

Karl Mannheim's Contributions to the Development of the Sociology of Knowledge

Peter Mayo

Karl Mannheim's work in the area of Sociology of Knowledge is generally considered to be his greatest contribution to sociological research. In his writings on the subject, the Hungarian theorist posits that a sociology of knowledge is possible and that there exists a relationship between forms of knowledge and social structure. His major contention in this respect is that ideas relating to definitions of social reality are existentially-determined.

In this paper, I shall attempt to provide an exposition of Mannheim's ideas regarding the existential determination of knowledge, taking into account:

- (a) the various schools of thought and social factors which influenced his thinking;
- (b) his interpretation of the concepts of ideology and utopia;
- (c) the way he sought to grapple with such pertinent issues as the validity or otherwise of existentially-determined knowledge;
- (d) his attempts at preventing his theory from lapsing into relativistic nihilism, and finally,
- (e) the various criticisms levelled at his work on the Sociology of Knowledge.

The Social Setting and the various philosophical influences

Mannheim was active as a writer exploring the relationship between knowledge and existence at a time during which Central Europe was still reeling from the effects of the First World War. The 'Front Generation' of the First World War was shocked not so much by the violence and the human as well as economic losses as by the fact that 'reality' had revealed itself in a different and terrible light (Kecskemeti, 1968: 2):

"What everyone had taken to be reality itself now stood revealed as an illusion. A complete re-orientation was felt to be necessary; a re-examination of all traditional ideas about reality, all values, all principles ... one no longer lived in the shameful situation of taking the unreal for the real, of trusting illusory authorities and values."

(Kecskemeti, 1968 : 2)

The overriding concern appeared to be that of shattering the illusion. Traditional ideas had to be re-

examined. Similar concerns appear in Mannheim's work on the Sociology of Knowledge as well as in his other writings related to the subject. Mannheim's work deals with such issues as the relativism of truth - an issue widely discussed in Germany at the turn of the century. In this respect, his work stood in marked contrast to that of the Phenomenological School which had come to be identified with the theory of absolute, objective as opposed to relative, subjective values (Kecskemeti, 1968:8).

Max Scheler was the chief proponent of the objectivist theory of value and yet, quite surprisingly, he later became arguably the first social theorist to employ the term 'sociology of knowledge' (Kecskemeti, 1968:8), using it in the wake of a strategic campaign against Positivism, in which he wanted to show that, despite its pre-eminence, science is not a superior form of knowledge, having greater validity than, say, religion or metaphysics (Kecskemeti, 1968:16). According to Scheler, it is only given greater importance in bourgeois, capitalist societies, societies dedicated to the control and manipulation of things, whereas those which promote other values would, according to Scheler, generate other types of knowledge (Kecskemeti, 1968:16, 17).

Mannheim regarded Scheler as a 'Conservative' thinker who, nevertheless, acknowledged that the mind depended on material factors (Kecskemeti, 1968:17). Unlike the Positivists, whom Scheler attacked, Mannheim maintained, in the essay 'On Interpretation of Weltanschauung' (1923), that methodologies used in the natural sciences could not be applied in relation to the social sciences and other cultural objects (Larrain, 1979:101). He argues that, when analysing social life, a specific kind of understanding ('verstehen') is required, "since the object of knowledge partly involves the subject" (Larrain, 1979:100). In Mannheim's view, therefore, a distinction between 'Geisteswissenschaften' and 'Naturwissenschaften' is made. This is very much in keeping with the Historicist tradition which Mannheim observes (Larrain, 1979:103). Mannheim appears to go as far as to intimate that natural sciences should be excluded from "the direct determination of social factors" (Larrain, 1979:103). On the other hand, knowledge and ideas that are existentially-determined, and these include historical, political and cultural matters (Larrain, 1979:103), are "bound to a location", albeit differently, within the social set up and historical process (Coser, 1977:431).

Mannheim states that cultural objects and phenomena can be dealt with in two ways: they may be understood either from the inside, so that their immanent meanings may be revealed, or from the outside, that is to say, they may be viewed as a reflection of the social process in which their producer is involved, the latter being the method of the Sociology of Knowledge (Coser, 1977:430). Mannheim's view, therefore, is "that all thoughts in the humanities and social sciences are determined in form and content by non-theoretical factors" (Remmling, 1975:9).

