing human *resource* that all individuals employ in order to make sense of their ongoing daily lives. The fact that "daily life" itself appertains to a *dynamic* situation of absorption of new modes of knowledge and action, and adjustment to disruptions in "normal" social relations, requires us to rethink our understanding of this basic capacity in the same way we have had to rethink our attitudes toward custom, convention, and tradition (Wilson, 1984). My position on this matter simply reflects the fact that such absorption and adjustment does take place, and in so doing reveals not the absence of an active capacity in the form of a grounding or resource but rather the fact that in order for things to change and be accommodated to, there must be some human capacity that stays the same even as it makes such accommodation possible.

The other side of the distinction whose prototype is discussed by Freire can readily be discovered in the willing acquiescence of unorganized and organized publics alike to the objective authority which is seen to go hand in hand with institutional training and certification. Ideally, this acquiescence *should* have become problematic for social scientists in the advanced societies, but did not. Their own adjustment and accommodation necessitated their acceptance of meritocracy and a legal-rational authority structure committed to normalization through tinkering and reform (Crick, 1959; Mills, 1959; Wilson, 1985: chapters 3–5). Such a commitment to the Durkheimian and Popperian agenda could not help but guarantee an important function for the social sciences, first in the cultural superstructure and subsequently in the substructure as both legitimator and force of production. The extent of such unthinking public acquiescence in professional and scientific demands and requirements has been all too poignantly chronicled by Stanley Milgram. Even when the complaints of his detractors have been fully taken account of, the fact remains that a

large majority of those used in Milgram's now well-known "obedience to authority" experiments did justify the imposition of what they believed to be painful, even incapacitating, shocks by pointing to the expert authority of individuals whom the "subject" believed were either natural or social scientists (Milgram, 1974; 1965; cf. Wenglinisky, 1975). Garfinkel, on the other hand, radicalizes phenomenology but nevertheless refuses to allow it to fully escape the shackles of a (counter-) theory of knowledge when he "turns the tables" on social scientists by making them the real subjects of "research" rather than their erstwhile respondents. His subject matter is the absurdity of professional and scientific conceit given the fact that the data of social science must comprehend not only the actor's action but his knowledge of the world (Garfinkel, 1956; 1967). What gives the lie to so much social science research, particularly the work of those allegedly committed to interpretative sociology like symbolic interactionism, is the way it persistently refuses to mobilize the "actor" as a real subject through some sort of "anti-method" functioning as a counter-structure subverting established professional practices in the "real" world.<sup>4</sup>

Instead of being a detached and neutral study of the way practitioners or "deviants" think, act, and behave, an emancipatory social science would mobilize the research situation as a central element of the Society it is determined to investigate and "know," rather than treat it as a mere means to eventual intervention. It would become a central manifestation of an in-process critique which would overcome the spatio-temporal distinction between thought, communication, and change ordained by causilinear reasoning and the disciplined observer. Perhaps most significantly, it would speak to the limits of meritocracy and legal-rationality, as they take institutional shape in professionalism and scientism, in the name of commonsense capacities as a human resource which is actually employed, as well as remembered, when addressing the nature of professional and scientific knowledge. What makes such a proposal clearly and unambiguously subversive is precisely the way its operation undercuts the idea that the manifest function of social research is (or should be)

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<sup>4</sup> What is relevant to this proposal is that Milgram did not inform *his own research subjects* in the experiment, while Garfinkel followed Schutz in refusing to *politicize* the postulate of adequacy.

self-justifying in the form of the accumulation of expert and “objective” knowledge. In so doing it points to what only appears to be a preliminary requirement, but in fact constitutes its latent function—communicative equality and reciprocity through the interaction of researchers and subjects. This latter function could become a key element in any effort at societal reconstruction *per se*, if only because the research situation already constitutes the basis for new processes and practices aimed at generating expert knowledge through communication. In effect, real process would annihilate the distinction between communication and change altogether in so far as reciprocity would be effectively guaranteed by the formal requirements and stipulations I have suggested.

Such an effort to overcome the sort of distorted communication virtually endemic to the professional/lay distinction as it takes shape in social research operations clearly seeks to update Durkheim’s now tame demand for a professional “moral code” among sociologists (Durkheim, 1952: 407). Whereas Durkheim saw salvation in the very existence of social scientists committed to normalization through incremental intervention and reform, I find the stated objective of “organic” (industrial and civil) solidarity more of a problem for collective life in the advanced societies than it is a “solution.” By refusing to accept the deification of *Society* as a synonym for collective life in the way Durkheim did, I unavoidably take issue with the entire normalization project he authorized because its origin really is its goal (Society). That this goal *begins* in the commitment to the objective authority of specialists and professionals in the societal division of labour highlights how intervention and reform can function as a professional, scientific, and bureaucratic *control* on change (Wilson, 1985: chapters 4–5; 1977; and Chapter 7 above). The key to the success of this entire enterprise is the way a spatio-temporal bias in favour of division of labour serves to justify both the professional/lay distinction and the causilinear view which distends communication from change and sustains meritocracy as a form of rational domination characterized by “hidden hierarchies.” The formal requirements which I stipulate for carrying out social research in the advanced societies would bring many presumptions about superiority and subordination out into the open, if only because social researchers will really have to learn what they might later claim to know “objectively” at first hand. How could social researchers possibly stand in support of undistorted (or less distorted) communication when they

rely on deference to professional and scientific trappings in order to get so much of their "normal" work done?

*V. Some problems and possibilities in implementing the proposal*

I must now turn to the possibilities for implementing this proposal and the problems which will invariably be associated with such an effort. In effect I have to address the limits of a causilinear culture committed to disciplined observation, and to the idea that complexity, differentiation, and specialization are indicators of "progress" rather than problems for those who must live collective life in the advanced societies. As a corollary to this, I must formulate a specific critique of theory and method in the social sciences and at the same time endeavour to go beyond both specific and general critiques while supporting and encouraging such intellectual practices as indispensable, though admittedly not sufficient on their own. This is necessitated in large part by the fact that the social sciences, taking their lead from Society and some of its (other) key "rational" institutions, also honour complexity, differentiation, and specialization, as well as a "success" objective, as central indicators of progress. The problem of implementation is much more a "political" problem than a technical one, however, because the objective of the proposed anti-method is to overcome precisely the sort of thinking which distends thought from practice in support of intervention by the disciplined observer. In other words, there appears to be a clear vested interest in continuing the present distorted communication which is so persistent a feature of the social research situation. This situation, after all, is plucked out of the ongoing structure and division of labour of a meritocratizing (or meritocratic) social order, and provides a replication in microcosm of this order in several significant respects. In addition, of course, it legitimizes this order while standing in its midst, and doing "what it alone can do" (cf. Weber, 1947: 103-04, 106).

Taken as it stands, adherence to the postulate of adequacy, and its consequent radicalization in the ways suggested, would doubtless put the brakes on much of what passes for sociological research at the present time. Again however, one is forced to seriously ask how the social research situation could almost totally escape the attention of social scientists, even given what I have already said about pro-



fessionalism and scientism in the advanced societies. My earlier point about the actor's knowledge of the world being as much a datum for the social scientist as his actions is nicely underscored by one of Schutz's corollaries to the postulate of adequacy: "What makes it possible for a social science to refer at all to events in the life-world is the fact that the interpretation of any human act by the social scientist might be the same as that by the actor or by his partner" (Schutz, 1964: 85–86). What could better draw attention to the ultimate significance of commonsense capacities for thinking, speaking, and reasoning relative to institutional modes of training and certification than this? I would argue that the basic principles of inquiry and research on which the methodical practices of the social sciences are presently premised cannot help but violate the cardinal tenet of openness and reciprocity on which the process-centred claims to superiority of the advanced societies depend. This is because central to these principles is a definition of reason which views it as a relatively undistributed possession of individuals whose major claim to reasonableness rests on institutional training and certification. The apparent paradox that something can be both a possession of the individual and the result of secondary socialization is resolved when the "positive" character of individuation in the advanced societies is remembered.

In effect, Durkheim resolves the paradox posed for individualism by his commitment to a "normalization" process which would effectively preserve individualism by reformulating it. Weber's dilemma is no longer really problematic, premised as it was on the tension between "negative" (possessive) individualism in the person of principled *and* goal-rational conduct, and the reality of a rationalization process which would only allow such individuation to survive if it turned its back on principle and acceded to the organizational imperative as it takes shape in "rational" institutions like bureaucracy, the rule of law, the corporation, managerialism, and the societal division of labour itself. My point here addresses the thoroughly uncritical function of a reaffirmation of Durkheim's original enthusiasm for a "moral code" which would direct social scientists to occupational organization and stand in near-total opposition to "dilettantism" (Durkheim, 1952: 40–44, 403–07; Wilson, 1977: 181–89). Given the inadequacies of a Popperian approach which endorses "piecemeal tinkering" and reformism, the social sciences should become radicalizing disciplines committed to *overcoming* the split between thought and

action so thoroughly institutionalized in its own “normal practices” as a replication of a social order committed to “rational domination.” Thus, the problem I have indicated with implementing any effort to radicalize the postulate of adequacy is given in the fact that a preliminary requirement of “truth” in social science and social theory is that such truth must make sense to the actor or partner in dialogue, as well as to the social scientist.

