IDEOLOGY AND UTOPIA IN SOUTH AFRICA: A METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

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1. HISTORICAL LIMITATIONS OF THE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

SINCE THE PUBLICATION of Mannheim's major contributions to the sociology of knowledge the discrepancy between their epistemological promise and their actual fruit in terms of empirical research has become more and more striking. Mannheim's own tendency to overrate the philosophical side of his work may have contributed to this development but the context of post-war sociological research is likely to have been of greater importance. Where the stimulus for research comes from 'direct market pressures and military needs' there is not likely to be much interest in the problem of knowledge as a sociological category. Accordingly, the sociology of knowledge has been replaced by the analysis of 'mass communications', reflections on 'styles of thought' have given way to opinion polls, the relationship of social groups to ideas has been transformed into the relationship between 'audiences' and 'communication sources', and a concern with the social conditions for intellectual truth or error has been superseded by a more modern concern with the reliability of ratings. As interest in substantive problems wanes research procedure is converted into a set of administrative routines.

But these developments are closely related to wider social changes that would in themselves suffice to bring about the practical eclipse of the sociology of knowledge. Empirically, the strength of this approach lay in its ability to analyse and assign a proper place to socially transcendent ideas, that is to say, ideas which went beyond the present, actually existing, framework of social relationships and pointed either towards the past or towards the future. It is no accident that the sociology of knowledge was mainly restricted to an analysis of political ideas, for it is in political ideas that man's capacity to transcend the
immediately given social framework receives its most direct expression. Where ideas are not situationally transcendent they can be quite effectively studied by the ordinary methods of what Wright Mills calls ‘abstracted empiricism’, but it is the failure of these methods in the face of utopian or ideological systems that requires the application of special methods of research.

Now, there seem to be strong reasons for thinking that the role of situationally transcendent ideas has suffered a considerable decline in Western societies, especially during the last quarter century. Mannheim was already aware of this trend and foresaw the possibility of a future world in which ‘there can exist a condition in which thought will be utterly devoid of all ideological and utopian elements’. More recently, other writers have furnished copious illustrations of the modern failure to develop positive images of the future, so that the future becomes either a frightful ‘counter-utopia’ (1984) or a mere repetition of the present which brings only technological but not human changes.

Mannheim thought that these developments depended on a shift from the intellectual preoccupation with ‘the problem of class relations’ which had characterized an earlier generation, at least in Europe. As long as the relationships between social classes were unstable they were seen as a threat to the social system as a whole, and it is on this basis that positive speculation about the future of society flourished. But where the stability of existing class relationships was never in doubt, as in America, there was not the same ‘drive for a total perspective’, the social whole would take care of itself and the intellectual had to concern himself solely with problems of social technique and organization. Concern about the future of society as a whole introduces that dimension of historical time into human thought without which no situationally transcendent ideas, whether ideological or utopian, can develop. But under present conditions the threat to the whole of society comes not from the instability of class relations but from that ‘military metaphysic’ which is the modern counterpart of ideology. The sociological analysis of military and anti-military ideology would therefore constitute the most direct application of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge to the problems of the ‘overdeveloped’ society.

It is in the ‘underdeveloped’ countries of the world that class relations retain a degree of instability which casts doubt on the continuation of the existing system of social relationships as a whole. In many cases new groups of capitalists and old groups of landowners are rivals for the control of the machinery of the state, while the process of differentiation among the peasantry is greatly accelerated and wage workers begin to feel their potential power. Frequently, the relationships between these different social strata are in a state of violent flux and institutional channels for diverting the threat to the social whole are brittle or ineffective. Under these conditions, where the future of society as a
whole is indeed in doubt, situationally transcendent ideas flourish as they once did in Europe, both in their ideological and in their utopian form, and the sociology of knowledge is faced with a magnificent field for empirical research. There is no lack of chiliastic, millenarian sects in modern Asia and Africa, and the range and variety of conservative ideology far exceeds the European contribution to this style of thought. On the other hand, one has to recognize the intense appeal which the rationalist utopias have for intellectuals from these societies. Ideas which transcend the framework of existing social relations can grow only where the continuation of existing relations is in doubt.

II. THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

There can be few societies where this doubt is more intense than in present-day South Africa. For a country which has established quasi-colonial relationships within its own borders the world-wide collapse of the colonial system necessarily threatens the collapse of the existing framework of society. Moreover, large-scale industrial expansion has introduced new elements of instability into social relations which had previously enjoyed a measure of permanence. The effects of these sources of tension are greatly multiplied by the extraordinary rigidity of the existing system of social differentiation by race. This rigidity is partly due to the fact that ‘race’ has become a purely administrative concept and ‘race relations’ have been removed from the sphere of public policy to bureaucratic control. The system as a whole therefore has the worst of both worlds. It suffers from the rigidity and organized irresponsibility of an efficient bureaucratic control of all important sectors of social life, but its Leviathan is built on the tensions of a colonial society unable to satisfy the material or political aspirations of the majority of its population. As the bureaucracy is dedicated to the preservation of the existing system, and not, as has happened elsewhere, to its change or even reformation, it can only have the effect of multiplying the disintegrative tendencies arising out of the basic tensions within the social system.

Small wonder that these conditions have led to widespread anxiety about the future of South African society as a whole. A considerable popular literature in both official languages has grown up dedicated to this problem, and speculation about the fate of the existing system of social relationships is rife. Under these circumstances almost every segment of life becomes politicized—the individual cannot make a choice of sexual partner, take his seat in a bus or queue for his pension at the post office without involving himself in a political situation. That means that any questioning of existing administrative arrangements implies a questioning of the system as a whole. Not only do such conditions provide fertile soil for the growth of situationally transcendent ideas but the rigour of administratively imposed social
divisions ensures that these ideas will develop into mutually impervious ideological systems between which no communication is possible. The colonial system produced four distinct national groups in South Africa: the indigenous African group, a numerically small group of Indians, a group of English-speaking Europeans and the group of Afrikaans-speaking inhabitants who are of very mixed ancestry. These groups are distinguished by language, culture, religion and partly by geographical location. Each of them is also internally differentiated in terms of social class and other factors which vary from group to group. For the African group divisions by tribal origin are important, for the Indians there are religious and language divisions; religious divisions also exist in the English-speaking group. The internal division of the Afrikaans-speaking group is essentially political; that is to say, there is a legal separation into dark-skinned ‘Coloureds’ and fair-skinned ‘Afrikaners’. The latter practically monopolize the bureaucratic power structure of the country while the former suffer all the usual forms of racial discrimination. Cutting across all other social divisions and supporting them lies the massive inequality in the distribution of political and economic power. While there are exceptions, economic power wielded through large industrial and financial organization remains largely a privilege of sections of the English-speaking group, while political control of the vast administrative apparatus of the state has been an Afrikaner preserve for many years. The system as a whole is organized so as to secure the perpetuation of this existing pattern of privileges and the attitude to this pattern is the touchstone of the individual’s political commitment.

The conflict of social interests arising out of this situation is given a special sharpness by the specific factors previously mentioned. Firstly, the existing distribution of social power is an anachronism in the post-colonial world; secondly, it is incompatible with many of the demands of a modern industrial system such as now exists in the country; and thirdly, the rigidity of the legal complex of apartheid ensures that no individual will be left out of the administrative net which forces quite personal aspirations to take on political forms. The fact that social antagonism takes on the form of a struggle on the issue of racial discrimination should not obscure the underlying threat to the existing pattern of class relationships which this antagonism entails. For the class composition of the main national groups is very uneven. There are few white workers who are not supervisors and there are even fewer Africans who have anything to sell but their labour. Where the terms ‘white’ and ‘boss’ are synonymous the antagonism between white and black cannot readily be separated from the antagonism between capitalist and worker. A threat to the system of race relations as a whole therefore readily implies a threat to the system of class relations as a whole. Under these conditions one might expect the
development of a set of mutually exclusive systems of situationally transcendent ideas which are meaningfully linked to the contending social groups, a classical situation for the sociology of knowledge.

III. METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

In a preliminary study it was shown that crucial differences in ‘styles of thought’ could indeed be demonstrated as between intellectuals from privileged and from non-privileged groups in South Africa. But before these findings can be extended some consideration of the methodological value of Mannheim’s contributions to the sociology of knowledge is necessary.

What basically distinguishes the approach of the sociology of knowledge from the methods of latter-day empiricism is its concern with social totality. This concern first of all expresses itself in a sense of the interconnection of various types of political ideas so that each can only be studied and understood in relation to others which flourish in the same social context. From the point of view of empirical techniques of investigation the holistic approach means that less importance is attached to the content of specific attitudes than to the cognitive categories on which such attitudes are based. In an ideal typical sense these cognitive categories show a meaningful coherence so as to form distinctive Gestalt-like patterns, but in concrete individuals elements of different styles may co-exist. This suggests that an empirical sociology of knowledge would adopt an analytical approach which would firstly seek to describe the elements of each cognitive orientation and then attempt to assess the relative weight given to each of these elements in the mental productions of various individuals. Such an approach differs from that of the usual attitude survey in that it does not start with a collection of separate elements in order to arrive at the measure of the whole by their summation, but starts with whole patterns which are then analysed into constituent elements for purposes of identification.

