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Karl Mannheim's Jewish Question

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Received: 5 January 2012; in revised form: 26 March 2012 / Accepted: 6 April 2012 /

Published: 11 April 2012

Abstract: In this paper, we explore Karl Mannheim's puzzling failure (or refusal) to address himself in any way to questions arising out of the position of Jews in Germany, either before or after the advent of Nazi rule—and this, notwithstanding the fact, first, that his own ethnic identification as a Jew was never in question and that he shared vivid experiences of anti-Semitism, and consequent exile from both Hungary and Germany, and, second, that his entire sociological method rested upon using one's own most problematic social location—as woman, say, or youth, or intellectual—as the starting point for a reflexive investigation. It was precisely Mannheim's convictions about the integral bond between thought grounded in reflexivity and a mission to engage in a transformative work of *Bildung* that made it effectively impossible for him to formulate his inquiries in terms of his way of being Jewish. It is through his explorations of the rise and fall of the intellectual as socio-cultural formation that Mannheim investigates his relations to his Jewish origins and confronts the disaster of 1933. The key to our puzzle is to be found in the theory of assimilation put forward in the dissertation of his student, Jacob Katz.

Keywords: Karl Mannheim; Jacob Katz; Jewishness; sociology; intellectuals; cultivation; assimilation; Germany

1. Introduction

From one point of view, there can be no question that the sociologist, Karl Mannheim, belongs in a collection of studies dedicated to “European Jewish Émigrés and the Shaping of Postwar Culture.” He

certainly belonged to the cohort of exiles compelled to flee National Socialist Germany when he was ousted from his professorship as a Jew and effectively rendered unemployable; and his two best-known books, *Ideology and Utopia* and *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*—particularly the latter—were extensively discussed in both academic and wider public settings during the ten or more postwar years, notwithstanding his untimely death in 1947. He was asked to broadcast to Germany in the BBC's re-education program, much to the chagrin of Carl Schmitt and others [1], and he had been chosen as first Head of the European UNESCO office when he became ill [2].

Yet Mannheim, as we understand him, does not fit easily into the company of the other figures examined under the present heading at the mini-conference held at Duke University on April 3, 2011 because the contributions of the others were presented as somehow grounded in their Jewish identities, especially under the conditions of the war and post-war period, while Mannheim clearly kept his distance from his Jewish antecedents in his intellectual life. He thought and spoke as intellectual and as sociologist—the articulation of the intellectual's role he considered appropriate to the age—but not in any case as a Jew. His principal interlocutors during many of his exile years, in fact, were expressly Christian thinkers to whom he spoke in his capacity as a thinker without religious identity. The idea that his intellectual contributions might be accounted Jewish by virtue of his imputed ethnicity, which he never denied, would have disturbed him. Even if we were to argue that he was nevertheless a member of the Jewish community of fate (*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*), we would find at least one occasion on which he expressly denied precisely this and, more generally, we would be compelled to overrule the self-understanding of a thinker who built his entire thought on the primacy of reflexive clarity [3].

There is a more disturbing alternative offered by a subtle thinker who sharpens the problem precisely because he offers such a fertile proposal to explain Mannheim's position, up to a critical point. In a recent study, Ulrich Oevermann has written:

One of the important and inherently paradoxical historical consequences of the precarious minority status of Jew since the time of antiquity—and increasingly with the Christianization of the Occident—was that the dialectical mainspring driving towards a universal rationalization, which was inclined towards secularization, became ever more tightly wound in the course of the struggle for survival and adaptation, which was itself marked by a tension between “chosenness” and the universal ethic in whose name the “chosenness” was grounded. And under the conditions of entry into modernity, this led to a thoroughgoing cosmopolitan and universalistic intellectuality among European Jews. For the Jews socialized to this intellectuality, a Judaism understood primarily either as ethnic or as religious identity became increasingly obsolete. The consequence of the Nuremberg Racial Laws was that this universal-historical line of development was radically and brutally cut off. The industrially executed mass destruction of European Jews that was the sequel of these laws meant perforce that all surviving Jews and their descendants would henceforth have to define themselves in their collective social identities as victims of this persecution. Anything else would amount to a self-destructive denial of reality [4].

The last two sentences pose a challenge not only to Mannheim but also to numerous “surviving Jews” who defined themselves rather as comrades in one or another Socialist formation, as scientists, as continuators or innovators in cultural work, whether cosmopolitan or variously bounded. Paradoxically, Oevermann's formulation would also call into question the realism of Zionists during

the years before the Eichmann trial, when the separation from the “passive” victims was a pervasive motif. There is much ingenuity in Oevermann’s subtle version of what is sometimes called “psychological Judaism,” or “Jewish consciousness”—both terms offering poor connotative equivalents to the culturally laden German concepts of “*Psychologie*” and “*Bewusstsein*”—which offers a depth-structural hypothesis for a development that is subject to more sociological attention in the article below; but the proposition that the inner dynamic of Jewishness led Jews as such to become cosmopolitan intellectuals is no more proof against a myriad of counter-examples than the contention that failure to define themselves later as above all Jewish survivors is against their nature, to speak with Aristotle. Neither the writ of the Nuremberg Laws nor the murderous decree of the camps ran in the diverse and versatile mentalities of the individuals who share a designation as Jews.

A Jewish refugee who eventually played an important part in the German postwar academic culture can serve as authority for questioning the availability of a deep Jewish consciousness—as distinct from the shared but variously interpreted experiences of a generation—to which intellectual and cultural achievements can be referred. The testimony of Ernst Fraenkel is especially poignant because his considered judgment differed so markedly from his initial reaction, which approximated to Oevermann’s generalization, at least in relation to the German setting in which he had earlier functioned as political intellectual. Immediately after the war, in a letter to a Socialist comrade who had remained in Germany, he wrote:

In the relationship between Germans and Jews, now that 5,000,000 Jews have been murdered, I feel solidarity with the Jews—and only with them. I do not believe that it can be expected of any Jew that he will ever in future live in Germany [...]. I was in Germany long enough to know that a considerable proportion of the German population endorsed Hitler’s measures against the Jews. After this campaign has led to massacre, it is not permissible for me as a Jew ever again to make the cause of this people my own. That may sound bitter. I feel very bitter on this question. I believe that this wound can never be healed [5].

Yet in 1954, after a number of years in which he did indeed live in Germany and define himself first as representative of American political thinking and then as associate of German anti-Communists of the reformist left, including especially the recipient of his earlier letter, Fraenkel wrote an article on “The Jewish Question” in a volume produced jointly with a Wehrmacht veteran and dedicated to German political education in which he cast doubt on notions of a common Jewish ethnic identity or consciousness. He wrote:

The sociological character of the Jewish minority can hardly be established with any scientific certainty, since the Jewish communities scattered throughout the world differ so greatly in cultural and social characteristics and since neither Jews nor non-Jews are agreed as to who should be designated as a Jew.

Fraenkel was charged at the time by a well-known Jewish advocate, Hugo Marx, with having failed to recognize Jews as an „authentic ethnic minority “with its own collective “essence and attitude”; and he did not deny the charge. His point in reply was simply to emphasize the priority of the political task to which he had set himself and—at least implicitly—the terms of the alliances he had entered to advance these objectives [6].