This is very much in accordance with the tenets of Historicism which incorporated historical relativism and stressed that "each thought and each human action could only be understood and judged in terms of its cultural matrix" (Coser, 1977:452).¹

The influence of Marxian thought is too obvious to pass unobserved. The notion of the social conditioning or social determination of thought was expressed by Marx in such early works as *The German Ideology*, wherein he stated that the dominant ideas in every epoch are the ideas of the dominant class (Tucker, 1978:172). As Remmling (1975) maintains, "it was Marx who first interpreted ideas as mere reflections of their producer's position in the 'process of production', of his class position" (p.56).

Both Marx and the exponents of Historicism sought to establish a strong relationship between ideas and the social structures within which the producers of such ideas are located. In this respect, the issue of relativism becomes relevant to any consideration of their discussion of the relationship between knowledge and society. As already indicated, the same applies to any discussion of Mannheim's work on the Sociology of Knowledge.

Mannheim asserted that thought was "group thought" in that it is rooted in "group action": (Ditterberner, 1979:13): "... knowledge is from the very beginning a cooperative effort of group life, in which everyone unfolds his knowledge within the framework of a common fate, a common activity, and the overcoming of common difficulties (in which, however, each has a different share)." (Mannheim, 1936:29).

For Mannheim, ideas are very much related to the 'group' to which their proponent belongs.² In this respect, one cannot overlook Marx's notion that ideas are relative to the social class of those who espouse them. For Marx, therefore, class was the main determinant of knowledge. For Mannheim, however, the range of 'groups' that determined knowledge was much broader, including not only social class but also status groups, occupational categories and (Coser, 1977:433) age groups. The last mentioned were accorded great importance by Mannheim.³

The Concept of Ideology

One aspect of Mannheim's work which inevitably invited comparisons with that of Karl Marx is his treatment of the concept of ideology. In Marxian theory, the concept assumes great importance and refers to "a class rationale of supposedly universal ideas that actually masked class interests" (Ditterberner, 1979:1). It is widely used in Marx's work as "illusion, 'false consciousness'" (Ditterberner, 1979:1), or, as Raymond Williams puts it, 'an upside down version of reality'.

Mannheim, for his part, distinguishes between what he calls a 'particular' and a 'total' conception of ideology. The former refers "only to specific assertions which may be regarded as concealments, falsifications or lies without attacking the integrity of the total mental structure of the asserting subject" (Mannheim, 1936:266). As such, the particular conception of ideology was limited only to the content of an opponent's assertion and indicates that only part of his/her argument is "ideological", while the total conception of ideology calls into question the entire 'Weltanschauung' (world view) of an adversary (Ditterberner, 1979:15,16). It refers "to a phenomenon revealing concern 'with the characteristics and composition of the total structure of the mind' of an age or social group" (Larrain, 1979: 108). The total conception operates at a sociological level, whereas the particular conception operates at a psychological level, the total conception of ideology presupposing that there is a correspondence between a particular standpoint or perspective and a given social location (Ditterberner, 1979:16). Ditterberner (1979) considers Mannheim's notion of the total conception of ideology to be akin to Marx's notion of false consciousness, however with a difference (p.16). In Marxian theory, Ideological and, hence, 'false' thinking was the characteristic of non-Marxists (p.12). Marxists held their ideas to be true and non-ideological in as much as they served as an expression of a class without any privileged interests to safeguard (Coser, 1977:431). Mannheim posited that all ideas were ideological, including those expressed by Marx. Ideological thought was the characteristic of everyone (Ditterberner 1979:12). Therefore, Mannheim's notion of the total concept of ideology "was purged of Marx's notion of truth and therefore without the invidious note associated with false consciousness" (Ditterberner, 1979:16). Unlike the particular conception of ideology, which is associated with "falsity" (Mannheim, 1936:265), the total conception is devoid of all "moral and denunciatory intent" (Mannheim, 1936:266). Absolute truth and falsification are values that do not apply to Mannheim's total conception of ideology.