This holistic approach is especially suitable for the analysis of the situationally transcendent, that is to say, the ideological or utopian attitudes which require to be treated as wholes because they are themselves directed at the social whole. They arise, as has been indicated, where the future of the social whole is in doubt, and they have no other object than this whole. Their internal structure, if it is to be adequate to this object, must be correspondingly complex. Just as the essence of a social whole lies in the system of its constituent social relationships, so the essence of ideas about the social whole lies in the system of their interconnection. This system involves the operation of certain cognitive categories, above all, the categories of historical time, for these are the categories in which knowledge of the social whole is consciously presented. The cognition of the social whole involves the
ordering of social events on a time scale, and the kind of ordering which is used determines the meaning which social events will have for the subject. The use of one or other system of temporal ordering enables the individual to assess the significance of isolated events for the social whole—one may see an event as a sign of slow social progress, another may see it as an indication that utopia is at hand. The elements of the cognitive styles which an empirical sociology of knowledge seeks to detect in ideas which transcend the existing social situation are therefore largely aspects of temporal orientation, the categories of historical time.

These categories are based on a certain dynamic orientation to the social process as a whole, a ‘dominant wish’, a basic motive with regard to the reality of social change. Out of this wish arise specific Weltwollen, an ‘intellectual motivation’ to impose one or other system on the world, both cognitively and in action. These notions carry the strong implication that men are to be studied as the producers rather than as the ‘consumers’ of ideas. ‘Social strata’, says Mannheim, ‘play a creative role precisely because they introduce new intentions, new directions or intentionality, new world postulates . . .’ 12 This kind of approach differs sharply from the social psychological model of behaviourism, implicitly underlying modern attitude studies, according to which an attitude is essentially an ‘implicit response’ evoked by certain stimulus patterns and which is in turn ‘drive-producing.’ 13 In this case the role of the individual is essentially a passive one, and he is studied not as the producer of the world of stimuli which surrounds him but as its product. Thus, in an ‘attitude inventory’ or a survey question the form of the cognitive item is contributed by the investigator, while the subjects of the investigation function merely as selectors of items, accepting some and rejecting others. The very form of the research instrument makes it inevitable that the groups whose attitudes are to be studied should be treated essentially as audiences, as consumers of attitudes rather than as their producers. This approach has its uses in connection with certain practical problems. But the sociology of knowledge is essentially concerned with man as a producer of social orientations, with the cognitive forms that he imposes on the information at his disposal. Hence this discipline must be concerned with the analysis of cognitive response to unstructured material, and in the usual case it must restrict itself to those members of a group who have made or are likely to make some active contribution to the construction of a cognitive style, that is to say, the intellectual representatives of the group.

In the past, the sociology of knowledge has concerned itself almost entirely with historical material, leaving the investigation of contemporary data to the methods of the social survey or to anthropological methods. If an empirical sociology of knowledge is to make a contribution to the study of contemporary problems it is necessary for it
to adopt certain modifications of technique so as to safeguard the objectivity of its findings. Thus, it is no longer possible to restrict one's analysis to the productions of a few systematic thinkers in the manner of the classical sociology of knowledge. In the first place such systematic thinkers may not exist in parts of the world where mental life has been decisively shaped by the colonial system with its emphasis on action and its contempt for intellectual values. Moreover, as soon as research deals with contemporary material the question of the representativeness of a given line of thought can only be answered by some form of sampling, whereas with historical material our knowledge of subsequent events can usually answer this question for us. This does not mean that it is necessary to seek that chimera of social research, the 'representative sample'. But it does mean that groups rather than individual intellectuals should be studied.

The use of groups of subjects and large numbers of protocols makes possible the application of quantitative methods which were excluded in the classical form of the discipline. But these innovations also make it necessary to take seriously the problem of reliability. Where it is a matter of analysing the intellectual premises of a single systematic thinker the social effects of whose thought are in any case known, the problem of the reliability of the interpretation hardly arises. But where one is dealing with a large number of individuals about whom one knows very little and who usually lack the self-consistency of great thinkers so that they may show elements of several styles of thought, the question of the reliability of the analysis can no longer be ignored. The way to deal with this problem is not to abandon the investigation of cognitive styles and to restrict the subject to simple yes-no responses which even a machine can score but to multiply one's human judges. By getting several judges of varying background to assess the mental product of each of the subjects of the investigation according to the same set of interpretive categories a measure of the reliability of the analysis can be obtained. This use of human judges cannot be avoided if cognitive styles are to be studied as part of a social totality.

