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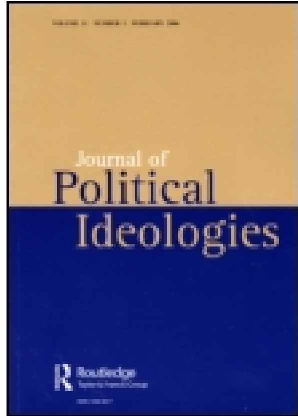

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Ideology and sociology: Reflections on Karl Mannheim's Ideology and Utopia

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Ideology and sociology: Reflections on Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*

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ABSTRACT *Ideology was a favourite and much-discussed concept for many sociologists in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. Undoubtedly this was mainly connected to Marxism, but Karl Mannheim—as a critic of Marx—had his part to play in this too. Ideology, and with it Mannheim's work, fell into disfavour with the retreat from Marxism in the 1980s and 1990s. But one could argue that much of what Mannheim discussed under the heading 'ideology' can now be found under other labels in sociology, such as 'social constructionism' and 'discourse analysis'. Mannheim's treatment of utopias suffered an analogous fate to his treatment of ideology, being caught up in a general suspicion of utopian thinking among professional sociologists. Utopian scholars, for their part, were unhappy with Mannheim's rendition of utopia as revolutionary or messianic social movements rather than the realized picture of the perfect society that they found in the literary utopia. There are many calls for the revival of utopian thought at the present time, but they fail to specify—as Mannheim was always at pains to do—what social and political conditions are likely to favour such a revival.*

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Farewell to ideology?

For many decades, sociologists were among the most enthusiastic users of the concept of ideology, whether as advocates, critics or simply as commentators. A massive literature exists on the subject, especially in the period from the 1950s to the early 1980s. Obviously this reflects the strong revival of Marxism in the West from the 1960s onwards. American sociologists of the 1950s—Seymour Martin Lipset, Daniel Bell—might announce 'the end of ideology'. But, apart from the fact that this was immediately diagnosed—and, in some quarters, denounced—as itself an ideology, the conflicts, both domestic and international, of the 1960s suggested to many sociologists that this was highly premature. Works such as Herbert Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man* (1964), with its anatomy of late

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capitalist ideology, became the bible of the student movement, while studies of alienation—in the mind as much as the body—abounded. Much of the best writing that accompanied the May Events in Paris 1968 were fundamentally critiques of reigning ideologies in the realms of culture, education, sexuality, and politics. The *chef d'oeuvre* of the May movement, Guy Debord's Situationist manifesto *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), was an updating of earlier Marxist critiques of liberal capitalist ideology.

Marxism was indeed the principal inspiration of the wave of studies of ideology in this period. Georg Lukacs's *History and Class Consciousness*, Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, the works of Adorno, Horkheimer, Benjamin, Fromm and other Frankfurt School theorists, the more recent work of Goldman, Levi-Strauss, and Althusser: these were the names and texts that dominated discussion. There was a particularly flourishing branch in England under the banner of cultural studies, especially as practiced by the members of the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies. Paul Willis's *Learning to Labour* (1977) was as characteristic and incisive a product of the Birmingham School as Stuart Hall's studies of media ideologies. For the Birmingham School Goldman and Althusser were the principal influences, for Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton—equally influential—a more diffuse Marxism. But no course in the sociology of literature or culture in these decades could have been complete without Williams's *Culture and Society* (1958) or Eagleton's *Marxism and Literature* (1989).[1]

In this story, Karl Mannheim occupies a curious and to some extent surprising place. As an associate of Lukacs and a disciple of Alfred Weber—who invented the concept of 'the relatively unattached intellectual'—he should have been expected to figure prominently in any account of the study of ideology in post-Second World War sociology. His *Ideology and Utopia* (1929, English translation 1936) was, after all, the most systematic statement of the subject available to Western scholars after the war. And a recent commentator has indeed observed that 'Mannheim had an extended period of celebrity, following his death in 1947, which lasted until the 1970s'.[2]

But the same commentator—himself a professor in a School of Management—also points out that Mannheim's influence was stronger among planners, administrators and educationalists than it was among academic sociologists, especially those engaged in social theory. *Man and Society in An Age of Reconstruction* (1935, English translation 1940), then, rather than *Ideology and Utopia*, seems to have been the main vehicle of Mannheim's influence. If Mannheim was read by sociologists, it was mainly for his essays, such as 'The Sociology of the Intelligentsia', or 'The Problem of Generations', or 'Conservative Thought'.[3] These of course do touch on ideology, but it was more for their substantive content, rather than their theoretical contribution to the study of ideology, that they were read.

