
The Sociology of Knowledge and Its Consciousness

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Robert Merton, C. Wright Mills et al. repeatedly complained that the sociology of knowledge failed to solve its central problem of specifying the nexus between social and cognitive structures. Nonetheless, this field has remained limited to techniques of content analysis and correlation studies while failing to explain these categories and correlations other than by recourse to functionalist truisms. For this reason, it is important to point to some of the fundamental reasons for this failure: not imperfect research techniques but the approach itself fails to examine its own categories as problematic (e.g. divisions into popular and classical music, into high and mass culture—these should be the problem rather than the premise on which to classify responses, as Adorno used to complain when he conducted part of the Princeton Radio Research Project with Lazarsfeld). Of necessity, therefore, Mannheim (commonly taken to be the founder of the sociology of knowledge) had to arrive at a leveling pluralism where all ideological positions, all forms of consciousness were alike in that they were the natural correlative of social positions. If he had considered what concretely mediated between social being and consciousness, he might have found a different nexus in every case, depending on what social necessities or possibilities were at work. But such a perspective would have required a theory of the emergence of the social constellations which Mannheim, in Adorno's eyes, accepts as givens, just as he does cul-

made sense, Adorno and Horkheimer argued, that despite his considerable acumen, Mannheim's accepting and conservative stance leads him to assume abstract principles to be the active agents of history, rather than people. Finally, if every ideological position was contingent on a social position, why should the sociology of knowledge be exempt from this postulate?

The sociology of knowledge expounded by Karl Mannheim has begun to take hold in Germany again. For this it can thank its gesture of innocuous skepticism. Like its existentialist counterparts, it calls everything into question and criticizes nothing. Intellectuals who feel repelled by "dogma," real or presumed, find relief in a climate which seems free of bias and assumptions and which offers them in addition something of the pathos of Max Weber's self-conscious and lonely yet undaunted rationality as compensation for their faltering consciousness of their own autonomy. In Mannheim as in his polar opposite, Jaspers, many impulses of Weber's school which were once deeply embedded in the polyhistoric edifice come to light. Most important of these is the tendency to suppress the theory of ideologies in its authentic form. These considerations may justify returning to one of Mannheim's older books, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*. The work addresses itself to a broader public than does the book on ideology. It cannot be held to each of its formulations. All the greater, however, is the insight it offers into the influence of the sociology of knowledge.

The mentality of the book is "positivistic"; social phenomena are taken "as such" and then classified according to general concepts. In the process, social antagonisms invariably tend to be glossed over. They survive merely as subtle modifications of a conceptual apparatus whose distilled "principles" install themselves autocratically and engage in shadow battles: "The ultimate root of all conflicts in the present age of reconstruction can be seized in a single formula. All down the line tensions arise from the uncontrolled interaction of the 'laissez-faire principle' and the new principle of regulation." As if everything did not depend on who regulates whom. Or, instead of specific groups of people or a specific structure of society, "the irrational" is made responsible for the difficulties of the age. The growth of antagonisms is elegantly described as "the disproportionate development of human capacities," as though it were a question of personalities and not of the anonymous machinery which does away with the individual. Right and wrong are glossed over in like manner;

the "average man" is abstracted from them and assigned an ontological "narrow-mindedness" which "has always been there." Of his "experimental self-observation"—the term is borrowed from more exact sciences—Mannheim frankly confesses: "All these forms of self-observation have the tendency to gloss over and neglect individual differences because they are interested in what is general in man and its variability." Not, however, in his particular situation and in the real transformations he undergoes. In its neutrality, the generalizing order of Mannheim's conceptual world is kindly disposed to the real world; it employs the terminology of social criticism while removing its sting.

The concept of society as such is rendered impotent from the outset by a language which invokes the exceedingly compromised term, "integration." Its occurrence is no accident. Mannheim's use of the concept of the social totality serves not so much to emphasize the intricate dependence of men within the totality as to glorify the social process itself as an evening-out of the contradictions in the whole. In this balance, theoretically, the contradictions disappear, although it is precisely they which comprise the life-process of "society": "Thus it is not immediately evident that an opinion which prevails in society is the result of a process of selection which integrates many similarly directed expressions of life." What disappears in this notion of selection is the fact that what keeps the mechanism creaking along is human deprivation under conditions of insane sacrifice and the continual threat of catastrophe. The precarious and irrational self-preservation of society is falsified and turned into an achievement of its immanent justice or "rationality."