The idea of a programmatic option for the social sciences in the person of an anti-method therefore requires us to *update* Durkheim’s original commitment, made at the turn of the last century, rather than to turn away from it. Since even Marx too readily distended the work of analyzing the world from that of changing it (at least for our purposes here), my concern is that the proposed anti-method operate as a real “counter-structure” promoting the latent function of social research *as well as* (not instead of) its manifest functions. The key to any attempted merger of analysis and change begins by recognizing that our causilinear commitment to intervention by the allegedly value-neutral disciplined observer *actually serves* normalization as Durkheim understood it, and is neither the only, nor necessarily the best, form that social change should take. A reformist posture is only aided and abetted by such a theory of change, one which argues that the options are *either* microstructural intervention and incrementalism, *or* utopian holistic and historicist revolutionary outbursts which lay waste to entire social structures. This point brings me back to the claims made at the very beginning of this essay, where I argued against the idea that the “available” options really were either piecemeal reform or total revolution. Today we need much more from social scientists, given their central role, than such a false split between thought and action, ensconced in traditional theory and empirical method, can possibly provide.<sup>5</sup>

If I believed that every social scientist as *a conscious rational subject* was committed to Society, I would be even less hopeful of the possibility of implementation than I am as things stand at present. Because I believe that progressive humanization is more important

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<sup>5</sup> Popper thus aids and abets the polarization of these two alternatives in his effort to safeguard the stability of Western industrial societies. Habermas’ discussion of the need for “radical reformism” (1971: 48–49) makes this same point. In view of the institutionalized nature of the social sciences in North America, I argue in favour of an anti-method rather than “communicative competence.”

relative to professionalism and careerism for many social, behavioural and administrative scientists, I make this proposal and seek in what follows to address what would appear to be the key problems in implementing it. Indeed, this belief allows me to make my proposal in the face of the reality of collective life in the advanced societies, where a generalized sociological rationality threatens reflexivity with annihilation while it seeks to reconstitute practice in its own image. The presence of social researchers supportive of my "definition of the situation," and willing to take my proposal seriously is, of course, absolutely indispensable. This point is only underscored by the uncritical deference which unorganized publics give to the meritocratic ideal as it expresses itself in and through professional and scientific status. The idea that we can realize an alternative to the two options presented above makes it necessary to treat critically the willingness of Society to express itself in an "either-or" fashion: either tinkering or revolution! This is a real dilemma if we consider the parallel process over the past forty years whereby individual "citizens" have been encouraged to leave "politics" to a small elite in the interests of "stability." The upshot of such one-dimensional thinking, increasingly accepted by atomized individuals, could well be concatenated passive support for activities designed to undermine the social fabric in a violent and destructive way (Almond and Verba, 1963; Crick, 1960; Wilson, 1987; see Chapter 7 above). My anti-method aims at achieving clear revolutionary changes without violence by building change into the ongoing process of social research itself, as well as those increasingly important forms of social interaction modelled on social research in the advanced societies.

Looking at specific problems of implementation, I have drawn up the following list, certainly not exhaustive, but one which hopefully indicates some of the most important difficulties.

1. Researched subjects might be *indifferent* to what was said about them, or what generalizations were reached on the basis of information about them. This might lead them to give their consent *pro forma* or waive it without thinking.
2. Researched subjects might, on the other hand, be *hostile* to the social research enterprise and give their consent only to sabotage these efforts.
3. Researched subjects may be so illiterate, ignorant, or stupid about the nature and purposes of social research that it is hard enough

- to get them to “behave” as passive objects, forget treating them as equal members of an interaction situation.
4. Social research is so heavily dependent upon funding, access, institutional support, etc., from the dominant “rational” institutions already cited that the possibility of an anti-method of the sort I suggest must be counted minimal, even where there are social researchers supportive of it.
  5. In line with 2, researched subjects might be put in too powerful a position to influence social research or stop it from happening altogether.
  6. Not unrelated to 1 and 3, researched subjects might as a consequence of their failure to be informed about their “rights” and responsibilities as real subjects, feel compelled to participate in social research even if it were contrary to their perceived interests.

In all cases where we are dealing with difficulties arising out of the imbalance between the interests of social researchers and the overall “competence” of their erstwhile subjects, only the combination of a formalized (and updated) “moral code” for social scientists, and an awareness derived from the mass media, particularly broadcasting, can compensate for the fact that many social scientists, perhaps an overwhelming majority, might themselves be hostile to the proposal. Even here, however, I would depend on those social researchers who supported the objectives and proposed “counter-structure” of this anti-method to encourage a more open attitude toward it.

Reference to the possible, even likely, *apathy* of subjects would also depend on support from active social researchers. After all, it is precisely the acquiescence of these individuals in a *societal* definition of “citizenship” in its competition with consumer and audience roles which goes so far in explaining such apathy (Thomas, 1960; Wilson, 1985). One could even argue that for many of these individuals all that would be needed would be the initiative of supportive social researchers. Informing them of their “rights” and responsibilities would do much more than simply “break the ice,” since the upshot of this effort might well be all that would be needed to inspire their full and active participation in social research as real subjects. As for the third set of difficulties connected with the *hostility* of individual subjects and the institutions they allow to represent them, part of the blame for this situation can readily be found in the way industry and business initially bought, paid for, and used this research,

particularly in the early decades of the last century, but also in various areas of the advanced societies even today (Baritz, 1960; Marcuse, 1964: 108–114; Wilson, 1973). While it would be most unfortunate if social researchers supportive of my proposal were denied access by members of a potential group of subjects for any reason, this is definitely the lesser evil in my opinion. The researchers' efforts, as I see them, must be clearly committed to bringing the biographies of their individual respondents "together" in their studies as much as the logic and purposes of social research will permit.

Though survey and panel techniques seem most imperilled by my proposal, it must be remembered that here, as well as in the case of interviewing, research is generally carried out on either an individual, small group, or site by site basis. Too long have we tolerated as the ideal research situation one which approaches the top-down asymmetry of either dependent factory (and other) employees, as in the human relations movement, or dependent marginals and deviants receiving social assistance or variously suffering under incarceration or constraint (Haug and Sussman, 1969). An example of what I have in mind in this proposal would be the possible benefit over time which might accrue to social researchers who took their task seriously in the eyes of previously hostile or indifferent individuals and publics. Without unqualifiedly dismissing participant observation *per se*, it must be clear from this proposal that the idea of carrying out such research without informing the relevant population universe being researched in advance would violate its commitment to openness, no matter what the researchers' reasons might be. Indeed, anything which compromised the central role of the research situation as an open-ended process in its own right would have to be anathema to this proposal, *no matter which "side" of the dialogue it emanated from*. The all-pervasive issue of funding, access, and institutional support dependencies already noted would be no less responsible to the guiding idea of process as its own justification, and would therefore clearly require social researchers committed to the nature and objectives of a radicalized postulate of adequacy.

A final difficulty must be mentioned, even though it would clearly water down the impact of the proposal, whether it was taken advantage of or not. Individuals and groups must be allowed the opportunity to *wave* the conditions set forth in this proposal if they desire to participate asymmetrically as research subjects in ways of which our proposal is on the whole critical. Even if this might eventually

result in a microcosmic version of the “civic culture” phenomenon already alluded to, where the supreme right *in practice* appears to be the right *not* to vote and participate in political life, a true commitment to openness demands that we acknowledge such an “opting out” procedure and make sure that individuals are aware that it exists. Indeed I would argue that it is in this particular decision that free choice as a necessary prerequisite to reciprocity and researcher/subject equality must begin. In other words, we must not take advantage of any of the already-existing asymmetries and inequalities in our zeal to repair them in and through our proposal. Radicalizing the postulate of adequacy by applying its imperative demands to social research operations would simultaneously begin with reality as the actual structure of certain advanced societies, and with the reality of this actual structure as dehumanizing because predicated on repressive and distorted communication. The denial of the priority of substantive or commonsense capacities for thinking, speaking, and reasoning found in the ongoing procedures and practices of Society’s dominant institutions has motivated me to attempt to revive the sociological imagination through this critique of and alternative to normal “methodical practices” in the social sciences and related disciplines. The idea that reason could be comprehended as a relatively undistributed individual possession of societal members makes me feel the need to turn the social research situation to the task of disproving this fact, ideally in the hope that such a dialogical approach might thereafter become an important fact of life in Society’s dominant institutions as well.

This proposal is clearly marked by my commitment to merge revolutionary with piecemeal efforts by giving scope to the latent functions of social research as well as the manifest ones. I want to begin “locally,” taking the established structure of the advanced societies as a working given, while encouraging both general and specific critique even though I “understand” that it is precisely the real relation between the social sciences and Society which necessitates “normal” social research and compels us to acknowledge its central role. As a part of the established structure of the advanced societies, it too must be taken as a working given. At the same time, refusal to consider this proposal by social researchers suggests a fear of “politicization” which unavoidably stands in opposition to the established values and goals cited. Indeed, every reason for turning away from this proposal would be predicated to some extent on the very

claims to exclusivity which meritocracy employs to make a mockery of openness, recognition, and reciprocity. This would have to be the ultimate critique of the social philosophy of Karl Popper, with its commitment to and defense of the so-called "open society." Refusal to take this proposal seriously only exposes the hollowness and hypocrisy of the alleged concern for improved practice on the part of social scientists in the advanced societies. Such demurrals would allow "institutional complexity" to front for vested interests, thereby becoming a permanent barrier to new beginnings like the one suggested here, and would aid and abet the problematic trends already mentioned.

Any conclusion to such an analysis and proposal needs to reaffirm the fact that here we have the possibility of a significant new beginning in the attempt to seriously confront our shibboleths regarding dialogue, reciprocity, rationality, and openness as ideals. If we are serious as social scientists about what we claim we care about on the matters under consideration here, then the idea that these disciplines can continue in their professional and scientific postures as handmaidens of established institutions and authorities must be brought into question. After all, what is the point of accumulating such knowledge at all if its accumulation is seen to be a function of attitudes and orientations which deny or render nugatory the very goals allegedly valued by those who engage in the effort?

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## CHAPTER TEN

### TIME, SPACE AND VALUE: RECOVERING THE PUBLIC SPHERE

In this chapter, I intend to develop the following points:

1. The dichotomies between man and nature, mind and body, subject and object, ends and means, values and facts, policy and administration, and formulation and implementation are central features of our social, economic and political life.
2. These dichotomies consistently favour exchange values over use values in their preference for separateness, distinction, individuation, transactions and disciplined observation as a mode of knowing (allegedly) superior to both theory and practice.
3. This preference has direct implications for relations between time and space, thus temporal and spatial values, because exchange values tend to privilege time over space while use values tend to privilege space over time.
4. Western development, and increasingly that of the world as a whole, has been characterized by a movement away from space over time, use over exchange values, toward time over space, exchange over use values, with shorter and shorter periods of relative parity in the transition from one to the other.
5. Included in this development has been a bias toward *social place*, with its emphasis on the problem of organization, control, and governance, and against *political space* as both the defining characteristic of public life, and the precondition for speech as a deed and as the basis of active citizenship.
6. One consequence of this preference for time over space is the atomization of space(s) into place(s), a development clearly biased toward time over space and exchange value over use value.
7. Space must therefore be restored to at least parity with time, use values with exchange values, but this can only happen if the dichotomies cited are constructively and critically engaged from the bottom up, as it were, in ascending rather than descending order.