Our aim in this preface is not to deny by any means that the distinctive historical experiences of figures like Ernst Fraenkel or Karl Mannheim are conditioned by their designation as Jews or their

needs to cope with the consequences of that designation. But we challenge the claim that there is an essentially Jewish way of undergoing these experiences or a Jewish way of acting in consequence [7].

We, the authors of this study, exemplify the complexity of the situation. Like Lillian Furst, to whom this collection is dedicated, one of us, David Kettler, is a member of the “second wave” of Jewish émigrés from Germany. He was born in Leipzig in 1930, the second son of young parents who were East European Jews, and he escaped to the United States with his immediate family in March of 1940. The prime mentor of his graduate studies was Franz L. Neumann, an exile scholar and intellectual, who taught at Columbia University. The other, Volker Meja, was born in Berlin two months after Kettler’s flight. His father, an engineer, was a *Wehrmacht* soldier during the last two war years, and Meja’s remaining family spent the last eighteen months of the war with his paternal grandparents in Silesia, and as a small child experienced the flight westward ahead of the Russian troops. Meja came to the United States on a Fulbright stipend after undergraduate study in Frankfurt with Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno and earned a doctorate at Brandeis University under Kurt H. Wolff, an émigré who had been a student of Karl Mannheim. He has had most of his academic career in Canada, while remaining a citizen of the German Federal Republic. The two of us have been collaborators in the study of Karl Mannheim and some other topics for almost forty years. We have differed often, but we have never experienced a division as between a Jewish and non-Jewish sensibility, except possibly for one afternoon in 1988, when we made two stops on a drive from Frankfurt a. M. to Cracow. First, we visited the village where Volker spent almost two years to escape the bombing of Berlin. And then, towards evening, we visited Auschwitz. On those occasions, we were both deeply affected but not in the same ways. Yet the paper we jointly delivered in Cracow bore no signs of these radically different experiences and memories. Neither author thought or wrote as a victim. We were preoccupied, rather, with the decline of trade unions in the West and worried about its consequences for the welfare state.

The original of the study presented below was written in Kettler's birthplace, Leipzig, during our joint fellowship at the Simon Dubnow Institute for Jewish History and Culture. We think that it is germane to the present occasion and are grateful for permission to contribute a revised version to the present collection [8].

2. A Puzzle and a Paradox

In this paper, we explore the puzzling failure (or refusal) on the part of the sociologist, Karl Mannheim, to address himself in any way to questions arising out of the position of Jews in Germany, either before or after the advent of Nazi rule—and this, notwithstanding the fact, first, that his own ethnic identification as a Jew was never in question and that he shared vivid experiences of anti-Semitism, and consequent exile from both Hungary and Germany, and, second, that his entire sociological method rested upon using one’s own most problematic social location—as woman, say, or youth, or intellectual—as the starting point for a reflexive investigation. A number of circumstances—including his choices of residence in notably Jewish middle-class neighborhoods in both Frankfurt and London, his seeming comfort with his identification as a Jewish person among colleagues and students, his abstention from any actions of disavowal, and his life-long close relations with his unquestionably self-identified Jewish parents, who outlived him in Hungary—make it implausible to

ascribe this seeming contradiction to some blanket denial of or disassociation from his own Jewish background. The key to our puzzle, we believe, is to be found in a place defined by an unsurprising relation for as dedicated a teacher as Karl Mannheim: in the work of one of his students, Jacob Katz.

Instead of a puzzle, we now offer you the paradox that, far from avoiding reflection grounded on his position and experiences as a Jew, it was precisely Mannheim's convictions about the integral bond between thought grounded in reflexivity and a mission to engage in a transformative work of *Bildung* that made it effectively impossible for him to formulate his inquiries in terms of his way of being Jewish. It is through his explorations of the rise and fall of the intellectual as socio-cultural formation that Mannheim investigates his relations to his Jewish origins and confronts the disaster of 1933. The crux is to be found in the theory of assimilation put forward in the dissertation that Jacob Katz planned with Karl Mannheim, according to Katz's testimony, but that he could not complete before Mannheim's expulsion from the university.

Jacob Katz was a Hungarian Jew from the village of Magyargencs. Strictly orthodox and a supporter of the religious Zionist organization, Mizrachi, he began his stay in Frankfurt, while preparing for university admission, in one of the city's yeshivas, which also provided him with sanctuary during his university studies. In addition to Karl Mannheim, the teachers he recalls in his memoirs include Paul Tillich and Theodor W. Adorno, Max Wertheimer, Max Horkheimer (whose course he fled because the teacher "lacked any inspiration") and a number of history and literature teachers. He was able to earn his doctorate in 1934 after the ouster of most Jewish faculty deprived him of his adviser, because of the professional and "fair" attitude of the historian, Georg Künzel, to whom Mannheim had sent him after his ouster, and who also promoted Margarethe Freudenthal, another Jewish "orphan" of Mannheim. In the case of Katz, good will combined with luck to secure him a second reader. Künzel coopted a Jewish Orientalist, G. Weil, who normally would have no qualifications in this field, and whose dismissal, delayed because of his military service, took effect on the day after the *viva voce*. With a stop-over in London to improve his English, during which time he attended some classes taught by Mannheim at the London School of Economics, Katz arrived in Palestine in 1936, in keeping with plans he had already made in 1930. He taught in the Sociology Department of Hebrew University, headed by Martin Buber, and he was one of the most prominent Israeli historians of the modern diaspora, operating throughout within the framework of a sociological approach, not uncontroversial among his peers [9].

In our paper, we shall touch on the following points: First, we summarize the main theses of Katz's pioneering work: "The Origins of Jewish Assimilation in Germany and its Ideology [10]." Second, we offer reasons for considering Katz's analysis as an extension and application of Mannheim's own thought, including an examination of their reciprocal interest in precisely this study, drawing on our familiarity with Mannheim's practice derived from earlier studies of other doctoral projects fostered by Mannheim and mentored by him. These are reasons, in short, for thinking that Mannheim's conduct in this matter was the expression of a deliberate strategy. Inevitably, such reasons cannot move this claim beyond the level of speculation. Yet our juxtaposition of Katz and Mannheim does not depend on this speculation, since Katz may be understood, in any case, to provide an explanation for the conduct common to Mannheim and other Jewish intellectuals of a certain kind. Third, then, in the light of Katz's theses, we review some key elements of Mannheim's work after 1933, notably his theory of the disintegration of the cultural elite structure as decisive for a diagnosis of the German catastrophe, to

show this work as meeting Katz's functionalist criteria for assimilationist Jewish thought. In conclusion, we suggest a surprising parallel between the assimilationist project that we impute to Mannheim and the vastly more successful undertaking of American Jewish intellectuals between 1910 and the 1940s to help "reconstitute American intellectual life and ... to construct, in the process, the particular, liberal vision of American culture that became a common possession of the American intelligentsia during the middle decades of the twentieth century [11]."