Where there is integration, elites are never far away. The "cultural crisis" to which, in Mannheim, terror and horror are readily sublimated becomes for him the "problem of the formation of elites." He distills four processes in which this problem is supposed to crystallize: the growing number of elites and the resulting enfeeblement of their influence, the destruction of the exclusiveness of elite groups, the change in the process of selection of elites, and the change in their composition. In the first place, the categories employed in this analysis are highly questionable. The positivist who registers the facts *sine ira et studio* is ready to accept the phrases which conceal the facts. One such phrase is the concept of the elite itself. Its untruthfulness consists in the fact that the privileges of particular groups are presented teleologically as the result of some kind of objective process of selection, whereas in fact no one has selected these elites but them-

selves. In his use of the concept of the elite, Mannheim overlooks social power. He uses the notion "descriptively," in the manner of formal sociology. This allows him to shed only as much light as he wishes on each particular privileged group. At the same time, however, the concept of the elite is employed in such a way that the present emergency can be deduced from above, from some equally "neutral" malfunctioning of the elite-mechanism, without regard to the state of political economy. In the process, Mannheim comes into open conflict with the facts. When he asserts that in "mass democratic" societies, it has become increasingly easy for anyone to gain entrance into any sphere of social influence and that the elites are thereby deprived of "their exclusive character, which is necessary for the development of intellectual and psychological impulses," he is contradicted by the most humble prescientific experience. The deficient homogeneity of the elites is a fiction, one related to those of chaos in the world of values and the disintegration of all stable forms of order. Whoever does not fit in is kept out. Even the differences of conviction which reflect those of real interests serve primarily to obscure the underlying unity which prevails in all decisive matters. Nothing contributes more to this obfuscation than talk of "the cultural crisis," to which Mannheim unhesitatingly adds his voice. It transforms real suffering into spiritual guilt, denounces civilization, and generally works to the advantage of barbarism. Cultural criticism has changed its function. The cultural philistine has long ceased to be the man of progress, the figure with which Nietzsche identified David Friedrich Strauss. Instead, he has learned profundity and pessimism. In their name, he denies the humanity which has become incompatible with his present interests, and his venerable impulse to destruction turns against the products of the culture whose decline he sentimentally bemoans. To the sociologist of the cultural crisis, this matters little. His heroic *ratio* does not even refrain from turning the trite thesis of the demise of the formative power of European art since the end of the Biedermeyer period against modern art in a manner which is both romantic and reactionary.

Accepted along with elite theory is its specific coloration. Conventional notions are joined by naïve respect for that which they represent. Mannheim designates "blood, property and achievement" as the selection principles of the elites. His passion for destroying ideologies does not lead him to consider even once the legitimacy of these principles; he is actually able, during Hitler's lifetime, to speak of a "genuine blood-principle" which is supposed to have formerly

guaranteed "the purity of aristocratic minority stocks and their traditions." From this to the new aristocracy of blood and soil, it is only a step. Mannheim's general cultural pessimism prevents him from taking that step. As far as he is concerned, there is still too little blood. He dreads a "mass democracy" in which blood and property would disappear as principles of selection; the all too rapid change of elites would threaten continuity. He is particularly concerned with the fact that things are no longer quite right with the esoteric doctrine of the "genuine blood-principle." "It has become democratic and quite suddenly offers to the great masses of the population the privilege of social ascendancy without any achievement." Just as the nobility of the past was never any more noble than anyone else, the aristocracy of today has neither an objective nor a subjective interest in really relinquishing the principle of privilege. Elite theory, happy in the invariant, unites different levels of what sociologists today call social differentiation, such as feudalism and capitalism, under the heading "blood-and property-principle"; with equally good humor it separates what belongs together, property and achievement. Max Weber had shown that the spirit of early capitalism identifies the two, that in a rationally constituted work process the capacity for achievement can be measured in terms of material success. The equation of achievement and material success found its psychological manifestation in a readiness to make success as such a fetish. In Mannheim, this tendency appears in sublimated form as a "status drive." In bourgeois ideology, property and achievement were first separated when it became obvious that "achievement" as the economic *ratio* of the individual no longer corresponded to "property" as its potential reward. Only then did the bourgeois truly become a *gentilhomme*. Thus, Mannheim's "mechanisms of selection" are inventions, arbitrarily chosen coordinates distanced from the life-process of actual society.