IV. THE ASSESSMENT OF COGNITIVE STYLES

The material used for the investigation of cognitive styles in South Africa consisted of several hundred essays written in response to the following set of instructions:

ESSAY: THE FUTURE OF SOUTH AFRICA

Please write a short essay of 2 or 3 pages on the history of South Africa projected into the future. Imagine you are a historian writing in the 21st century and giving a brief outline history of South Africa from 1960 to 2010. Do not write merely a description of South Africa in 50 years' time, but write an actual history of the intervening period.
This is not a test of imagination—just describe what you really expect to happen.

These instructions were administered to groups of students in their class-rooms by their ordinary teachers. Subjects were told that the material was needed for purposes of social research and that all contributions were to be strictly anonymous. 45 minutes were allowed for the essay. The Afrikaans-speaking subjects wrote in Afrikaans and all other subjects wrote in English. The essays were collected during two periods: 1956–7 and 1960–2.

The subjects of the investigation consisted of 84 Africans, 51 Indians, 53 Afrikaans-speaking Whites and 251 English-speaking Whites. They were either University students or pupils in the last class of high school; a few of the African subjects were studying at a teachers' training college. The mean age of the White groups was about 19 years, that of the non-White groups about 21 years, but their overall educational level was comparable within the limits set by the South African system.

The essays were scored for elements of cognitive style by three independent raters, a psychologist, a sociologist and a historian. The cultural background of the raters was also rather varied, namely, British, Indian and German.

The raters were given the task of assessing the dominant type of historical orientation in each essay. For this purpose five types of orientation were distinguished: Conservative, Technicist, Catastrophic, Liberal and Revolutionary. It will be seen that two of these, the conservative and liberal categories, correspond to two types of 'utopian mentality' distinguished by Mannheim. The other two Mannheim types, the chiliastic and the socialistic, were not found applicable to the South African data. As regards the latter, it was observed that while actual socialist ideas were almost completely absent in all the social groups covered by the present study, elements of the historical orientation which Mannheim attributes to this type of 'utopian mentality' were extremely common among the essays collected from non-White subjects. It was therefore decided to substitute for Mannheim's socialist-communist category a new category, named the revolutionary orientation whose characteristic temporal perspective was the same as that of the corresponding Mannheim type but which showed no socialist or communist content. When this was done it was found that it became very difficult to distinguish this new type from the chiliastic orientation; usually the two kinds of orientation seemed to merge in the same individual and assigning the essay to one or other of these two categories became a very arbitrary matter. No further attempt was therefore made to distinguish the chiliastic type of orientation and certain aspects of this orientation were included in the new 'revolutionary' category, notably the sharp differentiation between present and future and the
voluntaristic conception of social causality. It is possible that this divergence from the patterns distinguished by Mannheim is due to the fact that his patterns were derived from the outlook of specific social groups at specific periods of European history which find little correspondence in the historical situation that is faced by the students who formed the subjects of the present study. They are neither workers nor peasants and yet, like so many others in the colonial world, they are driven to a revolutionary perspective by force of circumstances. It is only to be expected that their historical orientation should constitute a new type of organization which contains elements from both the chiliastic and the socialist utopia.

Mannheim's typology also requires to be amplified in other respects. His list of utopias is incomplete and does not take into account certain peculiar forms of the 'utopian mentality' which appear to have arisen in the twentieth century. One thinks here of the tendency for images of the future to become negative and frightening and also of the new genre of utopian literature embodied in Science Fiction. The latter is an example of a general tendency to see the future essentially in non-human terms; machines have become independent of man and history becomes the history of technology. This arises out of an orientation which considers all problems solely from the point of view of technique, what Georges Friedman has called the technicist orientation, and it is not by any means limited to engineers. Time becomes entirely a matter of physics—historical time disappears, or rather it stops, for no perspective is as blind to changing human relationships as the technicist one. This kind of Utopia usually means the projection of the social present into infinity. Concern with the remote future usually indicates passivity and helplessness in relation to the immediate future which is the effective range for constructive human action. It is under these conditions that the old split between present and future is replaced by the split between reality and illusion and that futurism takes on the non-constructive form of escapism.