Our aim is not *Ideologiekritik*, a dismissive exposé of Karl Mannheim's thought, but an examination in the spirit of Mannheim's own sociology of knowledge, intended to open a neglected dimension of Mannheim's thought to negotiations from the standpoint of a new set of concerns, specifically, his problematic relationship to Jewish questions. Among premises not now on the table for discussion is our assumption that assimilated Jews are not inherently condemned to greater incoherence of thought or intensity of personal or political crisis than Jews of any other kind—not to speak of every variety of non-Jew. We reject what has been called in a different context the "jargon of authenticity," just as we do not mean to commit ourselves to the contention that individuals who are somehow cut loose from their home—whether by choice, circumstance, or exile—are uniquely situated to understand the human condition, a thesis that Mannheim himself advocated—and that was put into question by another of his prized students, at least as it applies to political émigrés [12]. Implicitly, then, we are also probing—through a case study—the complex reciprocal interplay between generative teachers and creative students.

3. Assimilation and *Bildung*

Briefly stated, it was the central contention of Jacob Katz's dissertation that the status of assimilated Jew depended historically upon the emergence of a new social location where Jews could be active on terms that did not merely hive off the discourse and practices constitutive of Jewish communal life, which could also be said of instructional sites where Jews acquired useful knowledge and scientific instruction, but whose constitutive ground rules rendered the distinction between Jew and non-Jew immaterial [13]. In principle, if not in practice, this required the Christians as well as the Jews to suspend their preoccupations with their religious starting points. Only under those conditions could Jews enter into collaborative relations with centers of non-Jewish thought and culture, not merely for the sake of science, but also, as Katz himself put it, applying a distinction of critical importance for German discourse of the Weimar era and a subject given special attention in the working group under Mannheim's guidance to which Katz belonged, for the sake of *Bildung* [14]. Such a social location, Katz shows, came into being with the formation of what he calls the modern *Bildungselite* at the end of the eighteenth century; and the relevant terms of discourse, turning above all on the concept of equality, can be comprehended, he contends, as Enlightenment thought, or Liberalism [15].

Citing Georg Simmel, moreover, Katz is not satisfied with speaking of the social location of the *Bildungselite* in abstract terms, but he also calls attention to concrete social associations and meeting grounds, from the academies of the mid-century to the salons of the following generation, where sociability came to count almost as much as actual mental performance (*Geist* and *Bildung*) in the shared cultivated idiom. The constitutive ideology of assimilationism, accordingly, is to be understood not in terms of this or that substantive deviation from some core of Jewish doctrine, given the

contested boundaries of these inherently non-dogmatic teachings, but in terms of its functionality for incorporating the assimilationist Jew in this more inclusive context, as a mode of social advancement under newly hospitable social conditions of elite formation, which the assimilationist Jews themselves, once admitted, did much to shape, so that it is only a slight exaggeration to go beyond Katz and to speak of a mutual assimilation.

4. Jacob Katz and Karl Mannheim

The similarities between Jacob Katz's analysis of Jewish assimilation and Mannheim's sociology are noted not only by Katz's grateful acknowledgment of the teacher who gave him his handhold in the alien world of secular social sciences but also by numerous commentators on Katz. Benjamin Ze'ev Kedar stands out among the latter because he specifies several important points of contact [16]. First, he notes that Katz "took up Mannheim's ideas about the socially unattached intelligentsia." In that connection, then, Kedar also points to a broader conception of a "neutralized social form," which figures importantly in Katz's subsequent work, if also in a skeptically amended version. Finally, Kedar cites a passage in a work by Katz of 1955, where Katz expressly refers to Mannheim's essay on Generations in constructing his own concept of "precursors." These thematic continuities are doubtless important, but the structural parallels are more profound.

These similarities are further elaborated here, if only in brief, both because they offer some new insights into Katz's early thought and because we want to hold open the ultimately unprovable possibility that Mannheim saw his educational transactions with Katz as part of his own work of self-clarification, as we have elsewhere shown to have been the case, with high probability, in his dealings with his student, Nina Rubinstein, whom he painstakingly supported in her work on their shared status as political *énigrés* [17]. In investigating the points of contact between Katz and Mannheim, it is not enough to compare Katz's writings with Mannheim's published texts. Katz never cites Mannheim in his 1935 dissertation, and this was not because Katz had been somehow forced to comply with new anti-Semitic norms in bibliographic practice, since Katz generously credits the writings of Hans Weil, another Jew, who had been a fellow member of the Mannheim seminar, although he received his doctorate at Göttingen. Weil's dissertation on the history of *Bildung*, suitably revised in consultations with Mannheim, was selected to follow Mannheim's own *Ideologie und Utopie* in the series that Mannheim edited. In his memoirs, then, Katz speaks of Weil as emerging "from the school of Karl Mannheim." For Katz, as for Weil, the crucial contribution made by Mannheim came through classes and conversations between the two men.

This point is important enough to warrant documentation through a rather lengthy quotation from Katz's autobiography:

In 1930, the year that I enrolled in the university, Karl Mannheim was appointed in place of the sociologist Franz Oppenheimer.... [W]ithin a year the young Mannheim, subsequently renowned as one of the founders of the sociology of knowledge, made a name for himself among the students as an interesting and stimulating lecturer.... At the very first class I knew beyond doubt that here was the person from whom I had most to learn.... I enrolled in the course and asked to join his seminar, and to use a rather grandiloquent phrase, thereafter my hand never left his—that is, until Mannheim was banished from Frankfurt with the rise of the Nazi party. Mannheim exhibited a personal interest in the life of his advanced students. The two of us shared

a common Hungarian-Jewish background although we came from opposite ends of the spectrum.... Mannheim's knowledge of Judaism was scanty, but he was much interested in its problems, especially in the role played by Judaism in the emergence of modern society. One of the most interesting seminars that Mannheim conducted, together with a number of other teachers, concerned the rise of liberalism. The seminar students were divided into groups, each one charged with exploring the historical sources to determine the role played by a specific sector of society in the development of liberalism. One of the groups dealt with the Jewish factor; and when I joined the class, I found their work already in progress under the direction of one of the more senior students. When this student left the university, I took his place—and thus was born the idea for my dissertation on the assimilation of German Jewry [18].

More precisely, the group that Jacob Katz joined was actually an interdisciplinary “Working Group on Social History and History of Ideas: Early Liberalism in Germany,” which ran for two years beginning in the academic year 1931/2 and was instructed as well by the economist, Adolf Löwe, the political scientist, Ludwig Bergsträsser, and the historian, Ulrich Noack—with Paul Tillich also occasionally present. Student participants included Norbert Elias, Hannah Arendt and her husband, Günther Stern (later known as Günther Anders), Hans Gerth, and Hans Weil, a number of whom based important subsequent work on their experiences in and contributions to the working group [19].