Conclusions can be drawn from them which bear a fatal resemblance to the lax conceptions of Werner Sombart and Ortega y Gasset. Mannheim speaks of a "proletarianization of the intelligentsia." He is correct in calling attention to the fact that the cultural market is flooded; there are, he observes, more culturally qualified (from the standpoint of formal education, that is) people available than there are suitable positions for them. This situation, however, is supposed to lead to a drop in the social value of culture, since it is "a sociological law that the social value of cultural goods is a function of the social status of those who produce them." At the same time, he continues,

the "social value" of culture necessarily declines because the recruiting of new members of the intelligentsia extends increasingly to lower social strata, especially that of the petty officialdom. Thus, the notion of the proletariat is formalized; it appears as a mere structure of consciousness, as with the upper bourgeoisie, which condemns anyone not familiar with the rules as a "prole." The genesis of this process is not considered and as a result is falsified. By calling attention to a "structural" assimilation of consciousness to that of the lowest strata of society, he implicitly shifts the blame to the members of those strata and their alleged emancipation in mass democracy. Yet stultification is caused not by the oppressed but by oppression, and it affects not only the oppressed but, in their essentials, the oppressors as well, a fact to which Mannheim paid little attention. The flooding of intellectual vocations is due to the flooding of economic occupations as such, basically, to technological unemployment. It has nothing to do with Mannheim's democratization of the elites, and the reserve army of intellectuals is the last to influence them. Moreover, the sociological law which makes the so-called status of culture dependent on that of those who produce it is a textbook example of a false generalization. One need only recall the music of the eighteenth century, the cultural relevance of which in the Germany of the time stands beyond all doubt. Musicians, except for the *maestri*, primadonnas and *castrati* attached to the courts, were held in low esteem; Bach lived as a subordinate church official and the young Hayden as a servant. Musicians attained social status only when their products were no longer suitable for immediate consumption, when the composer set himself against society as his own master—with Beethoven. The reason for Mannheim's false conclusion lies in the psychologism of his method. The individualistic façade of society concealed from him the fact that its essence consists precisely in developing forms which undergo a process of sedimentation and which reduce individuals to mere agents of objective tendencies. Its disillusioned mien notwithstanding, the standpoint of the sociology of knowledge is pre-Hegelian. Its recourse to a group of organizers, in the case of Mannheim's "law," to the bearers of culture, is based on the somewhat transcendental presupposition of a harmony between society and the individual. The absence of such harmony forms one of the most urgent objects of critical theory, which is a theory of human relations only to the extent that it is also a theory of the inhumanity of those relations.

The distortions of the sociology of knowledge arise from its

method, which translates dialectical concepts into classificatory ones. Since in each case what is socially contradictory is absorbed into individual logical classes, social classes as such disappear and the picture of the whole becomes harmonious. When, for instance, in the third section of the book, Mannheim distinguishes three levels of consciousness: chance discovery, invention and planning, he is simply trying to interpret the dialectical scheme of epochs as that of the fluidly changing modes of behavior of socialized man in general, in which the determinant oppositions disappear: "It is of course clear that the line which divides inventive thinking, which is rationally striving to realize immediate goals, from planned thinking is not a hard and fast one. No one can say for certain at what degree of foresight and at what point in the widening radius of conscious regulation the transition from inventive to planned thinking takes place." The notion of an unbroken transition from a liberal to a "planned" society has its correlative in the conception of that transition as one between distinct modes of "thinking." Such a conception awakens the belief that the historical process is guided by an inherently univocal subject embodying the whole of society. The translation of dialectical into classificatory concepts abstracts from the conditions of real social power upon which alone those levels of thought depend. "The novel contribution of the sociological view of the past and the present is that it sees history as an area open to experimentation in regulatory intervention"—as though the possibility of such intervention always corresponded to the level of insight at the time. Such a levelling off of social struggles into modes of behavior which can be defined formally and which are made abstract in advance allows uplifting proclamations concerning the future: "Yet another way remains open—it is that unified planning will come about through understanding, agreement and compromise, i.e., that the state of mind will triumph in the key positions of international society which hitherto has been possible only within a given national group, within whose enclaves peace was established by such methods." Through the idea of compromise, the very contradictions which were supposedly resolved through planning are retained; the abstract concept of planning conceals them in advance and is itself a compromise between the laissez-faire principle which is preserved in it and the insight into its insufficiency.