But Science Fiction also provides a clue to a further pattern in which the 'utopian mentality' has manifested itself in recent times. The main theme of many of these stories is war and catastrophe, they exult in the description of terrible super-weapons and inter-planetary warfare; forecasts of the biological degeneration of man vie with predictions about the psychic control of the individual by means of advanced 'human engineering'; the theme of conquest of mankind by robots or machines has not entirely replaced more traditional phantasies of a Malthusian kind. The constructive aspect of utopistic thinking has here been replaced by a profound pessimism about the future so as to constitute what F. L. Polak calls a 'negative utopia', whose perspectives, one may add, are not by any means limited to Science Fiction (Aldous Huxley, Orwell). One is therefore dealing with a specifically modern
type of historical consciousness whose main characteristics are the experience of the future as catastrophic and the use of the imagination for elaborate descriptions of the destruction of human values. Historical time has lost the rationality which it had attained in the classical types of utopian mentality and has regained some of the irrationality of chiliastic time. Instead of a rational progression linking present and future one gets a kind of detemporalization of their relationship so that the future either becomes the infinite prolongation of present agonies or else it is pushed into a remote area separated from the present by a temporal vacuum. Instead of the confident assertion of human hopes and human capacities one gets a profound conviction of human impotence. It is not inappropriate to refer to this type of perspective as the catastrophic orientation.

In order to transform the typology of historical orientation into a set of categories suitable for empirical application it is necessary to develop specific criteria for the differentiation of these categories. In classifying essays on the social future one requires more than general descriptions of the main types of historical orientation. It is necessary to distinguish these patterns in terms of a few major characteristics which will be recognizable in the empirical material. Four such criteria were in fact used by our raters, namely, (a) the attitude to and the interrelationship of the present and the future; (b) interrelationship of historical means and ends; (c) the conception of social change; and (d) the conception of social causality. On each of these criteria the essay was placed into one or more of the five categories of historical orientation, each orientation being considered independently of the others. The rater then assigned the essay as a whole to one or other of the five categories, depending on which category had occurred most frequently in his rating by means of the four criteria. Thus, an essay which had been rated 'conservative' on three of the criteria, 'liberal' on two and 'technicist' on one would simply get a final rating of 'conservative', this being considered the dominant orientation. Where no orientation emerged as dominant, the essay was classified as belonging to a mixed type. The following guide was used in making the ratings on each criterion:

(a) Attitude to and interrelationship of the present and the future

Conservative. The past serves as a model for present and future—the future consists of the carrying out of traditional policies.

Technicist. The historical present leads to the future via technological development, not via social change.

Catastrophic. The future is the catastrophic negation of present values.

Liberal. The present develops gradually and continuously towards the future which is expected to be socially different from and better than the present.

Revolutionary. There is much emphasis on present tensions which are
removed by the eruption of the future at one or at a series of strategic moments.

(b) Interrelationship of historical means and ends

Conservative. The existing pattern of social power is both the chief end and the chief means of the historical process.

Technicist. Techniques tend to become goals themselves; great size, great power and large quantities are the indices of historical progress.

Catastrophic. There is a fatalistic acceptance of social violence and destruction leading to a negative goal.

Liberal. The goal is the improvement of the existing system by means of peaceful reforms voluntarily instituted from above.

Revolutionary. The complete and desired change of the social system requires violent means which are employed with strategic foresight.

(c) Conception of social change

Conservative. Denial of real change as possible or desirable; only temporary disturbances of the basic equilibrium of the system are recognized.

Technicist. Change is essentially quantitative and material, not qualitative and social.

Catastrophic. The present situation necessarily deteriorates until the final catastrophe is reached.

Liberal. Change is gradual and relatively smooth—conflicts are settled peacefully.

Revolutionary. Change occurs in terms of the violent development of irreconcilable conflicts.

(d) Conception of social causality

Conservative. The model is that of the organic functioning of an equilibrium pattern that has been established by tradition.

Technicist. There is a mechanistic emphasis on isolated causes, often of a chance nature, such as lucky finds and discoveries or exceptional individuals.

Catastrophic. This outlook is characterized by fatalism, a belief in the inevitability of decline.

Liberal. Enlightened self-interest and the spread of enlightenment provide the main social force.

Revolutionary. There is a voluntaristic emphasis on the role of the will for social change which is precipitated in political action.