The definition and scope of *Bildung* was a major field of contention during the Weimar years, and Weil's book played an important part in the later stages, providing key arguments, for example to the right-wing sociologist Hans Freyer, as well as to Mannheim, notably on the obsolescence of a *Bildung* grounded in aristocratic experience [20]. The contest about *Bildung* was carried into exile by the predominately Jewish refugee intellectuals, and Mannheim's own post-1933 diagnosis of cultural crisis—as well as his therapeutic scheme—belong to this discourse. As for the Liberalism workshop in Frankfurt, Hans Gerth's dissertation on early Liberalism, completed in 1933 but approved only in 1935, is another prime document of the seminar. Expressly designed to parallel Mannheim's earlier study of conservatism, it refers to the Jewish contribution to the confluence of social factors constituting Liberalism only in conjunction with merchant bankers, notably Rothschild [21]. As in Mannheim's earlier book, the emergent stratum of intellectuals, who do the primary ideological work, is traced to Protestant clerical households. Katz's work can be read as a supplement, as its thesis was doubtless received in the workshop. Other sociological studies traceable to this remarkably fecund seminar are Margarethe Freudenthal's study of the changing status of women in the household, which begins with a remarkable account of the Goethe family, as well as Norbert Elias' social ecological study of the courtly society [22].

Katz's account of the birth of his dissertation may be supplemented by a speculation informed by study of detailed records available in two other cases, comprising a remarkable archive in the case of Nina Rubinstein. Mannheim's expressions of “interest” in the “life” of Jacob Katz, as well as his interest in problems of Judaism, as reported by Katz, would have been integral to their discussions of ideas for the dissertation. It was a cardinal principle of Mannheim that individual study had to begin as an exercise in self-clarification, focusing precisely on an aspect that is experienced as problematic, primarily because of a clash between institutionalized social expectations, articulated in prevalent ideologies, and the concrete social experience of the individual. Mannheim would have been fascinated by Katz's profound immersion in the practices and supportive community of orthodoxy, and he would

have learned or surmised that Katz, as he reports in his memoirs, experienced some strain between that essential part of his life and the world of the university student, and especially his encounters with assimilated Jews. A secondary principle in the design of students' projects was the selection of a topic possessing structural similarities to their own "life" problems, but simultaneously remote in time or place. In the case of Rubinstein, perplexed by her life within the Menshevik emigration in Berlin, the project ended up dealing with French émigrés of 1789. Katz's study similarly focuses on the eighteenth century.

Out of consideration for his student, Mannheim would have refrained from urging Katz to make any tensions involving orthodoxy itself the starting point for his sociological studies, since he frequently used the example of a transmutation of religious identification from practice to problem as a moment of distantiation that marked the end of religious authenticity. For example, in his 1930 lecture course on the "Introduction to Sociology," which Katz, it should be noted, almost certainly did not attend, Mannheim said: "Tolerance is the first stage in the distantiation of phenomena. The state of being addressed by religion and morality is replaced by an altogether different attitude towards these objects, by a distantiation, through which a change in function comes into being. The following must be added: anyone who comes from a bounded world-view will be horrified by the situation of distantiation from the last things, treating them as variable. They will find it an act alien to life, exterminating everything [23]."

Mannheim was not always so considerate when dealing with individuals other than students, as witness a furious letter from Michael Polanyi after a meeting between the two old acquaintances, in which Polanyi berates him because, in his view, Mannheim has seen fit to cross-question him on the sources and origins of his [Christian] religious convictions, as if they were some sort of pathological symptom [24]. The difference between the "interest" shown on the two occasions, however, is to be explained not only by the difference between mentoring a student and speaking with a peer, but also by the changes over the years between the two occasions in Mannheim's own relation to religious questions other than the sociological.

Katz gives a compelling if somber account of Mannheim's condition in the first phase of his second exile. He writes:

Upon arriving in London, I naturally lost no time in visiting Mannheim with a copy of my printed dissertation, in which he too had had a part, in hand. I began attending his lectures and one of his seminars [at the London School of Economics], but these were a faint echo of those given in Frankfurt. There were few students, the teacher still struggled with the language, and the intellectual curiosity that had once united teacher and student was totally absent. Mannheim's seminars for advanced students were attended mostly by Americans, and they too displayed little of the alertness of Mannheim's previous students. When asked to deliver a lecture on my dissertation topic, I had to overcome not only the language barrier but also the lack of audience interest in so remote a subject. Little wonder, therefore, that I had no real sense of satisfaction after completing my talk.

Mannheim did not hide his distress, but neither did he complain.... I could gauge Mannheim's view of his situation by a question that he tossed out without warning: 'How long do you think it would take me to master Hebrew should I decide to learn it?' Not that the spirit of Zionism had suddenly descended upon him, but the oppressiveness of his situation led him to consider possible alternatives, among them the Hebrew

University in Jerusalem. This was nothing more than a momentary flash, an idea that faded just as rapidly as it had come.”

Katz may have underestimated Mannheim’s actual interest in Jerusalem. Their discussion must have taken place while Mannheim was in fact in the process of weighing—and rejecting—an offer to join the new “University in Exile” in New York, so that Mannheim in fact did not lack another alternative. Then too there is the as yet unexplained circumstance that Mannheim’s library was sent to the Hebrew University after his death. It is of course possible that this was simply a decision of his widow [25].

Mannheim’s encounter with Katz coincides with his most intense personal questioning about his own religiosity. Because of its character as testimony, we quote an extended excerpt from a transcript of Mannheim’s intervention in a discussion held in the home of the theologian, Paul Tillich. The context is Christian, of course, but we should note Mannheim’s ambiguous reference to his genetic inheritance, as well as his rejection of the “spiritualized” deity of the intellectuals. There are evident parallels, moreover, to discussions in the circle around Martin Buber, with whom Mannheim participated in Heidelberg seminars, and whose ‘I-thou’ vocabulary plays a part in Mannheim’s 1930 lectures at Frankfurt:

One ought to talk about God, and I do not want to evade this. I believe that the question of God must be posed here in a quite extreme form. Scheler has said, and I must go along with this: if there is a God and if he is supposed to matter to me, then, in view of the modes of experience, it can only be a personal God. Because the highest form in which I can be addressed is not spirit, machine, natural law, or anything altogether sublime, but the primal experience of personality. It must be possible for me to speak with him, he must be able to address me. That is the feeling I have unconditionally, perhaps from childhood, as a matter of genetic inheritance (*Erbgut*), on the basis of the modes of encounter that one has as a human being. Either a God or none—and if so, then a personal God. I must be able to beg his pardon, to pray to him; he must have this personal quality.

I cannot accept the intermediate stages that are placed between man and God, stages that are already installed by Protestantism. The development to the point of the Hegelian World Spirit arose out of this spirit of retreat. Spiritualization arose for the sake of the intellectuals, who found the simple personal conception hard to defend and who were able to arrange God for themselves only in this pantheistic form. This spiritualized God is of no use to me. On the one hand, it is the historical merit of Protestantism to have carried this process into effect, but on the other hand, it is a renunciation of much unconditional evidence and generative force.