Why was Mannheim's impact so relatively slight among sociologists? The cumbersome organization of the English translation of *Ideology and Utopia* probably had something to do with this.[4] But more important undoubtedly was the generally left-leaning cast of European social theory in the decades from the 1960s

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to the early 1980s. Mannheim was widely seen as the 'bourgeois Marx'. His attempt to substitute the intellectuals for the proletariat as the bearers of scientific truth was bound to seem irrelevant, as well as irritating, to theorists preoccupied with working-class militancy, and the obstacles to working class consciousness. If the role of the intellectuals in relation to working class movements was discussed, Gramsci rather than Mannheim was likely to seem the more promising guide.

In any case, Mannheim's influence even within disciplines other than sociology ended abruptly in the 1970s. 'After 1970 or so', says Stephen Ackroyd, 'with the exception of those writing specifically about the sociology of knowledge, it is as if Mannheim never existed'.[5] The eclipse of Mannheim was in some ways exemplary. It prefigured the eclipse of the study of ideology in general, even though it preceded that development by several years and was not directly related to it. One might speculate that ideology was killed by its own success, or perhaps its excesses. Its inflation, not to say its imperialism, at the hands of the Althusserians in the 1970s made of ideology so encompassing a concept as to render it well-nigh unserviceable. If ideology is everything, it is nothing—or at least, not much can be done with it.

But there were other, more compelling reasons, why ideology should decline as a field of study. At least in sociology, the study of ideology had largely been bound up with Marxism. The decline of Marxism, in the universities as much as elsewhere, has necessarily involved the decline of ideology as a formal analytical concept. This had already begun to happen in the early 1980s, before the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe added a further blow to the crumbling credibility of Marxism. The factor in this case was the rise of post-Marxist approaches, especially in the form of post-structuralism and post-modernism. In this movement the figures of Foucault and Bourdieu stand out, together with the influence of the kind of cultural anthropology pioneered by Clifford Geertz.[6] Whatever the complicated relationship of these thinkers to Marxism, their impact has had the effect of undermining the concept of ideology *sensu stricto*.

Ideologies, of course, can be studied in and for themselves, as systematic doctrines or statements of beliefs linked—though not necessarily—to particular groups or strata. That is one way in which Mannheim's legacy has lived on, even if Mannheim himself is not often invoked. In the 'sociology of knowledge', or in the analysis of political doctrines such as communism or fascism, one can see the continuation of Mannheim's enterprise.[7] Works such as Michael Freeden's *Ideologies and Political Theory* (1996), Thomas Metcalf's *Ideologies of the Raj* (1997), or Michael Mann's *Fascists* (2004), show what can be accomplished in this vein.

But for sociology in general, given the extent to which the study of ideology was linked to Marxism, the heart of that study was the distinction between appearance and reality, between error and 'truth', between a necessarily distorted subjective consciousness and an objective world. In all the wrestling with the legacy of Marxism, this seemed the central question. It was this, for instance, that had structured even such major works of empirical sociology as the 'affluent worker' studies directed by David Lockwood and John Goldthorpe in the 1960s and 1970s. It underlay the concerns of stratification theorists such as Frank Parkin and André Gorz. It can be seen in the attempt by cultural sociologists such as the Glasgow

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Media Group to uncover the distortions of television and newspaper presentations of industrial conflicts. Even in the literary sociology of Raymond Williams and others one sees a form of analysis that seeks to uncover the sociological 'truth' lying within the accounts of novelists and dramatists who are necessarily limited by their class and historical locations.[8]

But what if there is no truth? What if objectivity is a myth? What if history has no meaning—none, at any rate, discernible by us? What if all the projects of emancipation, and the other 'grand narratives' of the Enlightenment, are simply stories? That seemed to be the message of the post-modern thinkers who had such an impact on sociology in the 1980s. Taken with the other events of that decade—the triumph of Thatcherism and Reaganism in politics and economics, the decline of unions and working class movements, the waning belief in socialism even in the ostensibly communist countries—it is not surprising that the concept of ideology was a major casualty of the times. If ideology was opposed to truth or science, and if such an opposition was false, then it might be better to drop the term ideology altogether and find other ways of talking about ideas and their relation to society. Such seems to be the current consensus in sociology.[9]

Ideology by other names?

