Book Review/Compte rendu

David Kettler, Colin Loader and Volker Meja, *Karl Mannheim and the Legacy of Max Weber: Retrieving a Research Programme*. Rethinking Classical Sociology. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008, 228 pp. $US 99.95 hardcover (978-0-7546-7224-1).

This book is an invaluable exercise in placing the work of Karl Mannheim in continuity with Max and Alfred Weber's ideas and in the discontinuity of Weimar as the successor to Wilhelmine Germany. In a sentence, Mannheim's big idea was to place ideas in context and then to seek to overcome the situatedness of those ideas. This books places Mannheim's research program in context, leaving the reader to ponder over the dilemma that an intelligentsia, however ahead of the curve of trends in society, is always a thing of its time.

Intelligentsia are not only defined by their ideas and a certain freedom from determinative social origins but are also subject to and, if they are not careful, victims of other political forces and ideas. Situatedness is a two-way street. In examining the social determination of other groups in society, some maverick off the radar might just run you over in his flatback truck. So, however progressive a research program is in its ideas, methods, and modes of dissemination it is probably worth ensuring that Machiavelli stays on the bookshelf. Mannheim himself was under no illusions that when ideas, power, and violence become fused no reasoned defence is possible.

Mannheim was a post-1919 Hungarian emigré who prior to the war had been part of Lukács' aesthetic-philosophical circle in Budapest. His first task was to reorient his intellectual interests away from pure philosophy towards epistemology and then to the sociology of knowledge. He did this at the University of Heidelberg studying (1922–28) within Alfred Weber's research program; it was Alfred Weber who sponsored his habilitation (and subsequent departure to Frankfurt). Absorbing much from Alfred's sociology of culture and civilization, Mannheim undertook to learn as much as possible of Max Weber's work — in this period he had plans to write a book on the leading Wilhelmine figures: Ernst Troeltsch, Max Scheler, and Max Weber. During the war years there was growing realization among German academics that the postwar domestic settlement would be far more democratic and that the education of both

masses and elites would be a central task. Mannheim worked out a research program where these tasks were given organizational, academic, and intellectual heft. He also realized, quicker than most, the differences between the mode of intellectuality of old pre-1918 Heidelberg — confident in its own precocity and preciousness — and its Weimar equivalent, which could not take its audience for granted. Out of this came the immensely assured and path-revealing set of essays *Ideology and Utopia*, published in 1929.

It is the merit of Kettler, Loader, and Meja's book that they not only trace the development of what Mannheim would term the noetic, but also reconstruct how *Ideology and Utopia* was consolidated into a postgraduate research program at Frankfurt in the first few years of the 1930s. While Mannheim was ahead of the game, he was aware that he, and sociology, had to remain academically respectable. Although galvanized by their own life experiences, researchers had to remain "distantiated" from their own value positions. Mannheim even made his researchers fill out questionnaires where they were encouraged to make clear their own personal feelings and motivations. Kurt Wolff revealed his poetic side, only to have Mannheim tell him that the *Sachlichkeit* of social science did not allow for the personal-poetic. (Wolff quite rightly stood his ground.) Mannheim was also sensible that he was a professor in a German university and that this had status expectations that should not be upset by pursuing the role of a public intellectual. He embedded the institute into the progressive substrate of Weimar, where it was safe just as long as Weimar remained stable.

The introduction to this book downplays the centrality of *Ideology and Utopia* in favour of the consolidated research program, and the authors bring to light the various empirical programs pursued, noting — in a bias against grand debates — that Mannheim's "sociologists are empirical because they aspire to realism, but they are not empiricists." Karl Mannheim and Adolf Löwe had a workshop on social history and the history of ideas on early liberalism in Germany which Ludwig Bergsträsser, Lurich Noack, and Paul Tillich attended along with postgraduates including Norbert Elias, Hannah Arendt, Hans Gerth, Jacob Katz, and Hans Weil. It was to be a resonant theme for many of the attendees. Other research projects were Margarete Freudenthal's study of the changing status of women in the household, Elias's *Court Society* (which relates to Mannheim's economic sociology), Käthe Truhel on social workers and the need for a social rather than rule-based bureaucracy, Natalie Halperin and Freudenthal on the genealogy of women's movements, Jacob Katz and Nina Rubinstein on the sociology of the stran-

ger, and Frieda Haussig's study of Wilhelm Riehl's literary ethnography. These and other studies are all given the exposition they deserve.

As the title of the book denotes, a major theme is Karl Mannheim's engagement with Max Weber. Despite finding an academic berth with Alfred Weber for some five years, Mannheim saw himself — with some justification — as Max Weber's successor as a sociologist. (Others like Karl Jaspers, holding to the view of Weber as the eternal philosopher, dismissed Mannheim's claims.) This raises the question of how well Mannheim comprehended Max Weber. Probably very well, even though Alfred was in terms of theory the opposite of his elder brother. The Lukács connection must be counted as significant, remembering that in 1913 Max Weber, Lukács, and Emil Lask had pushed the value-validity question into aesthetics and eroticism. This was one of Heidelberg's deepest conversations. But no evidence is brought forward by the authors on whether Mannheim was in touch with Lukács in this period. Mannheim does at times use Lask's terminology and the general case must be that Heidelberg in the 1920s was the best place to learn about Max Weber, especially with the publication of editions of his collected works by Marianne Weber. Hans Gerth pops up as a research student taken on by Mannheim around 1927 (on the strength, as Gerth admits, of having read Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*) and it is Gerth who digs out the relevant passages of Weber's *Wissenschaftslehre* and *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* for Mannheim when he is preparing *Ideology and Utopia*. The borrowing not only of Max Weber's ideas but of his terminology comes across, even in translation (a credit to Shils and Wirth). One might want to translate *Wissenschaftslehre* as "theory of science" but this title also translates as "sociology of knowledge" in the sense that Weber's methodology essays are interventions in the politics of science. Weber would not, though, have subscribed to Mannheim's goal of a sociology of knowledge acting as an "organon for politics as a science."

There is an important chapter on Mannheim's 1930 essay "On the nature and significance of the striving for economic success." This was translated in 1952, but with a number of cuts, some of which excised discussion and citation of Max Weber. The essay has a Protestant ethic approach: what happens when the economic sphere is generative of its own values and not overseen by moral or political concerns? Further, given the anonymity of money, that economic exchange is a matter of individuals taking advantage of favourable circumstances and that economic success is anodyne of any other value than the mere quantification of money wealth — its own self-justifying entelechy, economic success then becomes limitless and the entrepreneur is given the licence of a

renaissance prince. This sounds familiar, and though I would not put Donald Trump in the princely category, the point is, neither can he despite his striving. *Pace* Bourdieu, economic fame cancels other status distinctions.

This 1930 essay, appearing a year after *Ideology and Utopia*, offers up a significant qualification of the sociology of knowledge program. The economic instrumentalization of values invades all sectors including the political, making the modern person pragmatic in judgement and openly swayed by public opinion. As the authors point out, this anticipates Marcuse and, one can add, incapacitates the kind of public intervention that Max Weber assumed was both possible and effective.

The authors are to be thanked for creating a set of generational linkages — the Weber brothers, Karl Mannheim, Mannheim's students who became emigré academics in the USA and mentors of the next generation of sociologists — and actualizing the recurring dilemmas of the sociological intelligentsia. Place this book on third year reading lists.

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