Therefore, because of its moral connotation, the term "ideology" is finally dropped by Mannheim and substituted by the term "the Sociology of

Knowledge" which he regards as "a research interest which leads to the raising of the question when and where social structures come to express themselves in the structure of assertions, and in what sense the former concretely determine the latter" (Mannheim, 1936:266).

Since social structures determine the structure of assertions, then thought inevitably comes to be regarded as perspectivistic. The same object is viewed differently by different persons, depending on their place in historical time and social structure:(Coser,1977:431):

"Perspective ... is something more than a merely formal determination of thinking. It refers also to qualitative elements in the structure of thought, elements which must necessarily be overlooked by a purely formal logic. It is precisely these factors which are responsible for the fact that two persons, even if they apply the same formal-logical rules, eg. the law of contradiction or the formula of the syllogism, in an identical manner, may judge the same object very differently." (Mannheim, 1936:272)

As such, "Human thought is 'situationally relative' "(Coser, 1977:432). Inevitably, this exposed Mannheim to a flood of criticism on the grounds that his theory degenerated into relativistic nihilism. He himself is on record as having concluded, at one stage, that since all thought is 'ideological' in nature, then "all thinking is false" (cf. Otto Dahlke's criticism in *Contemporary Social Theory*, referred to in Kecskemeti 1968:28).

Mannheim sought to escape such criticism in various ways. In *Ideology and Utopia*, he states that perspectivistic thought is not necessarily invalid but "might merely represent a partial view" (Mannheim, 1936:284). After all, he had stated that, at times, particular groups can have greater means of understanding a social phenomenon than other groups but no group can have complete means (Coser, 1977:431). Partial truth remains a possibility in a situation where thought is perspectivistic. However, the attainment of absolute truth remains out of the question.

Mannheim calls this version of his theory "relationism", the term he employed in order to counter that of "relativism" which "denies the validity of any standards and of the existence of order in this world" (Mannheim, 1936:283). Mannheim(1936) insists that the "analyses characteristic of the Sociology of Knowledge are by no means irrelevant" for the determination of truth(p285). As Larrain(1979) indicates, he asserts that sociological interpretation does not merely posit a relationship between the cultural object and the social world(P.107) but represents an attempt to "particularize its scope and the extent of its validity" (Mannheim, 1936:284). By virtue of particularization, "relationism 'restricts' the claim to truth.", limiting the extent to which knowledge is valid (Larrain, 1979:107).

Mannheim took great pains to steer clear of relativism. He asserts that Relationism "signifies merely that all the elements of meaning in a given situation have reference to one another and derive their significance from this reciprocal interrelationship in a given frame of thought" (Mannheim, 1936:86).

Mannheim maintains that the 'dynamic relationism' he advocates is the only means whereby one can synthesize the multiplicity of competing ideologies, each one of which is existentially determined(Ditterberner,1979: 18). In 'Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon', Mannheim maintains that synthesis can emerge from a situation of polarisation (Kecskemeti, 1968:25). Competing viewpoints would be assimilated until a relatively total conception of reality would emerge (Ditterberner, 1979:18). Mannheim claims that the Sociology of Knowledge can lead to such a synthesis.

Kettler, Meja and Stehr (1984), point out that, in Mannheim's view, "enquiry into social genesis will, if comprehensively done, bring about a synthesis of valid elements in the ideologies, relocating them in a development context which will not so much falsify the ideologies as cognitive structures as render them obsolete - displaced by a new comprehensive vision" (p.61).

The people who, in Mannheim's view, are ideally situated to carry out this 'synthesis' are those who belong to the "classless stratum" of the 'free-floating' or 'socially unattached intelligentsia' (freishwebende intelligenz), the term he borrowed from Alfred Weber. Mannheim believed that 'unattached' intellectuals had two options available to them to get out of their classless situation. They could either choose to become what Gramsci would term 'organic intellectuals', in that they would attach themselves to a particular class, or else they could engage in "scrutiny of their own social moorings"(Mannheim,1936:158). Mannheim believed that, if they chose the latter path, they would arrive at a new consciousness, one which would allow them to discover that they are in a position from where a total perspective can be attained (Ditterberner, 1979:18, 19).