8. This will necessitate responsible politicization through the exercise of active citizenship addressed more and more to non-electoral modes of representation, and in particular to bureaucratic representation of public and social interests, with its emphasis on implementation rather than solely or mainly on formulation processes and settings.
9. Only by beginning in a constructive *practical* critique of the dichotomy between formulation and implementation can we begin to reverse present trends and move toward a greater parity between space and time, use values and exchange values, while at the same time restoring and improving democracy by dynamizing it.

### *I. An analytical framework*

While the real-life distinction between those who make general policies and those who carry them out has likely always been with us, in what follows I want to address the formal process whereby this distinction has been sedimented in organized structures, particularly modern social, economic and political institutions. It is in the effort to bring to disciplined consciousness the central role of temporal and spatial assumptions that we are able to appreciate the place of the formulation/implementation dichotomy in a larger scheme of specifically modernist assumptions (Adam, 1990; Kern, 1983; Lowe, 1982).

I am referring to a set of operative dichotomies and distinctions so central to the modern Western project that one can scarcely understand this project without being aware of them. The most fundamental dichotomy from which all the others derive is the distinction between human beings and nature, the so-called man-nature dichotomy that lies at the root of the philosophy and practice of laboratory and experimental natural science. A series of distinctions derived from this dichotomy completes the schema and serves to underscore how elemental to our sense-making capacity and our assumptions about reality the resulting structure of thinking really is (Horkheimer, 1974; Glacken, 1970, 1967; Marcuse, 1964).

The most prominent of these derived distinctions for the purposes of this study would be the mind-body, subject-object, ends-means, value-fact, policy-administration and formulation-implementation dichotomies. This descending series, conceptually speaking, functions not only as a structure of thinking central to our form of life, but

as the basis of a hierarchy of language games that continually reproduces it (Wilson, 1984; Wittgenstein, 1958). It would not be too much to argue that in the aggregate these distinctions serve to define the contours of our reality as a general culture in Durkheim's sense of the term, albeit one that resists this label in favour of applying it to virtually everyone else (Durkheim, 1952). While this tendency to dichotomize may be found elsewhere in the human community, and may indeed even be "natural" for us as a species, my main concern here is with the consequences of this specific set and structure of distinctions for the way we conceive of time and space (Adam, 1990; 1995; Luhmann, 1995; Chapter 5 above; Wilson, 1989b; Wilson, 1992).

There is an important difference between addressing reality using one or another dichotomy or series of dichotomies—a form of abstract reasoning—and assuming it or them to be synonymous with reality. This latter tendency, in whatever it consists, does not make thinking impossible but it certainly straitjackets it in tighter conceptual confines than is often either necessary or desirable. In effect, short-circuiting the full procedure of thinking by freezing it in process would seem to be essential to socialization in our culture in both its good and bad aspects (Adorno, 1973, 1969; Frankfurt Institute, 1972). In addition, it gives aid and comfort to those who would seek to proscribe reflection and denigrate "mere" practice, while extolling the superiority of disciplined observation over both (Wilson, 1977). Figures 2 and 3 *address, rather than describe*, these matters in the context of the relationship between time and space over four discrete, yet overlapping and cumulative, periods of human history.

The context within which this unfolding is set is Marx's discussion of the gradual alienation of exchange value from use value, a process that reaches a crescendo with the emergence and development of the capitalist mode of production (Marx, 1961 [1867–1883]; Meikle, 1985; see Chapter 5 above). In what follows, I attempt to go beyond Weber's concern with the economic and cultural implications of Franklin's maxim that "Time is money" by examining Marx's observation that the basic tendency of capital is toward "the annihilation of space by time" (Marx, 1973 [1857/58]: 524, 538–40; Weber, 1958 [1904–05/1920]: 48, 50–52). The taxonomy of time follows in general the scheme employed by Rifkin (1987) and others, but departs from it in several ways besides its anchorage in Marx's analysis of value. Most significantly, it is paralleled by a taxonomy

of space that also features four stages of human development. Together they are intended to underscore the joint impact of alterations in temporal and spatial perception on human activities and values (Adam, 1990; Borst, 1994; Casey, 1997; DeGrazia, 1962; Lash and Urry, 1994; Lefebvre, 1991; LeGoff, 1980; Poole, 1969).

A major reason why the four stages of time are depicted on the exchange side of the diagram and the four stages of space on the use side is that changes in perceptions of time and its control are even more central to the success of capitalism than changes in perceptions and control of space (Gould, 1978). Nothing better captures the significance of this latter link than the phenomenon of capital-labour substitution. Only by engaging in a flight of fancy can one argue that the resulting efficiency generates more leisure, or even time off from work (DeGrazia, 1962) for anyone, except those at the very pinnacle of the process, and maybe not even them (Mannheim, 1951, 1947, 1940). Nowadays what this process of substitution really means is that any jobholder allegedly being assisted by new technology, whether on the line or in the office, now must meet what is often a radically revised set of demands. He or she is now expected to do more work (often at other jobs as well) and get more done, that is, work at a faster rate, than was the case prior to the substitution, assuming that the job still exists at all (Schor, 1991).

This serves to highlight a fundamental difference between exchange value and use value. Only under a regime in which use value reigned supreme could one realistically expect greater efficiency to lead to more leisure and be compatible with time off from work (DeGrazia, 1962). In its place we have the abject terror invoked by Rifkin in a recent study, based on the claim that work is on the verge of coming to an end, when in any "rational" scheme of things this should be cause for extended celebration (Rifkin, 1995). The fact that it is not should direct our attention neither to the evils of technology nor to the vagaries and weaknesses of individual human agency, however. We should instead be addressing ourselves to problems of technological advance emerging from capital-labour substitution *under a capitalist mode of appropriation, production, and distribution*, and to how this distorts and perverts human needs because of the priority it attributes to exchange value (Braverman, 1974; Schor, 1998, 1991).

The "shadow work" performed mainly by women is another case in point which puts the inferior status of labour that produces use rather than exchange values in the boldest possible relief, as I argue

Figure 2: Time, Space and Value 1

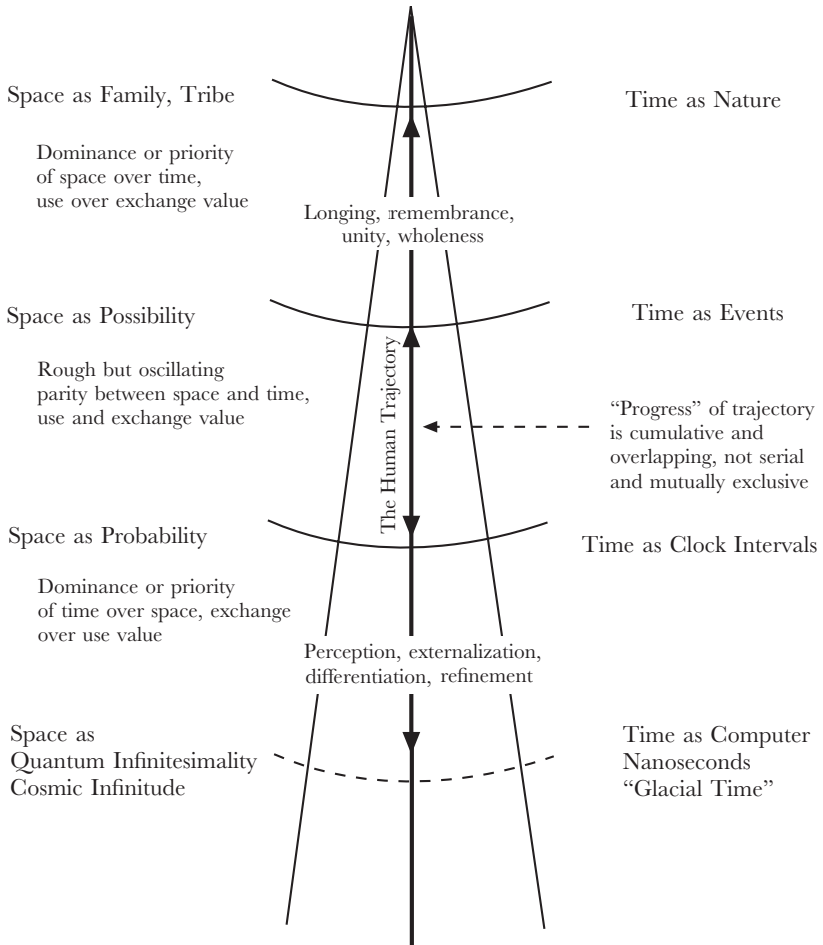
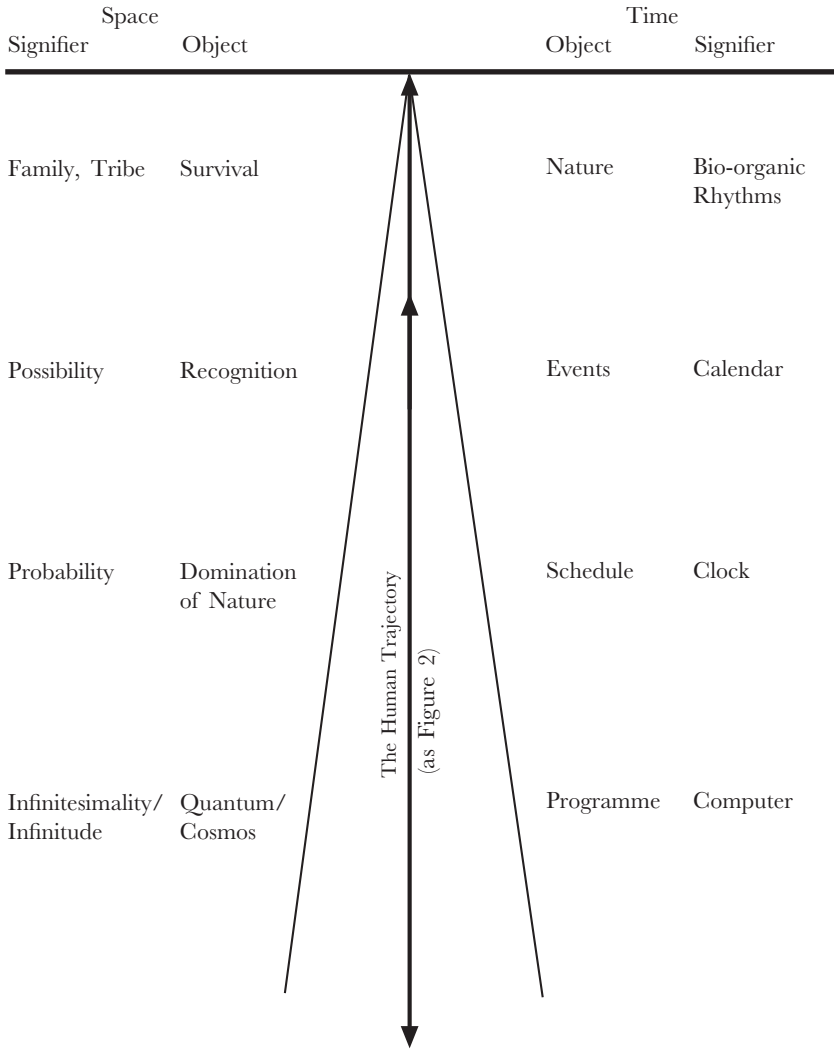


Figure 3: Time, Space and Value 2





in Chapter 5 and elsewhere (Wilson, 1989b; Wilson, 1992). Indeed, persuasive arguments have been advanced which underscore capitalism's abject dependence on this form of unpaid labour no less than on the surplus value created and sustained by the dominance of the commodity form in our culture (Illich, 1982, 1981). Together, these twin developments highlight the fate of use values in a social, economic, and political system which equates them with either "down time" or no time, therefore having no real value because of their (alleged) residual role as the beneficiary rather the creator of exchange values (Wilson, 1989b).