But there is another way of seeing the fate of ideology in sociology. Ideology as a concept may not appear very much in the literature. The search for the truth behind or beyond ideology may not now appear so compelling. But in another sense ideology may have triumphed. The reason why we do not hear very much about ideology in sociology today may be precisely because it is acknowledged to be everywhere. But, unlike the Althusserian inflation, this recognition does not undermine the concept because it goes under different names in different fields, and is crucially not tied—or at least not to the same degree—to the notion of demystification or uncovering.

It is impossible to ignore the extent to which 'social constructionism' has taken hold in many areas of sociology. This, as the name implies and as first laid out in elegant terms in Peter Berger's and Thomas Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* (1967), draws attention to the fact that the social world in all its dimensions is man-made. This applies to language, thought, art and science as much as it does to cities and states. There is in this perspective nothing that is 'natural' or objective about the world, at least as that is humanly known. Thus the sociology of science, as practiced by Bruno Latour or Harry Collins, seeks to explode the myth of scientific and experimental detachment and objectivity. The sociology of race, ethnicity and nationalism attempts to banish all ideas of the naturalness of these phenomena, seeking to show instead that these are historically and socially constructed categories which are not necessarily primordial or perennial. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger have enlightened us all on 'the invention of tradition', and sociologists along with many others have happily pursued examples of cherished customs and traditions, thought to be immemorial, that turn out to have been invented yesterday. Most tellingly, the social constructionist approach has

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been widely applied to the study of gender, sexuality and identity. Feminist sociologists in particular have been in the forefront of the attempt to show the extent to which structures of society give rise to structures of thought and feeling that condition our sensibilities and our deepest sense of our selves.

Much of this work employs the concept of 'discourse', taken largely from the writings of Foucault. Here one can see most clearly how ideology has been absorbed while at the same time suppressed. Few of the recent studies fall back on the concept of ideology, fearing perhaps to be locked into a tradition of thought whose postulates they do not share. But they are perfectly happy, indeed almost wearyingly so, to talk about 'discourses' that to the innocent eye seem to work very much like ideologies of old. That is to say, they function to light up certain things and to conceal others, to give positive evaluation to some aspects and negative ones to others, to force certain ways of seeing on participants at the expense of other possible ones. One can read Foucault's studies of the changing discourses of sexuality, or madness, or punishment, as simply successive forms of ideology.

But Foucault too has his critics. Is everything discourse? And if discourse is a form of power, is power everywhere (in which case, like ideology, it might be better to dispense with the term altogether)? Mannheim, like Marx, believed in truth, or at least something approximating it, the perspective that could be reached by 'socially-unattached' intellectuals. That ideal of truth grounds the study of ideology or the sociology of knowledge. While it is true that Mannheim can be seen as one of the originators of social constructionism,[10] and to that extent his approach has been vindicated, it appears unlikely that he would have been happy with this victory. Can ideology be divorced from truth? Is it helpful to continue to use the concept of ideology if that is the case? Why not simply doctrines, or programmes, or social philosophies? All these get round the 'spin' put on ideology by the well-nigh unavoidable inheritance of Marxism.

The utopian tradition

What of utopia, the other term of Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*? For Mannheim, the two were linked. But not quite in the ways that we might expect. Ideology does not simply express the forces of order and the status quo, though in the end that is its character and function. Nor is utopia simply the principle of change, or of hope. Indeed Mannheim goes out of his way to reject the popular meaning of utopia as wish-fulfilment, or a hope or dream that is in principle unrealizable. Paradoxically, it is ideology that is unrealizable; utopia is defined by contrast as a conception which, though at the time and from the perspective of the dominant classes appears fantastic, can in principle be realized and in practice often has been.