Mannheim believed that such a choice is possible in that, although these intellectuals do have class links and hail from most diverse social backgrounds, these differences become subordinate to that particular factor which brings them together - education (Larrain,1979:116):

"It is ... peculiarly characteristic of this new basis of association that it preserves the multiplicity of the component elements in all their variety by creating a homogeneous medium within which the conflicting parties can measure their strength ... This acquired educational heritage subjects him (the Educated Man) to the opposing tendencies in social reality ..." (Mannheim, 1936: 155, 156). It is from this position that the educated person, the 'free-floating' intellectual, can engage in the sort of

'syntheses' that could lead to a total conception of reality.⁴ And the Sociology of Knowledge was considered by Mannheim to be of crucial importance to the intellectuals in carrying out this task, (Kettler et al, 1984:6). Mannheim's belief in a 'vanguard' of intellectuals was reaffirmed in his later, British writings on the Sociology of Planned Reconstruction. There he wrote in terms of a chosen scientific elite of social planners, moral leaders and sociologists with a new orientation (Coser, 1977:440). As far as his writings on the Sociology of Knowledge go, the hopes which Mannheim pinned on a classless stratum of intellectuals left him open to a barrage of criticism. Most of his critics considered his attempts to avoid lapsing into nihilistic relativism as unconvincing and hardly successful (Coser, 1977:436).

Mannheim tried other means of grappling with the problem of validity. The notions of 'pragmatic adjustment' and what he calls 'the quest for reality' constituted such means. It would be amiss to explain such notions without referring to the distinction which Mannheim draws between ideological and utopian thought. In Mannheim's view, both ideology and utopia distort reality in as much as the ideas which they comprise are not congruent with it. The former is viewed by Mannheim as a kind of distortion which fails to take into account the new realities characterising a situation (Larrain, 1979: 114).

Ideas relating to past realities which, nevertheless, enable their proponents to retain their privileges (e.g. Conservatism) may be considered as ideological. The utopian distortion, on the other hand, transcends existing reality and is projected 'beyond the present' (Larrain, 1979: 113).⁵ So Mannheim argues that both types of thought are inadequate and situationally incongruous, since, in his view, ideology conceals reality while utopia exceeds its limits (Larrain, 1979: 114).

The avoidance of these distortions should, according to Mannheim, be conducive to a "quest for reality" (Larrain, 1979: 14). He states that "thought should contain neither less nor more than the reality in whose medium it operates" (Mannheim, cited in Larrain, 1979: 114). This is very much in keeping with the principle that "every idea must be tested by its congruence with reality" (Mannheim, cited in Ditterberner, 1979: 17). The implication of this statement is that such thought would have a measure of validity in that it would be free from the kind of "distortion" referred to above.

Critique of Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge

The criticism levelled at Mannheim's proposition and formulation of the relationship between knowledge and existence has been widespread and varied. Robert K. Merton, who attempted something very much on the lines of a sociology of knowledge, in his study on 'Puritanism, Pietism and Science' (Ditterberner, 1979:35),

criticizes Mannheim on the grounds that too many kinds of thoughts are grouped together by Mannheim under the same category of the Sociology of Knowledge, stating that the same considerations are applied to "ethical, aesthetic, political, religious or scientific judgements" (Ditterberner, 1979: 36). Speier alludes to virtually the same thing when he states that the considerations which Mannheim makes apply to the thought of men of action but could not be applied to philosophical thought which, he argues, could not be understood only in social terms (Ditterberner, 1979: 32).

Some critics (e.g. Speier) argue that there is also an inconsistency in the use of the term 'ideology'. In his distinction between ideology and utopia, Mannheim refers to the former as a situationally inadequate thought. Elsewhere, he refers to all existentially-determined thinking as ideology (Ditterberner, 1979: 32). Another inconsistency concerns the issue of validity. At one stage, Mannheim asserts that "all thinking is false" whereas, elsewhere, in a bid to confound his critics who accused him of veering towards nihilistic relativism, Mannheim provides a modified version of this statement by positing something to the effect that since thought is perspectivistic it can have partial validity. Merton (1957) also refers to a fundamental indecision on Mannheim's part regarding specification of "the type or mode of relations between social structure and knowledge" (p.498). In the relevant chapter in Merton's book, a number of terms, pointing to the nature of the relationship between thought and social structure, are listed. Such inconsistencies and indecisions are indeed glaring. Nevertheless, they can be excused on the grounds that Mannheim was merely proposing an area of sociological enquiry, one whose theories were in constant need of reformulation. His work in this field is therefore characterised by its "groping and tentative nature" (Coser, 1977: 430).