If I return to the primal question of either a personal God or none, I cannot come to any conclusion but that I do not know. One thing I do know. A personal God has never addressed me. I have indeed had experiences that you would call religious. But to experience these as if I had encountered a personal God could only be done by a man from the middle ages. I can provide a phenomenological description of what I call self-encounter, but only as a being thrown back (*Zurückgeworfensein*) on my own loneliness, the innermost source that springs up within myself and that is ecstatic,—and yet not so that a strange voice speaks into me, as a medieval mystic would say. Because I want to be just so exact (and modern man is like that) and because I have experienced it in this way, I cannot say that a personal God has spoken, and I remain silent

about it. I have not had him directly, but that is not all right (*in Ordnung*). And things are not all right with the world, there is something wrong with the ever greater analytical breakdown, something is lost. I also cannot see how my understanding could reach the point where it could say that there is nothing behind it all [26].

Drawing once more on the transcript of Mannheim's inaugural lecture course at Frankfurt, which Katz did not attend, we note the following: "Do not think about problems that do not become acute! If certain problems do not become acute in your life, do not believe that you would not be a cultivated person without these problems. When this problematic reaches you, however, you must know what it means and what possibilities the situation opens up. Perhaps one person can then even help another [27]."

To engage Jacob Katz in a study of assimilation may well have appeared as a brilliant opportunity for Mannheim to gain help with his own deep uncertainties while gently initiating a student into a process, on the other hand, which Mannheim must also have expected to result in his own distancing from his present commitments. Whether he saw the latter as risk or opportunity is hard to say, but his sense of sociological mission was inseparable from his conviction that there was something else. The contradiction would have appeared inescapable. Yet we do not want to build too much on this speculative excursus, whose claims are not essential to our main thesis. That is, whether Katz's theory of assimilation provides a key to our understanding of Mannheim's intellectual management of his Jewish question, which is our present concern, does not depend on the extent to which it also documents a process of intimate collaboration between the two men, where the student helps the professor to probe more deeply into his own existential uncertainties.

Yet the primary relationship between the two, especially from Katz's point of view, was that between teacher and student in a simpler sense, and the teacher, Karl Mannheim, during the Frankfurt years appeared above all in the guise of empirical-historical sociologist, with philosophical conundrums very much on the periphery, and quite possibly invisible to someone who came to university with Katz's sharp distinction between the sites of his scientific training and the sites of his cultivation—and with a supportive local network of orthodox Jewish associations to sustain the difference [28].

We turn, then, to some similarities between Katz's structure of analysis and the teachings of the "scientific Mannheim" of the Frankfurt classroom. Mannheim's lecture courses in Frankfurt followed a sequence of historical periods, each used as the occasion for highlighting a distinct complex of institutional concepts largely derived from Max Weber's systematizations. The Summer 1931 course that covered the time period from antiquity to feudalism, for example, developed the concepts of family, tribe, and patrimonial rule; the Summer 1932 course on the high middle ages and early modern period brought out themes of upward mobility, classes, women and the educated strata. There was also a course focused on the developments of urban, bourgeois society and the concomitant rise of state formations. The point of the sequence is epitomized in the catalogue title of the first one, "The Social Forms of the Present and their History [29]."

Mannheim's design embodied what may be called a "historical approach" with an unembarrassed presentist agenda. There is a complex relationship between Mannheim's pedagogical and theoretical strategies, especially in the uses of history. From the latter point of view, there was a strong

phenomenological element in Mannheim's approach, incorporating historical elements into an apprehension of "the social forms of the present [30]."

In applying our understanding of Katz's theory of the rise of assimilation and its ideology to Mannheim's management of his situation as assimilated Jew in a world that undermined the structural supports of trans-religious liberal space, we implicitly treat Katz's approach as more nearly phenomenological than historical. To justify this reading, we draw especially on Mannheim's practice of recommending historical distantiation to his students as a resource for a kind of phenomenological *Wesensschau*, as a methodological aid to confronting their own most problematic experiences.

Whether this was in fact the case for Katz in his days as Mannheim's student cannot be stated with certainty, especially because Katz's later use of the research reported in his dissertation treats the epoch of the rise of assimilation merely as a phase in a process that generated a sequence of differently designed social constitutions, notably in his *Out of the Ghetto* [31]. It is of course open to us to contend that Katz's early insight has no less power than his subsequent periodization—and that in fact his later conceptions in fact represent comparatively minor adaptations of the basic design. On the other hand, the design itself may have been affected by the ambiguous requirements of a thesis defended after the establishment of Nazi rule in the universities. In the end, the theory we derive from Katz and apply to Mannheim can be validated by the authority of Katz with only somewhat more assurance than we can treat Katz as expounder of Mannheim's self-understanding. Yet in both respects, we obviously think that the probabilities are worth the gamble.

The main conceptual elements in Katz's study of assimilation are the emergence of the *Bildungselite* in the 18th Century, the correlation between a new social formation of "intellectuals" within this setting and Enlightenment or liberal thought, the importance of concrete settings of conversation and sociability, the shift of perspective from one generational unit to the other, the motif of social advancement, and, overall, the identification of sociological analysis with the identification of "functional" relations rather than substantive ones. The themes are applied as analytical tools in historical sociology, rather than being theoretically developed, as they are in Mannheim's published writings. Their treatment here corresponds to the approach in Mannheim's lecture courses, as well as in Katz's most frequently cited source, Hans Weil's study of *Bildung*, which was developed, like Katz's own work, in Mannheim's Working Group on Early Liberalism [32].

In both Mannheim's publications and his classes, as in a large manuscript study of intellectuals left unfinished at his death, Jews who have left the community of the faithful always figure in Mannheim's recitations of the miscellaneous social elements who are collected in the emergent *Bildungsschicht* between the mid-eighteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet he never separately addresses Katz's distinctive questions about the processes that led to their departure from the Jewish community and to their acceptance within the programmatically "spiritual" (*geistig*) social groupings of non-Jews. To Mannheim, the dissolution of all primary religious communities and "primitive" modes of understanding the world appear simply as the single most important but nevertheless self-evident aspect of the processes of modernization. "Secularization" appeared irreversible, at least as far as the old religious institutions were concerned. Katz's starting point within the ranks of the orthodox problematizes that self-evidence and opens questions about Jewish assimilation that are analogous to the questions opened about the self-evidence of other aspects of liberalism by the revival of

conservative thought, which Mannheim had entered into for purposes of his seminal study of Conservatism, five or six years before his meeting with Katz [33].

5. Another Jewish Reception of Mannheim's Principal Work

To clarify the special character of Katz's intellectual negotiations with Mannheim, it is worthwhile to contrast it with the only other distinctly Jewish contemporaneous reception of Mannheim we have been able to find, a quite long review of Mannheim's *Ideologie und Utopie* by Rabbi Ignaz Maybaum in the Zionist periodical, *Jüdische Rundschau* [34]. Because of the importance of communicative transactions with his surroundings in the very constitution of Mannheim's *Bildungs*-oriented project, notably in relation to students and colleagues, but also with publics more broadly defined, we researched the Jewish Umfeld of Mannheim's work, focusing on a search for direct (or indirect) receptions of his work within the contested terrain of contemporaneous Jewish discourse. There is no evidence, however, of anything resembling Mannheim's intense interactions with two Christian groupings, the Paul Tillich Circle in Frankfurt and the Moot in England (where he always participated, it should be noted, as unquestionably non-Christian). Nor have we found any evidence that Mannheim was challenged by Jewish publicists, who one might suppose to have been disturbed that he made no effort at all to carry on the scholarly and personal involvement in Jewish affairs that marked the career of his immediate predecessor in the Chair of Sociology at Frankfurt, Franz Oppenheimer.