Mannheim arrives at this view by distinguishing two basic types of 'reality-transcending' thought. One, which he calls 'ideology', is a form of thinking which aspires to objects which the existing social order cannot possibly offer or allow but which it finds convenient to incorporate in its own official, socially approved beliefs. Mannheim gives the examples of the ideas of 'heaven' and of

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'Christian brotherly love' in the European Middle Ages. These ideas were both impossible and at the same time socially useful. 'As long as the clerically and feudally organized medieval order was able to locate its paradise outside of society, in some other-worldly sphere which transcended history and dulled its revolutionary edge, the idea of paradise was still an integral part of medieval society'. Similarly the ideal of brotherly love was useful—from the authorities' point of view—as a restraint on individual conduct in feudal society, even though 'in a society founded on serfdom [it] remains an unrealizable and, in this sense, ideological idea'. Once, however, 'certain social groups embodied these wish-images into their actual conduct, and tried to realize them, [these] ideologies become utopian'.[11]

Mannheim is critical of those, such as the anarchist Gustav Landauer, for whom utopia is virtually indistinguishable from revolution, and who think that 'only in utopia and revolution is there true life, the institutional order of society is always only the evil residue which remains from ebbing utopias...'.[12] But he praises them for their recognition of 'the dynamic character of reality', the fact that utopias are a necessary element in social change. Utopias express 'those ideas and values in which are contained in condensed form the unrealized and the unfulfilled tendencies which represent the needs of each age'.[13] Utopias 'break the bond of the existing order', releasing tendencies that are held back by conservative forces anxious to prolong the status quo.

This patently Marxist—or perhaps more precisely, Hegelian—idea shows once more how preoccupied Mannheim is with practice (he himself refers to the 'dialectical' relationship between utopia and the existing order).[14] It is almost as if he wants to revisit the debate with the 'utopian socialists'—Saint-Simon, Fourier, Owen—of the first half of the 19th century. Marx and Engels had denounced them for being impractical dreamers—or rather, for being thinkers with the right ideas but no sense of the way in which those ideas should and could be realized. Hence their hostility to utopias in general. Mannheim agrees with their criticism—it is simply that he redefines utopias to mean only those ideas that have some hope or prospect of realization. Thus he says that 'only those orientations transcending reality will be referred to by us as utopian which, when they pass into conduct, tend to shatter, either partially or wholly, the order of things prevailing at the time'.[15]

Mannheim is aware that in adopting this conception of utopia he is breaking with the tradition that takes its understanding from the model of Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516). He dismisses this objection as one based on a 'historically "naïve" concept', one that can see history only in terms of concrete particularities and literal-minded descent. His concept, he argues, by contrast relates to the 'structural' features of history. It is grounded in empirical reality but addresses 'theoretical' questions of history, ones concerned with large-scale processes of social order and social change.[16] It is in line with this conception that the examples of utopia he considers are practically oriented social movements such as the millenarian Anabaptists of 16th-century Munster, the 'liberal-humanitarianism' of the 18th-century Enlightenment, 19th-century 'activist' conservatism with its

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challenge to liberal individualism, and revolutionary socialism or anarchism with their goal of a free and fully egalitarian society.

It is obvious that what Mannheim calls utopias can equally well be treated as examples of what many people might call ideologies. In that sense he has much to offer, giving us what are in many ways brilliant and perceptive thumb-nail sketches of the leading elements of the ideologies of liberalism, conservatism and socialism. He is particularly interesting on the way in which not only may 'the utopias of today. . .become the realities of tomorrow', [17] but also how yesterday's utopias can become today's ideologies, breeding in turn new utopias. Thus the utopian liberalism of the 18th century becomes the dominant ideology of 19th-century bourgeois society, leading not only to the utopian movements of communism and socialism but also to the 'counter-utopia' of radical conservatism, defending the past in a constant engagement with the forces of the present (and, as Mannheim points out, in the process forging many weapons for use by the socialists against the liberals).[18]

But, illuminating as this account might be for other purposes, the question must be how useful can Mannheim be for the student of utopias. The answer has to be—and, in terms of the work done on utopias, has been—'not very much'.[19] The reasons have to do largely with the explicit commitment to practice, and to intended or actual realization, in Mannheim's concept of utopia.