Mannheim has often been criticised on the grounds that his work is self-contradictory. As Otto Dahlke maintains:

"The notion of relativism or relationism, as developed by Mannheim, is self-contradictory, for it must presuppose its own absoluteness. The sociology of knowledge must assume its own validity; if it has to have any meaning."

(Cited in Kecskemeti, 1968: 28)

He seems to have been re-echoing Von Shelling who stated that "the traditional concept of truth was both implied and denied - implied for Mannheim's own thought, denied to others" (Ditterberner, 1979:22).

"Since à la Mannheim, the total structure of consciousness is included in the ideology concept, and since, consequently, there cannot be any thinking but ideological thinking, therefore even scientific thought, and especially in the social sciences, falls under this concept and becomes "functionalized" with respect to social factors.

Consequently, according to our author, its objective, impartial validity is destroyed.” (Von Schelting, cited in Ditterberner, 1979: 22)

This appears to be the consequence of the formulation of a theory with strong relativistic overtones. After all, Mannheim himself acknowledged that all thinking is ideological, including his own. As such, he seems to be undermining his theory's validity. Going by Mannheim's own criteria, the truth expressed in his theory can only be partially valid, unless he saw himself as one of those 'free floating' intellectuals aspiring to develop a total conception of reality.

The concept of the 'socially-unattached intelligentsia' may indeed have been the product of his own existential-situation as a young intellectual in his native Hungary. Judging from the literature it appears that the existence of a socially unattached stratum of intellectuals was indeed possible in this country during and after the First World War. Coser (1977) writes that he belonged to an "increasingly self-conscious group of Budapest intellectuals", a high proportion of whom were of Jewish origin, just like Mannheim (P.441). Coser (1977) states that like the Russian intelligentsia of the previous century, these Jewish intellectuals were "largely men without firm attachment to any of the major strata and classes of their society. They were conscious of their isolation and unhappily or proudly aware of their marginality" (Coser, 1987:442).

Even so, the present writer finds it hard to believe that a similar strata of intellectuals can be found in academic circles in Western society today. There is ample literature in the Sociology of Education to show that the formal system of education in Western capitalist society tends to favour the middle class. As such, the majority of academics and intellectuals, who normally feature prominently among the beneficiaries of the school system, are likely to hail from the middle-class. This may serve to repudiate Mannheim's argument that intellectuals are likely to emerge from diverse social backgrounds as a result of which an academic in an educational establishment is likely to be exposed to different perspectives. One ought to remark that when Mannheim formulated this theory of the Intelligentsia, German universities were full of intellectuals who were openly attached to particular social classes and their political interests (Remmling, 1975:71). The majority embraced views which were an amalgam of "reactionary conservatism and nationalism" (Remmling, 1975:71).

Furthermore, as Larrain (1979) remarks, the theory of the social determination of knowledge appears to be "incompatible" with that of the socially unattached intelligentsia (P.116). It appears incongruous that the producers of that very same knowledge which is existentially-determined should be socially unattached: "The fact that all existentially determined thought is relativized to a social situation is inconsistent with the lack of attachment of its

authors" (Larrain, 1979:116).

Furthermore, Mannheim's belief in the ability of an 'elite' of socially unattached intellectuals to arrive at a total conception of reality has implications for a theory concerning the manner in which knowledge is to be disseminated. Judging from Mannheim's views, knowledge is to be disseminated in a most traditional manner - from above. It may be existentially-determined but it is not likely to emerge from the educatee's cultural base. That kind of knowledge can only be partial, perspectivist. Knowledge relating to a total conception of reality can only be derived from above, that is from a vanguard of 'socially-unattached' intellectuals.