The Zionist publicist, Maybaum, is in fact highly favorable in his assessment of the book, although he is markedly selective in the segments he recombines in his account of its argument. First, however, he dismisses Mannheim's concept of "total ideology" as an embodiment of what he considers to be Mannheim's mistaken claims that all social knowledge is perspectival in structure and that consequently a "science of politics" must somehow mediate the ideological conflicts to generate a "synthesis" in the form of a shared realism, a corresponding moderation of conflict, and its transmutation into a negotiation of contrasting interests. Instead, Maybaum emphasizes the contrast between ideologies and utopias that Mannheim develops in portions of the three essays unsystematically joined in the book, notably in the essay on utopia that is located at the end, without in fact serving as the conclusion of a cumulative argument, as Mannheim himself notes. The unified plot that Maybaum imposes on *Ideologie und Utopie*, then, involves the difference between intellectuals trapped in backward-looking ideologies by ignorance, the psychology of interests, or manipulative design, and intellectuals possessing the energy and insight to define the world by utopias, which have the capacity to validate themselves in practice by energizing action to implement their visions. Maybaum's sole criticism of the Mannheim he extracts and praises is that his review of utopias fails to recognize Messianism, where Maybaum would situate the intellectuals of Zionism. We add two small points, to close this excursus. First, it should be noted that Mannheim's "amplification" of his utopia concept in his 1930 course eliminated the ambiguity on which Maybaum's reading rests: "utopia" now appears simply as a preliminary stage in the process of distantiation from unproblematic, "primitive" interpretations of experience. Second, on the other hand, it should be said that the positive assessment of the "mission" of intellectuals that Maybaum did share with Mannheim and that doubtless first attracted him to *Ideologie und Utopie* did not give way when most Zionist discourse after 1933 concentrated single-mindedly on "salvation through physical work and the accompanying disdain for

pursuits requiring brain instead of brawn.” He warned “dejectedly” against the Zionist abandonment of *Bildung*, according to a historian of the Jewish publicistic in Nazi Germany [35].

The important point arising out of the brief comparison between Maybaum’s and Katz’s relationships to the work of Karl Mannheim is that while Maybaum read Mannheim for political theses grounded in sociological interpretation, Katz dealt with Mannheim, above all, as teacher, very much in the sense of value-free social science. We have called attention to a surplus dimension, where Mannheim intended sociological studies also to provide orientation through self-clarification, but it seems clear that this dimension mattered much more to Mannheim than to Katz, whose orientation was not problematical. There was a certain asymmetry in their shared enthusiasm for Katz’s project.

6. The Cultured Elite in Mannheim’s Diagnosis of National Socialism

Katz’s analysis offers us a vital new dimension for grasping Mannheim’s understanding of and response to the Nazi regime,—specifically, it leads us to find Mannheim’s self-awareness of his position as assimilated Jew and his despair at the fate of this group embedded in the primary manifest level of his diagnosis of the structural pathology, not limited to Germany, and in his proposed therapeutic response. The destruction of the *Bildungselite* is the more inclusive frame of reference, as the destruction of the labor movement was for Socialist emigrants.

In 1933, even before he arrived in London, his ultimate place of exile, Karl Mannheim approached the Paris office of the Rockefeller Foundation with a project proposal. He requested the extraordinary sum of \$50,000 (five times as much as the Foundation awarded Alfred Weber for ten volumes of detailed economic research) to bring together a team of exiled social scientists and his best Frankfurt students in order to study “The Sociological Causes of the Cultural Crisis in the Era of Mass-Democracies and Autarchies.” For the interdisciplinary senior staff, Mannheim proposed the psychologist Theodor Reik, the social historian Alfred von Martin, the political scientist Sigmund Neumann, and the legal sociologist, Franz L. Neumann. Mannheim also asked for five “young social scientists,” as well as two “observers” in Germany and Russia. Another source adds Ernest K. Bramstead, Norbert Elias, W. Falk, Hans Gerth, Svend Riemer, and Albert Salomon—all but one former Mannheim students--presumably to fill the junior roles [36].

“The urgent occasion for study,” he writes to the Rockefeller Foundation, is the conjunction between an “era of the most highly perfected technical rationalization and planning” and social-political forces that will, if unchecked, “lead to the dissolution of all forms of culture and a universal reversion to barbarism.” His “sociological investigation into the social conditions for the growth and existence of ‘culture’ “is designed to uncover “the clue to the remedial measures needed” to direct the un-avertable shift to the planning of culture not “according to the preconceived patterns of the various political groups” but according to knowledge capable of halting the abandonment of the “common Christian-humanitarian basis of Western society.” The central analytical figures are the distinctions between unplanned and planned sectors of society and the correlate conceptions of elite and mass; and Mannheim’s leading idea, as in his subsequent published writings, is that developments in the unplanned sector have led to destructive changes in the function of liberal non-intervention, undermining the structured reproduction of cultural elites and their publics in favor of a vicious symbiosis of leaders and masses. What emerges perhaps more clearly here than in some of

Mannheim's later writings is that his distinctive contribution to the widespread confident advocacy of planning was intended to be the planned reconstitution of an intellectual elite dedicated to high culture, albeit democratic in recruitment. The research aims to integrate historical, comparative, and empirical studies of social mechanisms of elite (de)formation, with the sociologist functioning as coordinator of an interdisciplinary team.

Notwithstanding Mannheim's historically and instrumentally apt qualification of the foundational culture as both humanitarian (*sic*) and Christian, the sociological focus on the disintegration and eventual restoration of what Katz had called the *Bildungselite* indicates to us that we have found the locus of Mannheim's treatment of what we want to circumscribe as his Jewish problem, the problem of the assimilated Jews whose social status and activity are constituted by their place in that socially transcendent location, namely their identification with the *freischwebende Intelligenz* which forms the most dynamic and innovative element in the more broadly defined cultivated segment of society. In a treatise written in 1924 as he was preparing to move from philosophy to sociology, Mannheim offers a theoretical account of the formation of the *Bildungskultur* and the range of possibilities that it opens to such socially unattached social existences as impoverished gentry and the Jewish element for comparatively liberal choice in the political or cultural tendencies they make their own [37]. The "crisis of culture," we maintain, was signaled for Mannheim not least by the anti-Semitic assaults against assimilated Jews, notably their exclusion from the cultural sphere that had been Mannheim's own home in Germany.