Using this guide for the assessment of the essays the three raters agree on the dominant type of historical orientation in the case of 384 out of 439 essays. The fact that only one essay in eight could not be reliably classified seems to indicate that this method of rating is potentially useful for purposes of empirical research. Moreover, there was no tendency for disagreements among raters to be significantly more frequent for certain groups of subjects or for certain types of orientation.

The results of the assessment of the essays are set out in the following Table. Those essays on whose classification there was no agreement among the raters are shown as ‘unclassified’.

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Percentage Frequency of various Types of Historical Orientation in Essays from different Social Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Afrikaans</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Indian</th>
<th>African</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technicist</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catastrophic</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revolutionary</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The frequency of the various types of historical orientation conforms broadly to the position of the different groups in the social structure. Thus, the Afrikaans group which is at the head of the power hierarchy has the highest frequency of conservative types and the African group which constitutes the lowest caste has the highest frequency of revolutionary types. The high frequency of liberal types in the Indian group is probably connected with the extreme aversion to social violence that is characteristic of this defenceless minority group. Technicism as a historical orientation appears to be closely related to that attitude of political indifference which is found among groups which are politically unconcerned.

It seems, therefore, that social position determines the range of available historical orientations for the members of each social group. In each case there are two or three types of orientation which occur with some frequency in the group, but the relationship between social group membership and historical orientation is never unambiguous. It is possible for an African student to be a liberal or a revolutionary and for an English student to adopt a catastrophic or a liberal outlook. The outcome of the choice depends partly on the existing historical situation—but it must also depend on factors of a more personal sort.

When the content of the essays is examined in the light of their known historical orientation one is struck by the fact that there is one specific attitude which appears to be crucial in determining the choice of orientation, and that is the attitude to the underprivileged masses. This attitude appears to vary along two continua, active-passive and good-bad. At one extreme the masses are simply ignored—they remain, by implication, the passive objects of history. But if the masses intrude into historical consciousness this seems to involve a definite change in historical perspective, though to begin with they remain essentially passive and hence containable within the existing system. Thus, it was found that essays of the conservative type mentioned non-Whites significantly more frequently than essays of the technicist type (2 per cent level of confidence). But when conservative and catastrophic types
are compared one finds that the latter mention the non-White masses more frequently as independent political agents, while for the former they remain passive objects of administration (5 per cent level of confidence). Moreover, a similar difference exists between revolutionary and liberal types in that it is the former who see the masses as the crucial agent of historical change while the latter accord that role to the triumph of reason in the minds of the rulers. (The difference between liberal and revolutionary types in regard to mention of non-White masses as independently effective historical agents was significant at the 0.1 per cent level.) Finally, the crucial difference between catastrophic types on the one hand and liberal/revolutionary types on the other is obviously based on the benign significance which the masses have for the latter as contrasted with the fears that they arouse in the catastrophic type.

In other words, the individual's orientation to the social future appears to be a function of the manner in which he experiences the relationship between rulers and ruled. If he sees the latter as passive objects for administrative manipulation by the rulers in whose hands resides all effective social power and initiative, then his outlook will be a conservative one. If, on the other hand, he is convinced of the necessity of a violent clash of interests between rulers and ruled his outlook will be a revolutionary or catastrophic one. The degree of historical activity which is attributed to the masses depends on the extent to which the ideology of class conflict is openly accepted. The technicist type is furthest from this ideology, the revolutionary type nearest to it, whatever the specific embellishment which class ideology may receive in a caste society. While it is true that social caste sets severe limits to the individual's choice of ideological position, the positions he can choose from remain class positions, that is to say, they are essentially commitments on the basic issue of class conflict.

V. THE PROBLEM OF VALIDITY

It need hardly be stressed that no special significance attaches to the exact figures presented above. The subjects of this investigation were not intended to be representative of their respective population groups and no conclusions can be drawn from these data in regard to the actual frequency of, let us say, a conservative orientation in the Afrikaans group or a revolutionary orientation in the African group. However, it is clear that as far as student groups are concerned the differences found could hardly have been obtained by chance. But do differences on a set essay have any relation to the underlying differences of historical orientation that may exist among groups?

This question can only be answered by citing certain lines of evidence. In the first place, the observed differences on the essays correspond rather well to the known lines of political cleavage in the country. It
is known that government policies which are based on a mixture of conservatism and technicism enjoy strong support from the Afrikaans section and partial support from the English section. It is also known that organizations which stress political gradualism receive some English and considerable Indian support. Finally, those illegal movements which rely on extra-constitutional action are based very largely on the African section of the population. These differences are clearly reflected in the essay material, though the actual percentages have little significance in themselves.