This does not, it should be said, by itself rule out a Mannheimian approach to utopia. There has always been a tradition of utopia that is concerned with practical utopias, with the founding of communities that live according to some sort of utopian ideal. Many of these communities have been religious, often millenarian, as with the Diggers of the English Civil War and the Shakers of America. Others have been secular, as with the Owenite communities at New Lanark and New Harmony. Some, such as Oneida in the United States, move from being religious to being secular. And there have been 'experimental' communities set up according to the principles found in certain utopian writings, as in the Fourierist communities in France and the United States, and the Walden communities inspired by B. F. Skinner's *Walden Two*. [20]

But to identify utopia with these practical strivings, as Mannheim would have us do, is to leave out a large, perhaps the major part, of the utopian inheritance.[21] Utopia, in Thomas More's coinage of the term, is a conflation of two late Latin words meaning 'somewhere good' (*eutopia*) and 'nowhere' (*outopia*). Utopia is the good place that is nowhere. This does not mean that utopia has to be equated with fantastic dreams, impossible yearnings for a world of painless and trouble-free life. That is the tradition of Cockaygne, *Schlaraffenland*, and Shangri-La.[22] Utopia on the contrary has never stirred very far from the contemporary world of its author. Whether it is More's own *Utopia* (1516), Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627), Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888) or Well's *A Modern Utopia* (1905), we are in a world with recognizable links to the author's own world.

What the author does is to conduct a 'thought experiment' with his world. He supposes certain changes—unlikely but by no means impossible—which once granted allow for the portrayal of the good society. This certainly involves a feat of

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the imagination as well as skills of social and political analysis. But it does not make the author 'the idle singer of an empty day', in William Morris's mocking self-portrait. Even in Morris's own *News from Nowhere* (1890), which describes a fully socialist England 200 years ahead of Morris's own times, the stages by which the good society arrives are carefully delineated in the account. The revolution may not happen, but Morris shows that it *could* happen. Utopia may be 'nowhere' but it cannot be just *anywhere*.

Utopia nevertheless is a tradition of thought that expresses itself in portraits of the best or perfect society. It differs from certain forms of social and political theory which are also concerned with portraying the ideal state, whether it is Hobbes's *Leviathan* or Rousseau's *Social Contract* state.[23] It differs also from schemes of thought such as Marxism which indicate a final goal for mankind, a state of things in which all humans will be able to realize their full potential as humans. These all contain a utopian propensity, we might say; they are the expressions of a certain utopian temperament.[24]

But they are not utopias. They do not do what utopias do, which is to give a detailed account of life in the good society (this as we know Marx, for instance, resolutely refused to do, declaring that 'I do not write recipes for the cook-shops of the future').[25] Utopias are in this sense closer to novels, indeed are for the most part novels. They give us a day (or more) in the life of the good society. They show us what it is like to wake up in it, what its inhabitants eat, how they dress, what their cities and countryside look like, how they work, what kind of art they produce. They ask us to judge the good society not by its principles but by the extent to which we feel we want to live in it, the extent to which we desire it. Morris's *News from Nowhere*, with its attention to the daily lives of the inhabitants, is the exemplary utopia here—no more so than in the final section when, with barely a word spoken between them, his characters make their slow journey up the Thames, passing between fields made more beautiful by the work being done in them, until finally they arrive at their destination, the old house on the upper Thames (quite clearly Morris's own beloved Kelmscott Manor).

Mannheim's conception of utopia is not of course entirely divorced from this literary tradition. Literary utopias have often inspired utopian communities. The early English settlers in Roanoke, Virginia, carried More's *Utopia* with them, and aspired to recreate its society in the New World. Etienne Cabet's *Icaria* (1840) was the bible for several communities in 19th-century America. B. F. Skinner's *Walden T*wo (1948) led to the setting up of several Walden communities, such as Twin Oaks in Virginia. Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975) was the inspiration for a number of ecological communities in California.

But there is a clear separation of function between utopia and the experimental community, or larger schemes of social reconstruction such as communism or fascism. Utopia is not a plan or a blue-print. Utopia aims to educate, using all the resources of literary artifice. It wishes to provoke thought and instil feeling, which may well spill over into action. But the consequences of that action belong to a different species of human endeavour. Utopias are not meant to be real, to be realized. It is just possible to blame Rousseau for the Terror in the French

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Revolution, or Marx for the totalitarianism of the Soviet Union. It is no fault of More's that the Roanoke experiment ended in disaster.

Out of utopia?

Sociology has never been particularly hospitable towards utopia. This may be, again, partly the result of the strong Marxian inheritance, with is distrust of utopias, despite the enormous success of socialist utopias such as Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and Morris's *News from Nowhere*. But it probably has more to do with the decidedly positivist bent of much modern sociology, whether deriving from Comte and Durkheim or from the American school of sociology which had such impact in Europe after the Second World War. This approach dedicated itself to the hard-headed, 'scientific', description and explanation of present-day reality. It showed not just indifference to the past but also scepticism about discerning future trends. More particularly, it showed itself distrustful of the kind of sociology that attempted to marry description with prescription. This meant the rejection of elements of both positivism and Marxism, insofar as both approaches were concerned not just with describing but with changing the world. Works such as Karl Popper's *The Poverty of Historicism* (1957) and *The Open Society and Its Enemies* ([1945]1962) were the weapons with which sociologists attacked those of its members who attempted to combine sociological analysis with social or political prophecy and prescription.