In addition, the diagrams depict an increasing gap between these two forms of perception and habitation over the periods indicated. This gap points not only to the stress that this disjunction between time and space creates for the large majority of people wherever it holds sway (Hughes, 1989), but also to the need for a fundamental reconciliation between them (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). For such a reconciliation to be realized, space would at last begin to be restored to a rough parity with time, use value with exchange value (Lash and Urry, 1994; Massey, 1994). Capital's control of both production and innovation and the resulting subordination of these processes to exchange values located in "the economy"—whether local, regional, national or global—still enables it to define the spatial markers for time and the temporal markers for space in our general culture, almost without opposition (Lefebvre, 1991; Urry, 1981; Volk, 1995).

The reason for equating space more concertedly with use value bears on the important role of human interaction, either directly or through technological mediation, in addressing human needs. Privileging spatial concerns over temporal ones, particularly given the present imbalance, could only serve to assist efforts to restore use value to the central role we need it to have if policy implementation is to be democratized in a number of human activities besides politics and administration (Massey, 1984). This is particularly the case if greater democratization of spatial relations and our use of space is understood to be an *essential prerequisite and in-process requirement* for increasing popular control and management of time and temporality. Attempts to take back greater community and public control of time have consistently foundered not only because we have ignored or been unaware of the proper target—the capitalistic mode of appropriation, production, and distribution and its preference for exchange over use values.

No less important is our failure to realize that there must be a *prior* grounding in and focus on spatial relations if the goal of increased public and democratic control of time is to be possible (Lash and Urry, 1994; Lefebvre, 1991; Wilson, 1985). From a situation of rough parity between them in the 15th century, space has steadily (although not linearly) lost ground to time, particularly in our general culture. More recent processes of globalization, under the joint control of corporate capital and the developed nation states it increasingly dominates, have only served to speed up this process exponentially over the past century. A major reason for this is capital's near-total monopoly of technological progress and its preference for temporal over spatial concerns, however important the latter have also been (Schumacher, 1973). While it is clear that this will require a significant alteration in human perceptions, it cannot happen at all in the absence of objective conditions that impart a sense of urgency to our situation and what it requires.

For the purposes of this study, then, space and use value belong together somewhat more than time and use value, just as time and exchange value belong together somewhat more than space and exchange value. This is not to say that time and use value and space and exchange value do not belong together, but rather that these relations are derived from the more fundamental ties between time and exchange value and space and use value, particularly in our general culture. In addition, however, Figures 2 and 3 should not be understood to denote developments and changes that are either exclusive of one another or serial and sequential in nature. They are intended to function as heuristic devices that suggest one way of conceptualizing such processes of human development through time and space.

Not only do the types and stages denote processes that must therefore be understood to overlap rather than be exclusive of one another. More important by far is the need to realize that these processes are developmental *and cumulative* rather than serial and sequential. Human being does not move serially and sequentially from one stage to the next over time and space, but builds upon *and absorbs* each preceding stage, which is thereafter reproduced in each individual through the joint auspices of heredity and socialization. The very persistence of these earlier forms creates the basis for subsequent conflicts not only between the demands of an earlier stage and present and emerging requirements, but also between our basic needs

and those that consciousness has helped us construct atop them from the very beginning (Hegel, 1967 [1821]).

It is in this sense that, far from being superseded, prior stages be understood to be transmitted through both physiognomy and culture in a form that dichotomies like those cited can only obscure (Freud, 1960 [1913]). Human beings are incomprehensible as human animals with species-specific needs emerging from and related to temporal and spatial realities in the absence of a willingness to acknowledge the foregoing as well as the following point directly implied by it. Any explanations or recommendations we offer for our own conduct must build upon our essential animality rather than be premised on the dichotomy between human being and nature and those distinctions that derive from it. Indeed, it is precisely because we are uniquely capable of concocting need structures, and the temporal and spatial forms that go with them, that we can generate, collectively and over time, modes of existence that either contradict or are incompatible with more basic human requirements (Marx, 1964 [1844]; Wilson, 1991).

Any assessment of the present situation of human being from the perspective offered here can therefore usefully begin with Hegel's trenchant observation about the role of consciousness in enabling us to generate needs far in excess of those which our animal instincts alone would require (Hegel, 1967 [1821]: para. 190). But this observation should be complemented by Marx's analysis of why the resulting problems have historically plagued many or most but not all of us, and of how this relates to the emergence and eventual supremacy of exchange value and the capitalist mode of appropriation, production, and distribution (Marx, 1973 [1857/58]; 1961 [1867-83]).

## II. *Abstraction and dichotomization: limits*

Abstraction and dichotomization provide a necessary, though clearly not a sufficient, condition for thought and thinking. Reflection, whether in the form of concretion, remembrance or the two together completes the procedure of thought and is essential if individuals are to have a grasp, however fleeting, of the whole and a sense of their participation (or right to participate) in it (Arendt, 1958; Wilson, 1985). From the standpoint of the concerns being addressed here, it would be necessary to note how these activities and processes depend

for their sense, both implicitly and explicitly, on shared, rather than simply accepted, temporal and spatial values. It would further be necessary to underscore the extent to which the determination and enforcement of these values lies with institutions of socialization, employment, consumption, and spectating that are the principal defenders of the priority of exchange value over use value, whether by accident or by design.

The point here is that the major institutions of modern Western civilization like science, capitalism, and the rule of law are in large part the product of assumptions about the natural and social world and the relationship between them. These assumptions in turn depend fundamentally not only on the set of dichotomies cited, but on their being assumed to constitute a description of reality rather than merely a means of addressing it. Institutions of all types, including those of modern Western civilization, also need to be understood as the ongoing result of cumulative processes. By this I do not only mean cumulative in a historical sense, but also the fact that these institutions are built atop and around basic needs of human beings *as human animals*. Thus even what Marx or Weber might call a pure case of an institution devoted to maximizing the values of one historical period and one system of power (the factory system of production; modern bureaucracy) finds itself unavoidably enmeshed in the basic need structures and the accumulated and variegated forms they have taken to that point in human history (Marx, 1961 [1867–83]; Weber, 1978, 1954, 1946).

How else can we fully explain why historical periods apparently dominated by one system of time and one conception of space generate so much conflict for the large majority of those who must live through them? Quite apart from the matter of basic human requirements and the fact that temporal and spatial values are built atop them through history, culture, class, and the resulting power relations is the conflict between *the forms* that the expression of these values take, both internally and between generations, societies, and cultures (Hall, 1983, 1966, 1959; Jaques, 1982). Thus it is not only the Hegelian conundrum about the impact of consciousness on human needs that is so consequential for an adequate understanding of these difficulties and conflicts. One also must address the Marxian analysis of the form of value in general and in its many and varied manifestations in order to grasp what makes a focus on temporal and spatial arrangements indispensable for a deep understanding of human

beings as *human* animals. Instead of conceiving of ourselves mainly or solely as conscious agents with a body attached, we also need to see ourselves as bodies with a head (Barkan, 1975; Eckstein, 1970; Straus, 1963).

This difference between thinking *by reference to and/or in terms of* dichotomies is a central factor in addressing the problem. In the absence of a capacity to suspend belief, such vehicles for thought and thinking are effectively transmuted into basic, guiding assumptions about, as well as descriptions of, reality which are accepted all-too-readily without cavil. Only in the presence of difficulties that challenge stereotypical assumptions do we reflect on these assumptions. In the case of the dichotomy between human being and nature and distinctions emerging from it, however, the resulting abstractions and the structure as a whole are often or even usually too deeply held to be uprooted and reflected upon in response to the sort of circumstances alluded to above. Instead, reflection in our general culture normally takes its point of departure in precisely these dichotomies and the structure of thinking they provide. The fate of the critical theory of society in philosophy and the social sciences since the 1960s bears eloquent testimony to the renewal and revival of a similar phenomenon amongst formerly critical intellectuals in Western Europe, the Commonwealth, and North America, as I have shown in Chapters 2 and 3 (also in Wilson, 1976; cf. Jay, 1973).

It may very well turn out to be the people demanding *their temporal and spatial rights* that will provide us with the most appropriate indication that the contradiction between exchange and use value is no longer sustainable or acceptable. To the extent that such a prospect is possible or likely, it must begin with and in the humanization of space and spatiality, and only thereafter address issues of time and temporality, given the greater bias of the former toward use values and the latter toward exchange values. In this process, it will be necessary for Western (and other) peoples to restore the complete circuit of thought, so that perception and a forward-biased form of reality construction is complemented by reflexivity and remembrance. This is not an option, but rather expresses the cumulative reality of our evolution and development not only as human beings but also as *human being*.

Errors of understanding, such as believing that we can take back control of time and temporality by focussing on these concerns alone, not only point to our capacity for "one-sidedness" and exclusivity

(Adorno, 1973, 1969; Marcuse, 1964; Wilson, 1984). They also serve to underscore how central to our understanding of *and participation* in the whole is our capacity *and willingness* to reflect and remember in ways that begin in, but go beyond, subjectivity and the subject-object distinction in which it is imprisoned. In the absence of such reflection and remembrance we run the risk of further distancing ourselves from aspects of our real nature precisely because we alone (presumably) are capable of concocting temporal and spatial ideas and practices that conflict with and contradict our human being as human beings. We must begin to challenge not only the temporal and spatial requirements put upon us that we presently treat as objectively given, but the very idea that certain powers and institutions external to us should be in an indisputable position to determine the fit between them at any given point. Unfortunately, the fact that these ideas and practices are imposed to a greater or lesser extent on some but not all of us helps to guarantee their perpetuation far beyond the point where present difficulties can be justified by reference to the proverbial long run.