Another line of evidence which suggests that the essays yield more than accidental material on group orientations is derived from the replication of the investigation after an interval of several years. When essays were collected from comparable groups of African and Indian subjects in 1956/7 and again in 1962 it was found that the distribution of the various types of orientation in the two groups remained remarkably constant; such minor differences as did exist between the earlier and the later sample were not statistically significant. This suggests that the distinctive cognitive styles of the essays are expressions of relatively stable types of historical orientation characterizing the various social groups.

In the case of the English-speaking group the original set of essays was collected in 1956/7 and a further set in 1960/1, in the period after Sharpeville and after the decision to leave the British Commonwealth. In this case there was one significant change—a decrease in the relative number of conservative types and an increase in the relative number of catastrophic types. This suggests that crucial historical events may produce a certain shift in the time perspectives of a section of the population. But the nature of this shift appears to be largely determined by the nature of the previous orientation. The fact that the commonest switch seemed to be from a conservative to a catastrophic and not to a liberal orientation suggests an interesting hypothesis about the nature of the catastrophic type. He may well be a conservative whose defences directed against the recognition of social change have broken down. He can no longer deny social reality, but still having a hierarchical view of social relations he reverses the perspective and anticipates the subjugation of his own group. As a result he suffers from a degree of personal alienation from the social process which the conservative does not know. The almost complete absence of catastrophic types in the non-White groups may be a reflection of their failure to adopt that ‘jungle ideology’ which is so prominent in sections of the dominant group.

In an attempt to test the generality of the cognitive framework expressed in the essays use was made of a method developed by Osgood for the ‘measurement of meaning’. This involved the administration of a list of adjectival pairs, such as, important-unimportant,
ant, negative-positive, good-bad, healthy-sickly, valuable-worthless, pleasant-unpleasant. A number of concepts then have to be placed on a five-point or seven-point scale running between each member of the adjectival pair. In the present investigation the concepts ‘the past’, ‘the present’ and ‘the future’ were used, and subjects had to rate each concept to decide whether ‘the future’, for example, seemed more good than bad, more negative than positive, etc. Fifteen pairs of adjectives, including the examples quoted above, were used to assess the overall positive or negative evaluation of these concepts, and there were also six adjectival pairs, such as, organized-disorganized, clear-hazy, transparent-opaque, which were concerned with the clarity of the concepts to be rated.

These scales were administered to 70 English-speaking White students, 28 of whom had written essays that belonged unambiguously to the liberal type and 42 of whom had written essays belonging to the catastrophic type. Several weeks elapsed between the essays and the scales which were administered as part of a psychological testing programme. On the basis of his responses to the adjectival scales each subject was then given six scores which represented his overall evaluation and clarity rating of the concepts ‘past’, ‘present’ and ‘future’. It was found that the ‘liberal’ subjects consistently gave a more positive evaluation to ‘the future’ than to ‘the past’ or to ‘the present’, while the relationship was reversed for the ‘catastrophic’ subjects who evaluated ‘the future’ in a more negative manner. Similarly, the ‘liberal’ subjects accorded greater clarity to ‘the future’ than to the other concepts, while the reverse was true for the ‘catastrophic’ subjects. Three of the four differences between the two groups of subjects reached the 1 per cent level of statistical significance and one reached the 5 per cent level.

While it is not claimed that responses to adjectival scales can yield a valid measure of the meaning of concepts, it does seem that they provide a useful set of formal reactions whose peculiar abstractness makes them a suitable vehicle for the expression of underlying cognitive orientations. They provide an opportunity for assessing certain aspects of temporal orientation under conditions rather different from those of the historical essay. The fact that a clear correspondence exists between responses under both sets of conditions seems to suggest that the cognitive framework expressed in the essays is not an artefact of the method but has some general significance also for other situations.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of our empirical data it is possible to make certain suggestions about a few of the intractable problems that have troubled the sociology of knowledge for many years. What room does the sociological determination of cognitive style leave to individual choice?
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Where this problem is posed in terms of a rigid alternative no solution can be expected. In fact, no simple correspondence between one particular cognitive style and one particular social group appears to exist. Within the society as a whole there are a limited number of social orientations and these are unequally distributed among the various social groups composing that society. This means that the individual member of the group has a limited number of possible orientations open to him. Where two kinds of social orientation are about equally probable in a given group certain common psychological factors may well prove decisive in determining the choice. Thus, in one study it appeared that young women who were optimistic regarding the consequences of the last War were also relatively more secure in their relation to their parents and in their sex role. But where a certain type of orientation is highly improbable for a member of a given group only exceptional personal circumstances are likely to lead to its adoption. Moreover, it must be remembered that many individuals show a great deal of inconsistency in their orientation, and here too accidents of personal history may determine which type of orientation achieves a relative and limited predominance.