The other means through which Mannheim sought to come to terms with the problem of truth was provided by the notion of the quest for reality: "thought should contain neither less nor more than the reality in whose medium it operates" (Mannheim, cited in Larrain, 1979:114). One feels inclined to ask whether Mannheim regards 'reality' as a social-construct. Judging from Mannheim's own assertion that thought is existentially-determined, one expects reality to be viewed differently by different people (Larrain, 1979:114).

The same applies to the notion of adjustment contained in the related statement that "A theory ... is wrong if in a practical situation it uses concepts and categories which, if taken seriously, would prevent man from adjusting himself at that historical stage" (Merton, 1957:503). This is what is generally referred to as the theory of pragmatic adjustment. As Robert K. Merton (1957) points out, social adjustment is "a normative rather than an existential concept" (p.503). And, needless to say, the construct to which the individual is expected to adjust is reality which, in itself, constitutes no criterion for establishing truth. Furthermore, as Coser (1977) points out, judgements as to which ideas contributed to adjustment in a given historical period are likely to be made ex-post facto (p.435).

One of the criticisms levelled at Mannheim's work on the Sociology of Knowledge concerned his separation of immanent and functional meaning. Mannheim distinguishes between idea and ideology, the former referring to an intellectual proposition when considered from within and the other referring to a similar phenomenon when considered from without (Larrain, 1979: 119). As Larrain (1979) argues, this contrast is conducive to an "epistemological dualism which separates the ideological from the intrinsic meaning of thought" (p.119). It appears as though Mannheim considers only functional meaning as valid, rejecting any consideration of an immanent meaning and so the Sociology of Knowledge which he proposes appears incapable of criticizing the content of a theory or thought since it insists upon its social setting (Larrain, 1979:120).

A theory which serves to unmask social contradictions and which may be in the interests of

those who suffer, as a result of such contradictions, can have both 'immanent' and 'functional' validity. One feels that a theory can be judged 'per se' as well as in relation to its social function.

The theory of the Sociology of Knowledge is widely regarded as an outgrowth of Historicism (Coser, 1977:452), according to which every epoch "can only be understood in its own terms (Abercrombie, *et al*, 1986:10). Ideas are therefore considered to be determined by the existential conditions prevalent during the historical period during which they are formulated. This appears to be a tenet of both Historicism and the Sociology of Knowledge. According to this theory, cultural products, including literary works, contain ideas that are relative to the historical, cultural and social settings in which they are produced. As such, judging from Mannheim's theories, they have only partial validity and can only be understood following a process of 'verstehen'. Such theories, however, do not explain why societies as historically remote from each other as Fifth Century B.C. Athens, Elizabethan and Jacobean England and Nineteenth Century Russia have managed to produce works of art that seem to convey identical insights into the human condition, despite the fact that they are the product of completely different cultures and were written in unrelated languages. Going by Mannheim's theory, this could hardly have been possible, considering that the ideas expressed by the various writers were directly related to their respective age, culture and society. One may, perhaps, argue that ideas and insights that reappear across different times and cultures may be regarded as having validity.⁶

Having outlined the criticisms levelled at and the problems related to Mannheim's proposition of the Sociology of Knowledge, one may conclude this paper by acknowledging that Mannheim has shed some important light on the nature of the relationship between knowledge and existence. His work has served to call into question several assumptions which, for years, had been formulated as absolute truths. Furthermore, building on the work of such predecessors as Scheler, he has indicated that historical, cultural and social ideas have to be judged by criteria which are different from those applied in relation to the natural sciences, stressing that such ideas are conditioned by the social situation of their proponents. In this respect, he has indicated that the range of sources determining such knowledge is more varied than Marx would have us believe. The chains to which men of knowledge were bound, to adopt Coser's metaphor (Coser, 1977:437), include not only class but also age, status and occupational groups (in this respect, Mannheim's concept of social differentiation is closer to the Weberian than the Marxian model).

Mannheim was active in a period rocked by tremendous political upheavals, the insecurity of which was partly reflected through such concepts as

'nihilism' and 'relativism', the latter being so widespread that it even made its presence felt in cultural productions of the age (e.g. the plays of Luigi Pirandello). To his credit, Mannheim took great pains to steer his theory of the sociology of knowledge away from relativism. The fact that he was hardly successful in this regard should not detract from his merit in having identified the problem of truth and validity as an area of major concern for those who later were to attempt to develop the theory he helped pioneer.