In this regard, it may be less surprising, but far more disquieting, to discover that capitalism and its supporting institutions often have a better grasp of postmodern realities than either our social and political/administrative institutions or most practitioners in the areas, fields, and disciplines that study them. For a number of reasons, these institutions seem to be “stuck” in the late 18th and early to mid 19th centuries (Wilson, 1985). One possible way of moving beyond present forms of representative democracy would require us to “use them up” through traditional modes of participation, while supporting alternate and complementary forms like bureaucratic representation of public and social interests and direct democratic techniques (Wilson, 2001). Without in any way minimizing the present and future importance of other forms, their success will depend ultimately on the development and acceptance of new techniques for public control of policy implementation processes. Present efforts to democratize and render transparent elite and professional techniques for controlling and managing processes of assessing and evaluating public and social sector programmes is a hopeful development in this direction (Alkin, 1990; Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

Democratic social and political practice should therefore be aware of the contemporary scientific and technological developments depicted in Figure 2, and open to the challenges to our now traditional struc-

ture of thinking that they present us with. Only in this way will we be in a position either to take advantage of them if they support use values or to counter them if they support exchange values to the detriment of use values. An example of the first circumstance would be the distinct possibility that some combination of audio-visual and computer-assisted technologies might function as a vehicle for democratizing policy implementation as well as policy formulation processes. An example of the second would be ongoing resistance to the claim, by capitals and neo-conservatives alike, that responsibly political policy implementation is logistically impossible, far too costly, or socially and politically undesirable (Wilson, 1988a, 1988b, 1985; and Chapter 9 above).

At one level of analysis, the importance of never forgetting our cumulative reality as both human being and human beings emerges in the way that we view the nanosecond culture relative to the clock culture of "objective" time that helped make capitalism possible and continues to sustain it today. Only serial-linear and deterministic thinking could lead us to assume that our present, and still dominant, clock culture with its established system of time will be superseded by *an even worse system* with the advent of the computer and the nanosecond. Such an assumption can be made only if we ignore, or are unaware of, the central role of the mode of production, appropriation and distribution in allocating human and material resources to various purposes in a way that consistently favours exchange over use values. In fact, the clock and computer cultures, far from being mutually exclusive, are both cumulatively related to and hyper-dependent upon each other in our general culture precisely because of capitalism, the commodity form, and the priority of exchange over use values.

The real problem is that technology and *its* progress is unhinged from *public and social* control and presently in the hands of capital and those institutions of the economy, state, and society that *it* increasingly controls. These latter institutions, in turn, continue to play a dominant role through socialization in determining or reinforcing our temporal and spatial values. It is the essence of the dichotomies in which we are imprisoned, rather than any alleged accidental effects of their central role in our culture, that they lend aid and comfort to commodification and the increasing dominance of exchange values over use values, therefore of time over space. In truth, they constitute an increasingly serious barrier to thought and thinking, not

because they exist and present us with topical foci and possibilities, but because they have become the basis of a fixed, and thereby limited, structure of thinking which is all-too-often assumed to be coterminous with reality. It is this dominant ideology of modernity, consistently confused with reality, that we must actively seek to overcome through both reflection and practical critique (Adorno, 1983, 1969; Wilson, 1984).

That capitalism in particular continues to rely heavily on our *not* subjecting these governing assumptions of our general culture to critique only helps us understand the nature, as well as the extent, of its stake in our continuing socialization. Keeping space in its place relative to time is a central feature of this process (Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1994). Time's allegedly objective requirements in a system that gives priority to exchange values can always be pointed to in order to justify skepticism and disbelief about the sense of any thought that might challenge the present temporal and spatial order. The idea that the computer and its allegedly "objective" nanosecond culture is simply more of the same, apart from being a counsel of futility and despair, fundamentally misunderstands the possibilities for public and social control of time and space which lie latent in this technology *if we understand what our priorities are and are willing to act on them.*

### III. *The space and place of politics*

To counteract this amnesia, and to illustrate the public and political consequences of "keeping space in its place relative to time," in this section and the one that follows I wish to recollect some of the key moments of this history from Aristotle to Weber and Arendt. Aristotle's problem was how the good citizen might be *produced*, given the imminent collapse of the polis that he was personally witnessing, and its displacement by territorial imperium—the predecessor of the nation-state. "As to the question whether the virtue of the good man is the same as that of the good citizen the considerations already adduced prove that in some states the good man and the good citizen are the same, and in others different" (Aristotle, 1941: 630). This particular problem of "production" arose for him because presumptions which had once been valid (and operative) about citizenship in Athens no longer held true. The eclipse of the city-state



as a result of successive victories by Philip, solidified and extended by Philip's son (and Aristotle's pupil) Alexander, in effect created a problem that had not been present before. In the polis, citizenship as such was restricted in all cases to men of leisure. All other men, and all women, children, and slaves were excluded from this opportunity. As Cleisthenes had already pointed out, this exclusion was based on the fact that only men could be heads of families and only heads of families had a political voice (Gouldner, 1965). Nevertheless it was only to those heads of families who were also men of leisure that the opportunity for real, active citizenship as a participatory politics of display presented itself. Others were effectively (not formally) confined to reflection and voting—essential activities for the process of politics but nevertheless incomplete by comparison to the kind of full-fledged citizenship which included an active politics of display.

This internal distinction between heads of families who were and were not sufficiently independent to be men of leisure continues, to a surprising extent, to define the nature of political participation engaged in by members today. Indeed, few matters are clearer in this regard than the fact that in most cases a person—still usually a man—must be sufficiently independent in economic and financial terms if he is to translate his membership into agency in a representative democratic system. We all too often receive evidence of the extent to which such independence is a lesser evil when compared to the temptations to corruption found in circumstances in which an individual lacks it. Particularly in the United States, but in Europe as well, a modern tradition has emerged of reposing trust in “patricians,” whose independence from economic and financial corruptibility is alleged to make them a better bet when it comes to looking after the elusive “public interest.” These men are all too often found at the head of parties to the left of centre, at least regarding the issues with which they are most concerned, if not others as well (Roosevelt, Kennedy, Trudeau, Wedgwood-Benn etc.).

Translating membership into agency in a representative system may or may not entail effectiveness in carrying out the electoral and party political mandate. At the very least, we must never make the mistake of confusing such agency, even when it is functioning at its relative best, with citizenship. As the American “founding fathers”, particularly Jefferson, well understood, no representative system was ever intended to operate effectively in the absence of consistent and

continuous public interest, activity, and participation (Wills, 1981; Wilson, 1985: chapter 12). Indeed, these "inputs" are really what make such a system work at all. Without them, a country or culture has little more than the formal, institutional mechanisms and processes of a representative democracy. While these constitute the scaffolding for an effective system, on their own they can guarantee little more than predictable stability and continuity (in the absence of external threats and disruptions) to a quiescent population (Edelman, 1964). Where the main function of states and their organizations is the pursuit of international and regional economic and financial comparative advantage, this sort of system seems to work well, but only in conditions of stability and incremental change and only for a while. In conditions of turbulence, when one might think that such a system would be a godsend, it turns out to be at best a mixed blessing, if not worse.

Agents should not, in short, be assumed to be better, more competent, citizens than members who are not agents. Indeed, there is much evidence on the other side that suggests that agency corrupts where independence is not considerable and temptations resistible. On the other hand, the possession of independence from worldly concerns itself constitutes the basis for a radical indictment of collective forms, including Society, where such independence is alleged to be the only real guarantee of incorruptibility. After all, how did such independence come about, and might it not constitute a basis for an agent feeling that he could pursue a policy path independent of his constituents? Hence a major motivator might involve commitment to an ideology or vision which the independent agent believes necessary to pursue even where its economic, political, and social implications, or public support for it apart from these concerns, seem to require a change of course or greater moderation. Seen from this perspective, the golden mean might very well turn out to be the career politician who lacks independence and who, partly for this reason, feels it necessary to continually take the pulse of public opinion lest his career projections and aspirations be jeopardized.

Max Weber is perhaps the best known scholar of modern Western institutions to address the significance of the contrast between living for and living off politics, with all that this distinction has come to mean. He believed that implicit in the world-historical process of rationalization and de-enchantment lay not only incipient bureaucratization, but also the gradual extension of this mode to politics

itself. The result was the development of the same sort of career notion for politicians that had historically transformed the limited number of vocations available under Catholic hegemony into a diverse proliferation of "callings." These latter had in turn been extended to other occupations essential to the emergence of a modern secular national state based on the rule of law, including modern "rational" bureaucracy (Weber, 1958: chapter 3; 1947: 329–41, 1946). The result, as Mannheim would later point out, was the emergence of a notion of "success" tied to the pursuit of (adult) lifelong careers modelled on bureaucratic office holding which were independent and distinct from either economic or political success (Mannheim, 1952: 235–49). The later extension of the concept of career to politics presupposed the establishment and thoroughgoing acceptance of the idea *and practice* of success. This notion was inspired by, and to some extent traceable to, the procedures by which a bureaucratic system staffs and maintains itself and provides for its perpetuation through a combination of succession and a renewal of the ranks (Wilson, 1977: 145–170).

The agent who views his occupational and work life in politics as a career is precisely the individual whom Weber had in mind when he spoke of the practice of politics as a vocation. In virtually every instance he cited (or recounted) it was in stable, republican systems based on the rule of law and a constitutional system that the career politician was most likely. A certain level of formal (and societal) rationalization, and corollary de-enchantment, was clearly necessary to the system stability on which all commitments to a career orientation then (and today) depended. Yet it was to constitutionalism and the rule of law that Weber turned in "Politics as a Vocation" in order to make his case for an ethics of responsibility rather than one of conviction (Weber, 1946 [1919]: 118–128). Implicit in Weber's analysis of this particular tension was the view that even though charisma may be essential to societal change, thus a way of periodically halting the process of routinization that grips all those who follow in the leader's wake, its significance as a historical and social event resides in the way that it interrupts the process of incipient rationalization and corollary de-enchantment. To the extent that this latter was the case, charisma could often be construed as a threat to both representative democracy (republicanism) and the rule of law (constitutionalism) (Weber, 1947: 358–92; Wilson, 1984: chapters 4–5).