The pain of this exclusion can be gauged from a somewhat dramatic statement he made at the time of his first arrival there, as exile from Hungary:

At this time—and perhaps it will some day be different—I am interested above all in the lives of those to whom I belong. We, the multitude spread all over the world, are the only international rootless scatterings without ground under our feet, we who write and read books and who are one-sidedly interested, in writing and reading, in the spirit alone. Cultivation, true humanism, forms men into a new kind of stratum, cutting across the economic and other sociological classifications. Cultivation also shapes the most spontaneous forms of life and transports man into an isolated world incomprehensible to others. While the cultures of China and India created an externally visible caste for these people, our isolation is sometimes hidden from view, since the stratum does not possess such an unambiguous mark of recognition.

When I think about the general and mistaken beliefs that are a consequence of not having such a mark, it always amazes me how much closer I am to those who participate in this cultivated humanism and how much closer they are to me than they or I are to those who share their nationality but are an altogether different kind of people. I respect their efforts (and time may eventually grant meaning to their strivings), but I simultaneously scorn the lies of those who, under national or racial catchphrases or the slogan of class struggle, want to fulfill the romantic dream that they are at one with the race or class that they programmatically represent [38].

7. Mannheim and the 'Jewish Sect.'

If this is indeed the solution to the riddle of Mannheim's seeming total indifference to the situation of Jews in Germany notwithstanding his non-denial of his own identity and the methodological

grounding of his thought on the moment of self-reflection, it yields a result that is unsatisfactory in a number of basic respects. First, it is an awareness devoid of any solidarity with Jews who have nothing to do with the *Bildungselite*, perhaps even orthodox Jews like Katz, not to speak of the numberless poor of the East. Second, there is no acknowledgment of the enormous violence against Jews, which is shocking even if we recognize that Mannheim died before the implications of the mass murders condensed into concepts of Shoah and Holocaust.

Before addressing these profound limitations, however, it is necessary to address the paradox in our thesis, which is that we impute a central concern with a vital Jewish theme to a thinker who did not himself refer to the supposed Jewish dimension of either the emergence (except in passing) or the terminal crisis of the cultural elite, which encompassed the intellectuals with whom he identified himself. Jacob Katz's exposition of the assimilationist ideology offers an explanation of the paradox, especially through his recognition of the "functional" or what might also be identified as the rhetorical dimension of this pattern of thought. If Mannheim was convinced that the effectiveness and perhaps the existence of the assimilated Jew depended on the vitality of a social-cultural space where the difference between Jew and Christian did not count, then he could reasonably conclude that it would be impossible to contribute to its reconstitution by speaking as a Jew, at least in a historical setting in which all the talk of inter-religious unity had become transparently empty, as was true at the latest since the First World War.

It should perhaps be emphasized once more that we consider the class of assimilated Jews of interest to Katz and of relevance in understanding Mannheim to be a bounded social formation rather than a moment in a continuous movement towards denial of Jewish origins or ethnic ties. Karl Mannheim is an altogether different case than the noted philosopher, Karl Popper, who rejected all links to a Jewish legacy in any sense [39]. Mannheim was always, as Nina Rubinstein recalled in old age, "a guter Jud," in the eyes of his students. We have explored the methodological problems associated with such bounded formations, constituted and reconstituted by processes of negotiation elsewhere, notably in the context of exile studies [40].

Mannheim's main design in Weimar Germany was to make the academic discipline of sociology a place open to intellectuals in his sense, which clearly included the assimilated Jews of his generation. Sociology, moreover, was to play a critical role in repairing threatening breaches in the civil fabric of society, notably by contributing to the political education needed to undergird the republican constitution. In brief, it was the new *Bildung* [41]. Mannheim's distinctive conception of sociology as the framework for a new *Bildungselite* and as an agency for the reconstitution of both civil society and an organon for a saving political knowledge is put in a curious light by the ironic label of a "Jewish sect" attached to sociology by his predecessor at Frankfurt, Franz Oppenheimer. A positivist in his conception of the discipline and a dedicated Zionist in his politics, Oppenheimer frequently wrote in Jewish publications on the sociology of anti-Semitism and similar themes [42]. Like many Zionist writers of the time, Oppenheimer agreed with anti-Semites about the hatefulness of many Jewish characteristics, but insisted that these had to be explained by the oppression and restrictions under which they were forced to live in the diaspora. In any case, he had a far different conception of both the discipline and Jewishness, and he did not respond to the state of the question as we recognize it with the help of Katz.

Like Mannheim, the literary critic and philosophical writer, Erich Kahler, similarly placed problems of German *Bildung* at the center of his diagnosis of and therapeutic response to the “cultural crisis,” but he had no reservations about speaking as a Jew of a kind. In a book that infuriated the Nazis when they came to power and led to Kahler’s exile in 1933, *Israel unter den Völkern*, he gave the mission of saving German culture to Jewish men of culture. This is not the place to relate this curious twist to our thesis about assimilation, but it would not be hard to show Kahler’s strategy to be a variant on the general project of reconstituting a neutralized cultural site [43].

Mannheim’s closest approach to an express identification with Jews in a published work gains this character only by the context in which it appeared. Writing in Hungarian in 1924, Mannheim claimed for himself a place in the principled political emigration from Horthy’s authoritarian regime, asserting an elite function for that segment among those that fled. What is interesting from the present point of view is that the editor of the émigré publication, Samu Fényes, claimed that it was “das Judentum” that had first crystallized the concept of “humanity,” which is the hallmark of the “most perfect patriot” who serves as model for the publication, Diogenes [44]. It is interesting both that Fényes should have considered Mannheim a kindred spirit and that Mannheim should have published there, at a time when he was simultaneously having to validate himself at Heidelberg, against hostile anti-Semitic official attitudes, as an unpolitical German scholar.

Mannheim’s opponents in German academic life included figures like the noted literary scholar, Robert Curtius, who were not the most rabid anti-Semites, but who expressly criticized the openness to Jews that Mannheim’s sociological project entailed. They saw a link between his version of sociology and his Jewish identity. His main competitor within the profession in Germany, Leopold von Wiese, a sociologist celebrated by many American sociologists at the time, wrote an obituary for Mannheim after his death in 1946 in which he remembered a conflict between them about the meaning of freedom. He concluded that Mannheim’s idea of freedom culminated in rule of the “clever” and that it would be alien to someone “whose parents did not come from the ghetto [45].” Speaking for sociology in Mannheim’s sense amounted to speaking as a Jew, at least in the mind of his non-Jewish contemporaries.

The rhetorical context was even more difficult in England, at least on Mannheim’s reading, since his conception of the *Bildungselite* required that it had to validate itself by its responsiveness to crisis, by its dynamic leadership, conditions that were not in his view met by the “smug” British publics that did in fact, we might note, offer a secure and influential home—or at least institutionalized routes of access—for English Jews of different degrees of assimilation, from whose influential centers Mannheim himself had, in any case, evidently suffered some rebuffs. After several failed efforts in social science circles, Mannheim found what he considered to be a promising setting in an expressly Christian group and among conservative cultural critics like T.S. Eliot, who spoke in terms of a Christian culture, while patronizing non-Christians like Mannheim himself and his close friend, Adolph Lowe. He could keep his distance from their religious convictions by emphasizing his status as both emigrant and sociologist, but he could not hope to address the relations between the cultural order they promoted and the fate of assimilated Jews, let alone the persecution and destruction of Jews in general, except as a symptom of the “crisis.”