While the social determination of the range of available thought categories remains an incontestable fact, it is also true that the extent of this range varies for different groups at different times. Sometimes the range of available orientations may be extremely narrow and at other times exceptionally broad. It would be the task of future research to assess the social conditions determining the range of cognitive styles available at any particular time. Again, it is the so-called underdeveloped countries which provide the richest material for empirical studies along these lines.

Situationally transcendent ideas can be regarded as attempts at subjectively mastering the basic tensions in a society. They provide the individual with a method of dealing with social conflicts that might otherwise assume an overwhelmingly threatening significance. Where the social framework itself is in doubt these ideas therefore always have a role to play in the psychological economy of the individual—their significance is not merely sociological. But the individual also has to deal with internal conflicts of a more personal sort, and it would not be surprising to find certain parallels between his preferred methods of mastering internal, psychological, and external, social, conflict. Techniques which the individual has learned in the family situation may well predispose him to choose one rather than another of the social orientations which his group membership makes available to him. But the kinds of conflict resolution which the individual has experienced in the family will hardly be independent of the position which his family occupies in the social structure. The relationship between individual and social factors in the formation of social perspectives is therefore far
more intimate than any abstract juxtaposition of social determination and individual freedom would suggest.

Nor can Mannheim’s claim for the privileged position of the intelligentsia be supported. Without going over the well-known criticism of Mannheim’s position it need merely be pointed out that the data of the present investigation provide no support for the view that intellectuals have a special freedom to synthesize a more objective world-view. The students covered by our investigation behaved in every respect as representatives of the wider social groups which had nurtured them, and their range of social orientations was correspondingly narrow. No trace of a common outlook or higher synthesis could be discovered. No doubt this is partly due to the exceptionally sharp nature of social conflicts in South Africa. But where the social whole is more stable the incidence of situationally transcendent ideas is low and the intellectual simply becomes a technician. Where the internal stability of the existing social framework is in doubt intellectuals are often concerned with utopian or ideological systems and their concern commands wide public interest; but under these conditions they invariably seem to act as the representatives of one or other of the main contending groups in society.

The non-privileged position of the intellectuals leaves Mannheim’s ‘perspectivism’ without any social basis. In the South African case it would require an extraordinary intellectual feat to arrive at some synthetic perspective which combines the partial historical insights of Afrikaner nationalists, English liberals and African revolutionaries. Such a synthesis would simply constitute the philosophy of the bystander, the cognitive style of the socially uncommitted. But where the ubiquity of social conflict excludes the possibility of non-commitment the intellectual stance corresponding to it would simply become another version of status quo ideology. It would certainly fail to yield any superior insight into historical truth because it would be based on the negation of the essential element in the historical situation, namely, the incompatibility of the conflicting interests.

The fallacy of according greater truth value to the synthetic world view is based upon a failure to recognize the active role played by cognitive patterns in the historical process. Subjective views of the social process do not merely lead to meditation, they also lead to social action. Conservative or revolutionary ideology is not merely a matter of ‘intellectual position’, but of practical policies and social movements which seek to impose a certain image on the world. Under these conditions social truth is created, not contemplatively interpreted, and he is nearest to the truth whose situationally transcendent ideas represent the interests of social forces which are favoured by the historical process. Not that social position directly affects the truthfulness of propositions generated by a particular thought model. But it affects the kind of
thought model which a given individual is likely to use.\textsuperscript{18} The extent to which an intellectual model of society is able to generate truthful propositions depends upon the relationship between the interests expressed in this model and the actual trend of historical development. Where these two factors are as sharply opposed as in the case of the ideology of \textit{apartheid} there arises the spectre of a totally ‘false consciousness’ whose every cognition must necessarily be wrong.

\section*{NOTES}
\begin{enumerate}
\item A few representative titles may be quoted:
\begin{itemize}
\item G. D. Scholtz, \textit{Het die Afrikanervolk ‘n Toekoms? (Have the Afrikaner people a future?)}. Johannesburg: Voortrekkerspers, 1954.
\item Mills, C. W., ‘Methodological consequences of the sociology of knowledge’. \textit{Am. J. Sociol.}, 1940, 46, 316–30.
\end{itemize}
\end{enumerate}