Looked at from Weber's perspective as a property (or problem) of the macro-system, charisma was at best a mixed blessing. For the price it extracted for halting rationalization and de-enchantment might be thoroughly disorganizing to societies and politics. Indeed, the essence of charisma defined as the "gift of grace" was an irrational devotion to the leader which effectively set aside formally rational considerations bearing on decision making, policy making, and justice, or at the very least shunted them into a faraway second place position. Weber, to the end ambiguous as to whether rationalization or charisma was the greater evil, in the final analysis seemed to opt for an ethics of responsibility and for living off politics (like Machiavelli before him) because the long-term benefits and the number who would benefit would be greater. Weber's is a modern day dilemma that is not dissimilar to the one that Aristotle in particular faced when he had to address the impact on the polis of territorial imperium. "Should it really matter so little for the ethical demands on politics that politics operates with very special means, namely, power backed up by violence?" Weber asked, thereby addressing the distinctive functions of the modern state in contrast to the ancient polis (Weber, 1946 [1919]: 119). Whether such city-states became the capitol of the captured and dominated space around it or not, ultimately they became mere urban aggregations—governable *social places* rather than *political spaces* in their own right. Out of this change emerged the question of how to make persons who could never become citizens in the former sense good societal members. The answer, one anticipated by Plato, was ethics and the ethical as an alternative to politics and a public life (Aristotle, 1941: 1109–1112, 1176–1205).

In the new equation, the idea would be to bring into being agencies of socialization whose task would be to mould the large majority of persons into right thinking, right acting social beings. Though the family was to continue to play a central role in this endeavour, it was now to be assisted on a continuous basis by education and by the state directly. In either case, it was clear that the state's major function in pursuit of properly socialized (i.e. ethical) societal members was the maintenance of law and order internally alongside protection from external invasion. This constitutes a very significant alteration in the nature of political activity. In effect, the polis was now to be replaced by a state structure whose legitimacy rested on its ability not only to protect and secure, but also to provide what amounted to *its own* legitimation through the aegis of the socializa-

tion processes cited. These were, in their turn, to be complemented by propaganda and agendas of strategic and tactical inclusion and exclusion of persons and groups whenever this was thought necessary. The result was a thoroughgoing displacement of the operative understanding of politics and public life in the polis, with all its problems and limitations. In its place arose a view of politics as state power legitimated through tradition, charisma, and occasionally law, and grounded in terror, force, and the fear of meeting violent death (Hobbes, 1968 [1951]; Weber, 1946 [1919]).

The project of producing and reproducing societal members as ethical beings who confined any political views they might have to what was required for stability, public safety, and law and order was absolutely necessary to the success of the state as an organized territory where cities were no more than urban social places within the dead space of territorial imperium. The established Athenian view that *space* was to be the defining characteristic of public life in the polis, with place the essential complement or counterpoint to it in private life and matters of necessity, was effectively inverted in the transmogrification of the polis into the urban city within a state. What emerged was a view of space as inchoate, unorganized and unfocused, and, most important of all, ungoverned or ungovernable. *Place* came forward as the answer to the problem, for it offered specificity, definiteness, the promise and distinct likelihood of organization, focus, control, and governance (Arendt, 1958: 175–247). Aristotle, in an attempt to offer some sort of alternative to the collapse of the *polis* in circumstances which even he could but scarcely envision, addressed this inversion as a necessary evil *given* territorial imperium and the inability of the Hellenes to deny to Philip and Alexander what had been denied to Cyrus and Darius in an earlier time.

The tension which Weber notes over 2,000 years later in conditions in which the modern nation state possesses sovereignty as well as one or another form of the rule of law, and even representative democracy, continues to derive its clearest sense from an understanding of Aristotle's problem. For it is by no means obvious that the present type (and level) of political organization has done anything more than formalize the tensions between the ethical and the political life in circumstances that reflect a world historical shift in the nature of legitimation itself. In effect, today regimes are required to legitimize themselves *from below* as well as from above, that is, by

dint of their capacity to deliver prosperity, economic growth, improved living standards, and increasing purchasing power rather than by appeals to tradition, charisma, or even terror (Habermas, 1971). As a matter of fact, a defining characteristic of regimes that do not fit the description of a modern nation-state is that they rely on any combination of the latter three appeals in the absence of legitimation from below in the ways indicated. *Political* progress, such as it is, continues to take shape in the shadow of Aristotle's problem: the inversion of space and place with the eclipse of the city-state by territorial imperium, and the corollary eclipse of space by time and temporality with the emergence of the modern state. The result of this inversion: the displacement of politics and public life (space) by ethics and social life (place) (cf. Weber, 1949: 28–39; Wilson, 1984).

As Arendt noted, the result was a reformulation of the public and private spheres the effect of which was to annihilate the *relationship* between them as it had existed in the polis, in favour of the ubiquitous realm of the social (now societal) (Arendt, 1958: 22–78). The state agenda for producing and reproducing its members in and through various modes of direct socialization occurring outside the family, its ethical task, now compelled a displacement of the distinction between public and private in favour of mass membership in the collective (social) form itself. The idea, so central to the polis, that there should be a strict distinction between public matters (politics) and those of one's private existence (necessity) rested on a hierarchical model of humanness in which man's highest attributes and capabilities were those which belonged uniquely to him alone. As one went down the line, one successively encountered activities, functions, and needs which were shared with higher animal forms, then with all forms of animate life together. Politics, with its concern about virtue and the good life, marked human beings off from all other animate forms, while more mundane activities, functions, and needs constituted necessities and requirements which humans had in common with many or all animate forms. Seen in this light, the Hellenic distinction between the public and private seemed incontrovertible, sensible, and well worth enforcing (Arendt, 1958; Aristotle, 1941).

While today we might claim that with minor exceptions this distinction is still enforced, we would be deluding ourselves if we did not acknowledge the precise way (as well as the fact) the societal has upended both the distinction between the public and the private and the relationship between them. Society's essence, in line with the

socializational agenda whose origins reach back to territorial imperium, is to wipe out public spaces while making the private (as well as the remaining public) social. The social (now societal), after all, promises a better levelling out and linearizing of space as the territorial surround within which urban (and capitol) places can govern (Wilson, 1985: chapter 10; 1977: chapters 8, 9). Society, and its creature socialization, effectively “one-dimensionalize” the relationship between space (public) and place (private). They reconstitute space as the dead territory of imperium and place as the urban (and capital) positions from which this territory is organized, governed and defended (Brim and Wheeler, 1966; Deleuze and Guattari, 1977; Jacobs, 1969; Lapidus, 1969, 1967, Marcuse, 1964; Scott, 1971; Weber 1978 [1910–14]: 1212–1372). The state is society’s vehicle for invading, upending, and transmogrifying politics and public life (and things) in the polis, while socialization and resulting imitation constitute the way that it takes effective control of the private. In effect, what is left of what is called the private (“privacy”) today is either what no one cares about or what everyone really knows, after all.

In these circumstances, space is reformulated as “dead” because it is territory, and territory can only be governed by being filled up with places that are in turn aggregations of people. This “urbanization” may seem to make governance less possible and secure, but this ignores both the state’s role and socialization processes favouring imitation imposed from the centre (capitol and other urban places). The purpose of such efforts, thoroughly compatible with the eclipse of space by time, is to make space subordinate to place by reformulating it as the “space-in-between-places,” thus not only inchoate and undefined by comparison, but the conceptual *and social* residual as well. Persons become socialized members of territorial imperiums who are viewed (and treated) as mass populations best organized in urban places where the full panoply of fear, anxiety, conformity, and imitation, alongside the reality of state power and force and the fear of meeting violent death, can have their maximum impact. What better way of organizing the disparate elements of an ethnically, racially, culturally, or religiously heterogeneous population in particular than by collecting them together in enclosed places, and subjecting them to power and socialization, while forcing them to learn to coexist in the new conditions of “moral” or “dynamic density”? (cf. Durkheim, 1952: 256–82; and essays by Oppenheim, Issawi, Gulick, and Abu-Lughod, in Lapidus, 1969).

IV. *Dynamizing the charismatic politics of civic display*

One approach in the contemporary context to the problem posed by this consequential inversion of space and place would require me to employ charisma in a way quite at variance with Weber's understanding of it. Indeed, as Arendt reminds us, the dynamic sources of active citizenship, speech as a deed, and thus the political space of display itself, have never in fact been completely obliterated. "The instrumentalization of action and the degradation of politics into a means for something else has of course never really succeeded in eliminating action, in preventing its being one of the decisive human experiences, or in destroying the realm of human affairs altogether" (Arendt, 1958: 230). In what follows, I shall reformulate charisma as a necessary feature of any dynamic microcosm in which public things are being discussed and debated. Seen in this light, charisma need not exact the price alluded to above, where it would appear to constitute a perennial liability in the absence of very strong and secure legal and representative institutions at the macro (societal) level.<sup>1</sup> My sense of charisma, which treats it as a politically necessary combination of passion, convictions, facts, and deep knowledge, would comprehend it microcosmically not because it lacks relational properties between persons, but rather because it is now potentially (when not actually) "available" to virtually everyone rather than being a remote possibility for all but a few. In saying this, I am identifying its relational properties as immediate and direct in nature, rather than constituting a one-dimensional (and one way) oral tradition whose "speechfulness" has been destroyed by being filtered through a written (bureaucratic/sociological) tradition which is, quite literally, Society's hidden agenda (Innis, 1951, 1950).

Such a view of charisma offers the last best hope for dynamizing the public sphere in ways that preserve the necessary legal and representative institutions possessed by advanced industrial societies. At the same time, dynamization will provide us with the prospect of simultaneously complementing these processes and mechanisms and

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<sup>1</sup> An all too apt recent Canadian example is the serious institutional damage—totally unintended—done by former Prime Minister Trudeau's charismatic leadership. That the Canadian system was believed better capable of subordinating charisma to tradition and legality than virtually any other in existence only underscores a point I have developed in *Retreat from Governance* (Wilson, 1989a).



eventually transcending them in favour of better institutions. The point I am making is that we cannot overcome existing political institutions unless we use them up, and we cannot use them up until we complement them with possibilities for display that will generate an oscillating, dynamic tension between them. Neither regression to older forms nor annihilation of existing institutions is either possible or desirable in the circumstances. Rather, a way must be found which will provide a basis for re-establishing the proper and sensible relationship between space and place that obtained in the polis, but adapted to what is worth preserving in the present collective form. To be sure, a major objective of what I have proposed here is to overcome this very collective form itself—Society, with its view of public and private alike as the prerogative of state action through either socialization or the threat (or reality) of violence (Deleuze and Guattari, 1977: parts 3–4).