In 1958, the German sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf published a widely read article entitled 'Out of Utopia: Toward a Reorientation of Sociological Analysis'.[26] Dahrendorf's main target was not utopianism as such, nor even Marxism, but American structural-functionalism, as practiced particularly by Talcott Parsons and his followers. Dahrendorf accused the structural-functionalists of erecting a 'utopian' model of the social system, in which consensus reigned and all structures worked efficiently and interrelatedly to ensure the smooth functioning of the social system. Against this model he wished to offer a 'conflict' model of society, in which 'consensus' was often a cover for coercion and manipulation, and in which social integration was always difficult and imperfect.

Since Dahrendorf in the course of his article also took swipes at more traditional forms of utopianism, he was generally taken as warning sociologists away from utopia, whether as a field of study or as an activity to be undertaken as a form of criticism or advocacy. The advice was only too well heeded. Despite the success of such satirical utopias as Michael Young's *The Rise of the Meritocracy* (1958), which brilliantly showed in one of sociology's own chosen fields how effective utopias could be both as tools of analysis and of criticism, sociologists of the past half-century largely turned their backs on utopias and utopianism. Zygmunt Bauman, in such works as *Socialism: The Active Utopia* (1976), was a lone voice among major sociologists in showing an interest in utopia. To work in the field of utopias, as some sociologists continued to do, was to condemn oneself to the sidelines of the discipline.

Given the eccentricity of Manheim's treatment of utopia it is hardly surprising that he was caught up in this neglect.[27] Utopia was conjured up in the 1960s out of elements of the young Hegel, the young Marx, and a sociological reading of Freud and the Freudians. This resulted not so much in true 'speaking-picture' utopias as in such utopian treatises as Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* (1955) and Norman O. Brown's *Life Against Death* (1959). But they captured the imagination of radicals in a way that was impossible with Mannheim's idea of 'democratic planning' as the best way to preserve the utopian spirit in modern conditions. Such an idea might find its way into certain works of social science but was not likely to fire the utopian imagination.

Sociologists for their part, concerned to insist on the 'scientific' nature of their enterprise, especially as challenged by the more successful science of economics, continued to frown on utopias. Critics, especially on the right, might discern utopianism in their work, especially as regards the possibility of change, but no-one could accuse sociology of being the discipline that embraced utopia. If utopia nevertheless continued to maintain some kind of an existence in the 1970s and 1980s, this was largely owing to the work of ecological activists such as Ernst Callenbach (e.g. *Ecotopia*) and, especially, feminist writers who found the form of the literary utopia particularly congenial to their cause. Sometimes feminism and ecology were powerfully conjoined, as in Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974) and Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976).[28]

If Mannheim has had any influence on contemporary thinking about utopia it comes in his warning about a world without utopia. 'The complete elimination of reality-transcending elements', declared Manhheim, 'would lead us to a matter of factness which ultimately would mean the decay of the human will...The disappearance of utopia brings about a static state of affairs in which man himself becomes no more than a thing'.[29] Though Mannheim himself gave little indication of how utopia could survive—except as 'democratic planning'—in a thoroughly rationalized world, there have been many others since who have voiced the same concern about the death of utopia. While the decline of utopia in the second half of the 20th century was a cause for rejoicing on the part of liberals such as Isaiah Berlin and certain bruised communists such as Leszek Kolakowski,[30] for others it has been nothing short of a disaster. There now exists a considerable literature which expresses, as a matter of urgency, a need for utopia in the contemporary world. Much of this emanates from architects, urbanists, and literary critics, but some political theorists and sociologists have added their voices.[31]

What seems lacking, in these thinkers as much as in Mannheim, is any indication of how and why utopia will revive. The need for something—e.g. peace and security—does not necessarily supply the remedy. Utopia has had its ups and down in the five centuries since More's *Utopia*, though it is not always easy to explain the fluctuations. All one can say is that there has been a tradition of thinking and writing utopia that, until about the middle of the 20th century, continued to show considerable vitality. Since that time, although their have been pockets of utopianism in certain areas, they have largely addressed restricted

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constituencies.[32] Utopia does not now seem the form in which, despite the great problems faced by the world, writers and artists wish to express their hopes and fears. There is no shortage, in the popular culture of film and science fiction, of apocalyptic visions. But the fusion of these with the constructive vision of utopia, as in the stories of H. G. Wells, is hard to find. Mannheim would have understood why, even if he would have mourned the consequences.