It is our argument in brief that Mannheim’s silence on Jewish questions is to be explained by the priority he assigned to what he saw as a “crisis of liberalism” to be countered by a *Bildung* in the guise of a sociologically informed “political education,” and that this complex project, combined in what he

took to be the mission of sociology both before and after his expulsion from Germany, also comprehended what he took to be his own Jewish question. We would contend, moreover, that understanding this as an assimilationist ideology, in Katz's terms, does not in itself deny Mannheim's thinking important cognitive worth, as we have tried to show in numerous publications. On the subtle relations between ideological perspectives and social knowledge, we side with Mannheim's claim that there may be interdependence as well as mutual contradiction, depending on the structure of the ideology and the historical context to which it is applied. And in this, we side as well, of course, with Jacob Katz, who never questioned that in Mannheim he had found "the person from whom I had most to learn."

8. Mannheim's Silence

Yet once the discussion turns to evaluation, we are confronted with the "limitations" noted above, which may be deemed ethical or cognitive, but in any case belong to the moral philosophy of knowledge. Whatever the theoretical perspective, how is it possible to address the largest questions of social explanation and diagnosis without some express attention to a whole population hunted to misery and death? Even Max Weber's conception of value-free social science always provided expressly that the selection of questions to be addressed by science may be subjected to ethical judgment. Solidarity is not an irrelevant demand. Yet the most familiar habitus of that term suggests a far more prominent parallel case, the reluctance of socialist analysts of all varieties not expressly identified as Jewish to jeopardize their capacity to speak for and to the working class movement by focusing on the fate of Jews, except insofar as they could be subsumed under an analysis of the proletarian situation. A friendly rival of Mannheim in the Weimar years on questions of both sociology and *Bildung*, Albert Salomon, broke with exile socialists on these grounds; while Mannheim's sometime student, Franz L. Neumann, on the other hand, remonstrated with Max Horkheimer when the Institute of Social Research decided, for a number of reasons, to invest great intellectual efforts in the study of anti-Semitism, maintaining that he had himself written a whole book on National Socialism without more than incidental mention of anti-Semitism and that the proposed new focus risked an abandonment of their socialist theory.

Some recent scholarship suggests that Neumann's fears were not altogether unjustified, but also that the problem of accounting for the new emphasis in the work of Horkheimer and Adorno is too complex to incorporate in the present study. We would suggest, however, that the considerations we develop in the case of Mannheim also have a bearing on the work of his rather scornful intellectual opponents, operating in a very different context. The subsumption of the horrors in German Europe under the rather bland heading of anti-Semitism, as it had been the domestic target of American Jewish investigation and mobilization for years, and as it still framed the inquiries pursued by the Institute for Social Research, raises a number of similar questions about the virtual neglect of key happenings affecting the great mass of European Jews. At present, we are only calling attention to Neumann's objections, stated, at least implicitly, in terms of solidarity with the working class movement. Horkheimer and Adorno did not so much oppose it; they lost interest [46].

In both the socialist and liberal cases (as we may label Mannheim's project), the scientific work was meant simultaneously to perform a rhetorical function, to produce and reproduce the cultural structures

they consider decisive—a working-class movement in the one case and a *Bildungselite* in the other. In both cases, the functional designs precluded a response to other considerations. The parallel does not resolve the problem, but it puts it in a larger more complex problem context, which cannot be explored here.

We come finally to the question that cannot be avoided by anyone living today, Mannheim's manifest failure to take notice of the mass destruction of European Jews. By 1943, when he published *Diagnosis of our Time*, much was already known. The photographs of old Jews scrubbing streets in Vienna in 1938 or the detailed reports of November 9, 1938 in Germany should have sent sufficient signals even in 1940, when he published *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*. When we confront this extraordinary omission, however, we must recognize that Mannheim simply never confronted physical violence at any level of his studies. It was a blind spot, perhaps related to his profoundly constructive project of a humane but regulated society, based on strategic controls and compromise. Violence, amazingly, was not interesting. In that sense, notwithstanding what may be called the constitutional-political character of his whole approach, he was a profoundly unpolitical thinker, the very antithesis of another old critic of his, Hannah Arendt [47]. It may be argued that to confront Mannheim in the 1940s with the question of the Holocaust is anachronistic not in the sense that the news about the mass murders of Jews was not known, but in the sense that at the time of his death, as has been shown through detail studies of historians by Nicolas Berg and through a sociological overview by Jeffrey C. Alexander a year earlier, the events were almost universally construed as "atrocities" and "war crimes," like other atrocities and war crimes of the regime, not as an integral event of unique character and ontological evil [48]. Yet that possible historical qualification does not affect Mannheim's larger blindness to violence against Jews, not to speak of the question why it was Arendt not Mannheim who saw the graver possibilities. So our criticism of Mannheim's one-sidedness stands.

9. The Jewish Question in American Social Science

That the interconnection between the effort to renew a socio-cultural space where assimilation is possible and the avoidance of Jewish questions in the work of Karl Mannheim and other Jewish intellectuals of his Weimar generation can be elucidated with the help of Jacob Katz's conception of a functional assimilationist ideology invites consideration of other situations that may also be clarified by this approach. An interesting parallel phenomenon is the role of Jewish intellectuals in the de-Christianizing of American academic culture with the help of a celebratory ideology of science. It is the merit of David A. Hollinger's work that he highlights, first, the extent to which the idea of a Christian culture continued to dominate American university life well into the twentieth century, second, the idea of a conjunction between science and democracy as prime vehicle of the largely successful attack on the hegemony of this conception, and, third, the vital role played by Jewish intellectuals in promoting this ideology of science, even where the element of myth-making is fairly patent, as in the elevation of Justice Holmes to an iconic role [49]. An elective affinity between the Weimar and American projects, notwithstanding the shattering difference between the tragic defeat of the one and the triumph of the other, is suggested by Hollinger's selection of Robert K. Merton, a sociologist who revealed his Jewish antecedents fairly late in his career, as a paradigmatic figure of the

American project, since Merton was also the most influential American interpreter of Mannheim during the 1930s and 1940s. In that interpretation, however, Merton shifted the reading of Mannheim from the focus on sociology as a form of the intellectual's world to a concern with sociology as science. We are arguably confronted with simply a different mode of the functional ideology of assimilation.

Introducing the question of an American comparison, frees the consideration of the German case from the claustrophobia of the endless debate about the supposed German-Jewish symbiosis. If Katz's theory of assimilation is freed from the notion of irreversible stadial development, which displaced what we provisionally called a "phenomenological" reading of his theses, it will appear that the need to produce and reproduce the "neutralized" social space essential to assimilation is a recurrent one, and that there is no cumulative or "progressive" development of Jewish intellectuals' awareness from assimilation to national consciousness—nor a necessary decline to self-hatred and self-denial. Without unusual philosophic gestures, then, it may prove that Katz's findings about assimilation in the eighteenth century are revealing not only about his teacher, Karl Mannheim, but also about Jewish intellectuals in various Western settings.

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