Marx had attacked the state of his day (and by implication ours) as an “executive committee of the ruling class,” while at the same time viewing the post-revolutionary period of communism as a system in which politics, in clear contrast, would be progressively *more* available to all members-as-citizens (Marx, 1947 [1848]). One does not need to involve oneself with any other aspects of Marx’s arguments and observations to notice how prescient such a vision was. For it is clear that human beings are too dynamic in their mental and emotional make up (not to speak of their biological and organic natures), and too different from one another, for progress and the future to be conceived of in ways that would negate or minimize these realities. But the question which keeps pressing for an answer is how this new microcosm, based on a revised estimate of the meaning of charisma, will serve to sufficiently dynamize the public sphere so as to address Aristotle’s problem. It may just be possible to reaffirm a new relationship between space and place, such that space (politics as display) can at least acquire parity with place (politics as institutional practices). However, we still need to address not only what impact this might have on the tension between the ethical and the political, but how efforts to resuscitate space over place presuppose fundamental changes in our views of and attitudes toward the role of time.

On the first matter, the very presence of a sustained politics of display now available to a far wider range of members than was the case for the polis would serve as a constant challenge to the

tendency to treat space as little (or nothing) more than the (dead) space-in-between-places. Here the very dynamism of this newly (re) defined space would lie in its lack of permanence, its evanescence. In opposition to our tendency to view something as more valuable (or real) to the degree that it is more permanent—for example political structures over discussions about the good and the virtuous—the very dynamism of a politics of display would be manifested precisely by its lack of permanence (Arendt, 1958: 167–74, 188–207). After all, to the extent that such activities of a direct and immediate nature in (or following from) the microcosm became permanent or stable features of collective life, they too would (and do) become places. Indeed, this process was to a considerable extent what Max Weber meant by both rationalization and de-enchantment as discernible processes. Where Weber erred was in his view that they were only reversible temporarily, and only then by the irrational intervention—planned or unplanned—of the charismatic leader or his equivalent (Wilson, 1985: chapter 12; 1977: chapter 10).

It is *this* very dynamic by which space turns into place through the formalization of “informal” discussion and debate that necessitates the constant production of new public spaces to compensate for this necessary and unavoidable development. Only in concert with place, by which I specifically mean the legal and representative institutions of advanced industrial societies, can space provide for the possibility, indeed likelihood, that existing institutions, now scarcely utilized, will be used up and thereby transcended in favour of superior institutions. This is precisely what the American founding fathers, particularly Jefferson, had in mind when they *assumed* that the political/legal system which they were bringing into being could not hope to be a success in the absence of consistent and continuing citizen inputs. While the relative absence of space may seem a picayune consideration in the light of American pre-eminence, its failure to *publicly* revitalize and transcend its political and legal institutions (in contrast to judicial review and primaries) has proven (and will continue to prove) to be at least as serious a problem as its imperial military and economic demands. It is little wonder that scholars continue to prefer waxing euphemistic about America’s political past to optimistic forecasts about its political future (Wills, 1978, 1981).

The issue of a continuing tension between the ethical and the political is directly tied to the discussion about space and place. This

is because the need for a charismatic politics of display based on speech and discussion in the microcosm challenges the socializing agenda of the state. This agenda is best understood as an effort, even a determination, to produce *and/or reproduce* the “good” person that is always the subject of ethics. What politics and a dynamic-because-evanescent space of appearance would secure, apart from resisting the transmogrification of such space into stable and permanent institutional places, would be a continuous counterpoint to this transmogrification functioning as the other side of legitimation from below. Habermas, while correct to note the increasingly central role of legitimation from below in capitalist and advanced industrial societies, goes too far when he implies that an *independent* process of legitimation from above has ceased to be necessary in these societies. While it may be true that socialization may include features and aspects of this process, it is most certainly not exhausted by it. Indeed, one of the pre-eminent features of socialization is a kind of symbolic horde-based identification with cultures and national traditions that no amount of “symbolically mediated interaction” can do any more than confirm (Habermas, 1971).

It is for this reason that I find Habermas’ reformulation of *both* Weber’s distinction between rationalization (rational purposive action) and de-enchantment (symbolically mediated interaction) and Marx’s distinction between substructure and superstructure, unsatisfying. For there is no place in it for the possibility of a real, dynamic (and charismatic) politics of display alongside the continued functioning of the institutional processes and mechanisms of the legal and political systems so central to our collective form. After all, Weber’s distinction between living for and living off politics is not a mutually exclusive one from the standpoint of process, only (perhaps) from the standpoint of the individual. The transmogrification of the informal into the formal—what Weber pessimistically viewed as the necessary evil of rationalization—has its ethical counterpoint in the non-exclusive distinction between an ethics of conviction (for politics) and an ethics of responsibility (off politics). No politics which fails to provide a complement and counterpoint, rather than a zero sum option, to prevailing mechanisms and processes is either possible or desirable. The increased independence from systems of rational purposive action which Habermas would like to see for members as citizens is inconceivable in the absence of the very “lay” persons that he claims presently lack the necessary “communicative competence”

to achieve it (Habermas, 1970; Wilson, 1985: chapter 8; and Chapter 7 above).

Let me conclude the discussion in this and the previous section by addressing a third element of Aristotle's problem—the nature of the contemporary city in advanced industrial societies (as discussed in the *Politics*, Books I, Book IV, Chapters 11–13; Book VII, Chapters 4–12; cf. Jacobs, 1969). All of the great thinkers with whom I am concerned here have quite understandably viewed the city as the origin and fount of virtually all sound ideas, inventions, and discoveries. Marx (1947 [1848]) carried the point to considerable extremes with his reference to the “idiocy of rural life” because he saw this form of life as a drag on progress and development. Durkheim (1952) framed his hope for organic solidarity mainly on the rediscovery of the very dynamic or moral density which had been worked out in the late medieval city some 500 years before industrialization brought about the collapse of mechanical solidarity and the onset of anomie after 1750. Weber, on the other hand, knew that the city was a form of collective organization which had emerged *prior to* (rather than following) the development of settled agriculture, and that it arose out of the need for trading centres by mainly nomadic peoples. With this in particular in mind, it is important to realize that the polis as such was always a city-state which had an economic and social, as well as a political life and existence. Today we consider it to be something of an epitome precisely because it combined—with all its limitations taken into account—political/legal institutions and political display, albeit neither the representative institutions nor those of the formal rule of law that we take largely for granted today (Weber, 1978 [1910–14]). My point in saying this is to argue for a persuasive (and necessary) contrast between the civic and the civil, the first correlated with both institutional politics and a (possible and actual) politics of display and the second mainly with the social, the socializational and the ethical. It is particularly necessary in large urban aggregations, and particularly in states where a large percentage of members as citizens reside in such aggregations, that the suggested reformulation of charisma and resulting dynamization occur there. At the same time, this is neither to restrict a politics of display to such places, nor to accord them any greater recognition than is granted to smaller cities, towns, and rural areas. Against the pessimism of Arendt and Weber, space must be constantly created and recreated anew, as a counterpoint to existing

places (structures), as the major vehicle of institutional improvement through progressive formalizations and through challenges to formalizations already in existence or proposed (Wilson, 1985: chapter 12).

Members-as-citizens are therefore absolutely necessary to the real progress of politics. Agents can only claim higher status on the matter of citizenship if they count themselves among those determined to use power, socialization, and legitimation mechanisms to thwart or reverse this most necessary human activity in the name of an exaggerated concern for social order.

#### V. *Beginning with and in policy implementation*

We are now ready to discuss the prospect of extending the need for citizenly display and participation from formulation processes carried out by elected representatives and governments to implementation processes. A major reason for focussing on policy implementation processes as a key element in asserting greater public and social control of the economy and the state is not only that these processes lie closer to the ongoing machinery of democracy and the public sphere than dichotomies further up the hierarchy (Wilson, 2001, 1988b). Like concentrating on spatial concerns in order to get at capital's control of time, reform of our political and administrative systems is the proper beginning point for overcoming the role of dichotomies and distinctions farther up the chain that are allegedly more "abstract." In effect, we must ascend the ladder, overcoming each distinction from the bottom up, as it were. Otherwise, we shall find ourselves at best engaged in precisely the sort of exercise appropriate in the main to intellectual rather than practical endeavours.

Thus it makes sense for us to *reconstitute* the hierarchy of dichotomies already presented in order to see its structure in terms of *practical requirements* that at the very least begin in demands for greater public and social participation in and control of policy implementation processes. From the standpoint of both historical and logical descent, on the other hand, the hierarchy clearly makes more sense as a structure if it begins with the distinction between human being(s) and nature and proceeds thereafter through distinctions successively and/or one-sidedly derived from it. The mind/body, subject/object, ends/means, values/facts, policy/administration, and formulation/

implementation dichotomies could then be seen to proceed both historically/chronologically and logically/conceptually from the original distinction between human being(s) and nature.

But this ordering provides us with poor counsel when we turn from history and the logical and conceptual requirements of traditional theory to practical action and a logic of improvement based on the need for *both* communicative interaction *and* instrumental rationality. Any notion of political and administrative “progress” which continues to be premised on the priority of instrumental rationality to communicative interaction is at best tutelary and will eventually be doomed, if not by definition foredoomed, to failure. The case for reconstituting this hierarchy of dichotomies in thought preparatory to ascending it in and through temporal and spatial action requires one to invoke *a logic of practical requirements* (Della Volpe, 1980; Zeleny, 1980). This latter seeks to make history in and through the collective and historical act of re-traversing through ascension the process of its developmental and conceptual unfolding. Resolving the formulation/implementation dichotomy means overcoming it both conceptually and through action, where the dichotomy itself is understood simultaneously to be the least abstract theoretical problem and the most concrete practical problem.