Finally, the issue of the socially unattached intelligentsia may have rendered him vulnerable to criticism. Nevertheless, given the political and social turmoil characterising the period in which he was active, including the later English years, which were affected by the advent of Nazism, it appears quite understandable that he should pin his hopes on intellectuals. They may have appeared to him to constitute the only crag of sanity in an ocean of madness.

Notes

1. Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge can be regarded as having grown out of the Historicist tenet, propounded by such theorists as Wilhelm Dilthey and Ernst Troeltsch, that every epoch can only be judged in its own terms (Coser, 1977:452).
2. Mannheim asserts that such young persons provide ideas that are intended either to "change the surrounding world of nature and society" or to "maintain it in a given condition", depending on "the character and position of the groups to which they belong" (Mannheim, 1936: 4). The point that thought is related, in Mannheim, to the intention to change or maintain nature and society is stressed by Steven Seidman in a footnote to the introduction to his book, *Liberalism and the Origins of European Social Theory* (cf. Seidman, 1983:302).
3. The essay on 'Generations' deals with this particular determinant of knowledge. Mannheim posits that generation is not a 'concrete group' in that it has neither an organisational framework nor a 'community character' (Kecskemeti, 1968:23). Nevertheless, one's generation does have a bearing on certain facets of one's behaviour and thinking. Members of the same age group will, however, have nothing in common, unless they belong to the same culture and society (Kecskemeti, 1968:23,24). Moreover, even within the same historical community, members of the same generation can be split up into clearly defined sub-groups with different orientations based on political or class lines (Kecskemeti, 1968:24). Mannheim calls these sub-groups 'generation units'. Knowledge may therefore be conditioned by an interplay of generational, cultural and social factors.
4. Mannheim attached a lot of importance to Education and Intellectualism elsewhere in his writings, most notably those related to his 'British' period. He regarded Education (including Adult and Parent Education) and Religion as the cornerstone of his plan for social reconstruction (Coser, 1977:439). They were deemed necessary for Western society, which was haunted by the spectre of Nazism and was regarded, in a manner reminiscent of T.S. Eliot (cf. 'The Wasteland'), as being devoid of its moral fibre and in need of regeneration.
5. Mannheim drew a further distinction, namely between absolute and relative utopias. He regarded the former as ones which 'in principle can never be realised' while the latter are those which appear to be unrealizable only from the standpoint of a given social order (Larrain, 1979:113).

6. I am indebted, here, to two persons, namely Mr. Paul Spiteri and Prof. Anne Marie Decore. The former raised and developed this issue in a personal letter sent to me, while Prof. Decore, a teacher of mine at the University of Alberta, discussed it with me, maintaining that this observation can open an avenue towards establishing validity, and that ideas and insights which recur across time and cultures may be identical to those whose validity is established by 'free floating intellectuals'.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Abercrombie, N., Hill S., Turner, B.S., *Dictionary of Sociology*, Middlesex: Penguin, 1986.
2. Coser, L.A., *Masters of Sociological Thought*, N. York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1977.
3. Ditterberner, J., *The End of Ideology and American Social Thought: 1930-1960*, N. York: UMI Research Press, 1979.
4. Kecskemeti, P., 'Introduction' in K. Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (Kecskemeti, ed.), London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968.
5. Kettler, D., Meja, V., Stehr, N., *Karl Mannheim*, London and N. York: Tavistock Publ., 1984.
6. Larrain, J., *The Concept of Ideology*, London: Hutchinson & Co., 1979.
7. Mannheim, K., *Ideology and Utopia* (trans., Wirth, L., Shils, E.), N. York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1936.
8. Merton, R.K., *Social Theory and Social Structure*, U.S: The Free Press, Glencoe, 1957
9. Remmling, G.W., *The Sociology of Karl Mannheim*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975.
10. Seidman, S., *Liberalism and the Origins of European Social Theory*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983.
11. Tucker, R.C., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, U.S: W.W. Norton & Co., 1978.