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Notes and References

1. A representative text of the kind of work on ideology done during these decades is Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology* (London: New Left Books, 1976). There are some helpful comments on the British school of cultural studies in Fred Inglis, *Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), pp. 94–107.
2. Stephen Ackroyd, 'Utopia or Ideology: Karl Mannheim and the Place of Theory', in Martin Parker (Ed.), *Utopia and Organization* (Oxford: Blackwell/*The Sociological Review*, 2002), p. 41. For Mannheim's influence in sociology in this period, see Robert K. Merton, 'Karl Mannheim and the Sociology of Knowledge', in his *Social Theory and Social Structure*, revised edn. (New York: The Free Press, 1968); Irving M. Zeitlin, *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), pp. 281–319.
3. The sociologist Steven Lukes once said that these were the only three of Mannheim's works that were still worth reading. They can be found in Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), *Essays on Sociology and Social Psychology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953), and *Essays on the Sociology of Culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956).
4. On the reasons for the particularly awkward organization of the English translation of *Ideology and Utopia*, see David Kettler and Volker Meja, *Karl Mannheim and the Crisis of Liberalism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1995), pp. 213–216. On the differences between the German and the English translation, see Bryan Turner, 'Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*', *Political Studies* 43 (1995), p. 720. On Mannheim's generally unhappy experience in England, and the lack of receptivity of Mannheim's work in America, see Kettler and Meja, *ibid*, pp. 176–240.
5. Ackroyd, 'Utopia or Ideology', *op. cit.,* Ref. 2, p. 41. The changing fortunes of Mannheim in Western sociology can be seen through considering some well-known texts. He is given respectable, though sceptical, treatment in Zeitlin's *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory*, *op. cit*., Ref. 2. In the first edition of Geoffrey Hawthorn's *Enlightenment and Despair: A History of Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) he gets one dismissive page (p. 181). In Donald Levine's *Visions of the Sociological Tradition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995) he doesn't appear at all. Current undergraduate textbooks of social theory—e,g. Craig Calhoun et al., *Contemporary Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002)—rarely mention him, let alone afford him extended commentary. It is interesting that while Western social theory has largely abandoned Mannheim, the same is not true elsewhere—for instance in Japan. See Ken'ichi Tominaga, 'European Sociology and the Modernisation of Japan', in Birgitta Nedelmann and Piotr Sztompka (Eds), *Sociology in Europe* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), pp. 206–208.
6. See, e.g. Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, 3rd edn (New York: Basic Books, 2000).
7. For some examples of the studies carried out under this rubric, see Volker Meja and Nico Stehr (Eds), *The Sociology of Knowledge*, 2 vols (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1986). See also Brian Longhurst, *Karl Mannheim and the Contemporary Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Macmillan, 1989). Much of the sociology of science, as practiced for instance by the 'Edinburgh school' of David Bloor, Steven Shapin and others, can also in principle be seen to be working within this tradition, though, again, it is rare for Mannheim's name to be invoked. If any one figure is seen as the founder of this sub-discipline it is Thomas Kuhn. See, e.g. Steven Shapin, 'History of Science and Its Sociological Reconstructions', *History of Science* 20 (1982), pp. 161–211.
8. See David Lockwood et al, *The Affluent Worker*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968–1969); Frank Parkin, *Class Inequality and Political Order* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1971); André Gorz (Ed.), *The Division of Labour* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1973); Glasgow University Media Group, *Bad News* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976); Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