Control of public policy formulation processes, however indispensable it may be for this further development to occur, is clearly insufficient on its own (Wilson, 1988b, 2001; see Chapter 9 above). Indeed, the now traditional mode of representative democracy, to the extent that it exists at all, limits public voice in the main to policy formulation. Even here, however, the process has been so totally co-opted by neo-conservative parties and the corporate capitals that dominate their agenda that it must at the very least be supplemented, if not complemented, by significant increases in public voice in and through control of policy implementation processes. As it turns out, *increasing control of implementation processes may be the best (or only) way for us to gain greater control of the very policy formulation processes we are already supposed to have in hand.*

Giving priority to public and social control of implementation processes in particular will also require us to re-conceptualize time and temporality in ways more compatible with spatial processes of discussion, deliberation, and consensus that are either directly or indirectly more interactive. This will help us to realize through reflection and discussion the nature and limits of our dominant form of time,

one that many have referred to as “objective” or “objectivist” when it is no less culturally defined and supported than different notions of time and temporality in other cultures. Both the clock and the computer presently embody this form of time, *but only because of the economic and social system in our culture, and the form of value that it privileges*. Given the nature of their overlapping, cumulative, and highly interdependent relationship, however, the object of our attention must be the computer rather than the clock. Not only is the computer more recent and consequently far less embedded (and implicated) in the dominant system of value. Unlike the clock, it is a vehicle of communication with tremendous interactive potential. Nevertheless, use values serve exchange values in this instance because acceptable utilities under the present system limit the computer to being a tool for either work or “time off from work” rather than leisure and the public life that it might help make possible (DeGrazia, 1962; Borst, 1994).

Two useful points of reference for addressing the limits of our “objective” mode of time would focus on realistic alternatives to the form of life in our general culture, but alternatives that we can conceptualize precisely because they are present and “available” to us in this very culture, however residually. The first might be called “traditional” or “traditionalist” because it is the product of remembrance, our capacity to think back, while the second might be called “holistic,” because it is the result of critical reflection. Such reflection is often directly or indirectly based either on one or more of the dichotomies cited or on the value form itself and its implications for spatial vis a vis temporal concerns. Through such activities we come to realize that forms of thought and the values they embody do not disappear but become latent in cultures that are either unaware of their presence or claim to repudiate them in part or in their entirety. The West was the first to generate a view of time and temporality as simultaneously objective and external to us, a notion essential for modern capitalism. This conception, and the cultural practices associated with it, can no longer be sustained without recognition of traditional, but particularly holistic, forms of life and their implications for the relationship between temporal and spatial values.

If traditional notions of time and temporality help us understand the reasons for associating use values with the priority of space and the need for real or virtual human scale in our social and political-administrative relations, holism is essential, among other things, for

effective (as opposed to merely efficient) planning. Effective planning refuses to accept the assumption that it must be an activity at loggerheads with, if not in a zero-sum relation to, participation, discussion, and consensus (Wilson, 1993, 1988b). This has serious implications for the nature of the process that will be, and to some extent already is, required. Time can no longer be conceived of solely as an element external to human beings and their activities and nothing more, because the very objectivity of such externality becomes far more a constraint than an opportunity, as indeed it must in any system dominated by exchange value. In effect, there must be room in our practice, as well as in its conceptualization, for the likelihood that *we inhabit, as well as respond to, both time and space*. In effect, time, no less than space, must often conform to the activities and processes that we value and desire rather than these activities and processes to time. Resituating objectivist notions of time and temporality by conceptualizing alternate forms in the light of use values and spatial priorities is essential to the process of ascension discussed above. This is because policy implementation is really only impossibly "time consuming" and costly under the present mode of appropriation, production, and value in our culture.

Consider just how often we arbitrarily compartmentalize formulation and implementation (as we understand them) in work and related activities, to the point where we treat them as totally segregated rather than essentially and necessarily integrated in their ongoing reality. This is frequently carried to the point where we find ourselves producing decisions and policies in a rapid-fire fashion, unhinged from serious concern about how they are to be implemented. This happens more often by design than by accident in our culture, if only because the division of labour not only makes such forgetfulness possible, but often rewards it handsomely. Our motives for doing this may include public expectations or the expectations of superiors, a busy schedule or backlog, "public relations," punctuality under the prevailing "time-is-money" regimen, or some set of justifications which are even less focussed on effectiveness. By serving the interests of efficiency criteria and productivity, which privilege rapid completion of the task and exchange value, we all too often guarantee that considerations of effectiveness, with their bias toward deliberation, process, and use value, will be sacrificed unduly.

The point here is that what is instrumentally rational and technically efficient may be seriously ineffective. The likelihood of this



being the case increases exponentially when one turns to work activities and responsibilities where the role of external social and political processes constitutes the central element in defining the success or failure of the undertaking (see Chapter 6 above; Wilson, 1973). Suddenly all the arbitrary formal dichotomies and distinctions lose their magic as anything more than a point of departure (at best) for processed-based action and its conceptualization and understanding. This emphasis on efficiency rather than effectiveness as the pre-eminent goal to be realized in and through policy formulating activities is largely responsible for the thoroughly wrong-headed and dangerous notion that policy formulation is easy, simple, or obvious and that the real and intractable problem is effective implementation. Whatever the reasons employed in support of this conclusion, it is usually to “politics,” “value conflicts,” “human nature,” “vested interests,” “complexity,” or other mysterious and unpredictable features of “the environment” that those caught in the grip of such thinking turn.

A more holistic conception of time and space which integrated traditionalist and objectivist notions while reflecting on the limits of both—but particularly the latter—would address critically the arbitrary and selective way we decide what is part of the situation and what intervenes from “outside” it. If everything appears to be “inside” the situation when policies are being formulated, this is only because a *cordon sanitaire* has already been employed to separate off and isolate this activity from its realization, that is, its implementation. Like the doctor who claimed that the operation was a success even though the patient died, the present distinction between formulation and implementation allows those involved in the former to claim success independently of the latter, with its requirements of and need for process and consensus. An entire edifice of hierarchical power, status, and remuneration has been constructed around this, fortified by the more abstract dichotomies already cited, providing the very ladder that a practical logic of action directed to increasing fundamental democratization will require us to ascend in the ways suggested (Mannheim, 1940).

In addition to a bias favouring formulation over implementation, and the clear resonances of age and seniority, as well as status and power that are privileged in the occupancy of positions on the formulation side of this distinction, there is another problem with such thinking and conceptualization. Like the examples cited above, it too

arises out of the tendency to assume dichotomies to be coterminous with reality rather than constituting a topic for approaching it, and is also a function of our dependence upon, if not imprisonment in, an objectivist conception of time and temporality. I am referring to the preoccupation with a problem-solution matrix from technology and finite mathematics. This latter presupposes both the possibility and desirability of final, that is, discrete transactional, rather than proximate and ongoing, solutions to social, economic and political problems.

Our preoccupation with realizing final solutions to problems that can never have them, or at the very least our reliance on a final solution format or the assumption that such a format is the ideal, all too often seals our fate where effective implementation is concerned. Belief that an objectivist notion of time imposes limits on us from the outside works against our willingness to act on what we already deeply know, namely that social, economic and political problems require a rolling, shifting consensus punctuated by intermittent policy changes *emerging from the process itself*. The inability of these processes to be subordinated to temporal practices hostaged to objectivist notions of time, and the final solution format they privilege, is already becoming evident, and will be increasingly clear. Proper attention to process presupposes the prioritization of use values and the space that process as such must privilege.

This preoccupation with final solutions addresses “problems” in a form that is inappropriate *to their reality and nature*. This is because it is always trying to reduce them to what is manageable and “merely” technical in order to divide them up, and thereafter to achieve closure and move on to the next transaction. It treats the decisional or policy form that results from this exercise as final, in the sense that its effect, and often its intent, is to *stop* the process rather than to acknowledge its outcomes at any given time. Final solution thinking may be unavoidable in many settings and activities. Nevertheless, the absence of the reflection and process that both politics and administration require cries out for a holistic, supplemented by a traditionalist, alternative. This is essential if we are serious about resituating objectivist notions of time in the interests of improved policy implementation and the public and social control of it that will increasingly be required. In turn, we will need to pay greater attention to spatial problems related to obstacles to human scale and use value, whether through face to face interaction or virtually through tech-

nological mediation. If the analysis and suggestions offered here have any validity, human requirements can and must become increasingly synonymous with temporal and spatial rights in all jurisdictions (Marx, 1964 [1844]).

The implications for an adequate understanding of the limits of final-solution thinking, and the objectivist notion of time that underwrites it, are inescapable, and require us to acknowledge the presence and central role in our general culture of a distinction which underpins both modern and postmodern forms of life. In effect, we must stop treating formulation as theory and implementation as practice, if only because of the thoroughly unrealistic load this dichotomy, rigidly adhered to, puts upon implementation, so understood. Far from being incapable of planning, and the forms and practices of citizenship that sustain such activities, I would argue that it is top-down, hierarchical planning characterized by *an absence of process and consensus* that we have proven ourselves permanently incapable of achieving (Mannheim, 1951, 1947, 1940; Wilson, 1988b). As it turns out, we desperately need the very processes we are already supposed to have in place not only in politics and administration but in areas of life that seem far from these distinct but overlapping activities and concerns. Nothing makes this clearer, while pointing out new ways to realizing the kinds of improvement needed, than a focus on time and space which foregrounds both by situating them in the context of the competition between exchange values and use values throughout human history.

Ignoring our individual, group, and cumulative reality as both human being and human beings leads us not only to overestimate the importance of superficial needs in the (value) form of commodities given the ascendancy of exchange value. It vastly underestimates the continuing importance of our basic needs as human animals and the requirement that we satisfy them on an ongoing basis through use values and the privileging of space relative to time that these needs often-to-regularly require. In all of this, serial, transactional, and final solution thinking is centrally implicated, alongside capital's commitment to an objectivist notion of time, a commitment that is essential to the ascendancy of exchange over use values.

However, the fact remains that exchange values and objectivist notions of time *are* an essential part of our culture, society, economy, and polity as human beings. What is required in the light of this is a greater sense of balance, reflected in our social and political,

then our economic and financial, institutions. It is our reality as *cumulative*, as well as social, human being that requires us to attend to our real, albeit often neglected, complexity in the ways suggested. We are backward and “re-membling,” as well as forward and perceiving creatures, which means that use values and the spatial concerns and priorities that proper citizenship necessarily demands are really not options for us after all (Wilson, 1991). The purpose of this chapter has been to suggest a way to make practical sense of this through critical reflection and the forums and arenas that present themselves as possible spaces and places for its realization.

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