9. It is striking that the recent two-volume *Encyclopedia of Social Theory*, edited by George Ritzer (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005), contains no entry on ideology. Mannheim gets an entry, with the comment that 'he is not considered by many to be an important figure in sociology' (Vol. 1, p. 469).
10. As claimed for instance by Ackroyd, *op.cit*., Ref. 2, p. 42. Others have stressed Mannheim's belief in 'the universal validity of scientific thought': B. Turner, 'Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopi*a', *op. cit*., Ref. 4, p. 727. On Mannheim's struggle with this problem—and his failure to solve it—see Edward Shils, 'Knowledge and the Sociology of Knowledge', *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization*, 4, 1 (1982), pp. 7–32.
11. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, translated by Louis Worth and Edward Shils, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, [1936] 1960), pp.174–175.
12. *Ibid*, p. 178.
13. *Ibid*, p. 179.
14. *Ibid*, p.179. And cf. also this very Marxian statement: 'It is always the dominant group which is in full accord with the existing order that determines what is to be regarded as utopian, while the ascendant group which is in conflict with things as they are is the one that determines what is regarded as ideological'. (p. 183).
15. *Ibid*, p. 173; see also p. 185. 'Realization', says Mannheim, is the criterion whereby we distinguish what is utopian and what ideological in a given historical situation. 'Ideas which later turned out to have been only distorted representations of a past or potential social order were ideological, while those which were adequately realized in the succeeding social order were relative utopias'. *Ibid*, p. 184.
16. *Ibid*, pp. 180–181.
17. *Ibid*, p. 183.
18. *Ibid*, p. 217.
19. Among the major texts on utopia, only Paul Ricoeur's *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) devotes much attention to Mannheim. Frank and Fritzie Manuel, in their massive *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge: MA, Harvard University Press, 1979), give him one line, in referring dismissively to 'Karl Mannheim's redefinition in his own private language of the idea of utopia' (p. 11). For a more sympathetic treatment, see Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (Hemel Hempstead: Philip Allan, 1990), pp. 67–82.
20. For utopian communities in 19th-century America, see my *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), chapter 3. On the experimental utopia, see also chapter 9. For the general discussion of practical utopias, see my *Utopianism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1991), chapter 4.
21. It is true that the practical realization of utopias, for Mannheim, relates mainly to the achievement of society-wide goals by major social strata, rather than, as with many of the experimental communities, the setting up of isolated communities by relatively small groups, such as the Owenites. But both share the decisive element of putting the emphasis on practice rather than, as in the main utopian tradition, contemplation or criticism.
22. See on this J. C. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English Utopian Writing 1516–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), chapter 1.
23. For the view that much classical political theory, from Hobbes to Rawls, can be considered utopian—and is none the worse for that—see Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 79.
24. See my *Utopianism*, *op. cit*., Ref. 20, pp. 27–32; also *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times*, *op. cit*., Ref. 20, chapter 2. Mannheim might have said that they all show a 'utopian mentality', which is how he characterizes all forms of utopia.
25. Karl Marx, 'Author's Preface to the Second German Edition' (1873), *Capital*, Vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 99.
26. *American Journal of Sociology* 64 (1958), pp. 115–127.
27. On this neglect see, e.g. Charles Turner, 'Mannheim's Utopia Today', *History of the Human Sciences*, 16 (1), (2003), p. 29.
28. For a study of some of these works, see Tom Moylan, *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (New York: Methuen, 1986).
29. *Ideology and Utopia*, *op. cit*., Ref. 11, p. 236.
30. See Isaiah Berlin, 'The Decline of Utopian Ideas in the West', in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity* (London: Fontana, 1991); Leszek Kolakowski, 'The Death of Utopia Reconsidered', in *Modernity on Endless Trial* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
31. See. e.g. Jurgen Habermas, 'The New Obscurity: The Crisis of the Welfare State and the Exhaustion of Utopian Energies', in *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989); David Harvey, *The Spaces of Hope* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); Russell Jacoby, *The End of Utopia: Politics and Culture in Age of Apathy* (New York: Basic Books, 1999);

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Russell Jacoby, *Picture Imperfect: Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Michael Jacobsen, 'From Solid Modern Utopia to Liquid Modern Anti-Utopia? Tracing the Utopian Strand in the Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman', *Utopian Studies* 15 (1), (2004), pp. 63–87.

32. See my *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times*, *op. cit*., Ref. 20, chapter 10; also my 'Utopia and Anti-Utopia in the Twentieth Century', in Lyman Tower Sargent and Roland Schaer (Eds), *Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). This conclusion is by no means accepted by all students of utopias. For some good discussions, see the essays in Barbara Goodwin (Ed.), *The Philosophy of Utopia* (London: Frank Cass, 2001); also the special issue on utopia, *History of Human Sciences*, 16 (1), (2003).

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