Dialectical concepts cannot be "translated" into the categories of formal sociology without their truths being impaired. Mannheim flirts with positivism to the extent that he believes himself able to rely

on objectively given facts, which, however, in his rather lax manner he describes as "unarticulated." These unarticulated facts can then be put through the sociological thought-machine and thus elevated to general concepts. But such classification according to ordering concepts would be an adequate cognitive process only if the facts, which are assumed to be immediately given, could be abstracted from their concrete context as easily as it would appear to the naïve first glance. It is not adequate, however, if social reality has, prior to every theoretical ordering glance, a highly "articulated" structure upon which the scientific subject and the data of his experience depend. As analysis advances, the initial "facts" cease to be descriptive, self-contained data, and sociology is all the less at liberty to classify them to suit its needs. That "facts" must undergo this correction as the theoretical understanding of society proceeds means not so much that new subjective ordering schemes must be devised, as it would seem to naïve experience, as that the data which are presumably given embody more than mere material to be processed conceptually, namely, that they are moulded by the social whole and thus "structured" in themselves. Idealism can be overcome only when the freedom to conceptualize through abstraction is sacrificed. The thesis of the primacy of being over consciousness includes the methodological imperative to express the dynamic tendencies of reality in the formation and movement of concepts instead of forming and verifying concepts in accordance with the demand that they have pragmatic and expedient features. The sociology of knowledge has closed its eyes to this imperative. Its abstractions are arbitrary as long as they merely harmonize with an experience which proceeds by differentiating and correcting. Mannheim does not allow himself the logical conclusion that the "unbiased" registration of facts is a fiction. The social scientist's experience does not give him undifferentiated, chaotic material to be organized; rather, the material of his experience is the social order, more emphatically a "system" than any ever conceived by philosophy. What decides whether his concepts are right or wrong is neither their generality nor, on the other hand, their approximation to "pure" fact, but rather the adequacy with which they grasp the real laws of movement of society and thereby render stubborn facts transparent. In a coordinate-system defined by concepts like integration, elite and articulation, those determining laws and everything they signify for human life appear to be contingent or accidental, mere sociological "differentiations." For this reason, sociology which generalizes and differentiates seems like a mockery of reality. It does not recoil before

formulations like "disregarding the concentration and centralization of capital." Such abstractions are not "neutral." What a theory regards and what it disregards determines its quality. Were "disregarding" sufficient, one could, for instance, also analyze elites by observing such groups as the vegetarians or the followers of Mazdaznan and then refine this analysis conceptually until its manifest absurdity disappeared. But no corrective could compensate for the fact that the choice of basic categories was false, that the world is not organized according to these categories. All correctives notwithstanding, this falseness would shift the accents so fundamentally that reality would drop out of the concepts; the elites would be "groups of the Mazdaznan form" which happened to be characterized in addition by the possession of "social power." When at one point Mannheim says that "in the cultural sphere (properly also in the economic) there has never been an absolute liberalism, that alongside of the undirected working of the social forces there has always existed, for instance, regulation in education," he is obviously trying to establish a differentiating corrective to the belief that the principle of laissez-faire, long ago exposed as ideology, ever prevailed in an unrestricted manner. But through the choice of an initial concept which is to be differentiated only afterwards, the crucial issue is distorted: the insight that even under liberalism the principle of laissez-faire served only to mask economic control and that accordingly the establishment of "cultural goods" was essentially determined by their conformity with the ruling social interests. The insight into a basic matter of ideology evaporates into mere finesse; instead of directing itself to the concrete in the first place without hypostasizing indispensable general concepts, the method seeks to conciliate by demonstrating that it remembers the concrete too.

The inadequacies of the method become manifest in its poles, the law and the "example." The sociology of knowledge characterizes stubborn facts as mere differentiations and subsumes them under the highest general units; at the same time, it ascribes an intrinsic power over the facts to these arbitrary generalizations, which it calls social "laws," such as the one relating cultural goods to the social status of those who produce them. The "laws" are hypostasized. Sometimes they assume a truly extravagant character: "There is, however, a decisive law which rules us at the present moment. Unplanned spheres regulated by natural selection on the one hand and deliberately organized areas on the other can exist side by side without friction *only as long as the unplanned spheres predominate*" [Mannheim's italics].

Quantified propositions of this form are no more evident than those of Baaderian metaphysics, over which they have the advantage only of a lack of imagination. The falseness of Mannheim's hypostasization of general concepts can be grasped precisely at the point where he interjects the *principia media* to which he debased the laws of dialectical movement: "However much we must take the *principia media* and the corresponding concepts ('late capitalism,' 'structural unemployment,' 'lower-middle-class ideology,' etc.) as concrete expressions of a special historical setting, it should nevertheless be borne in mind that what we are doing is differentiating and individualizing abstract and general determinants (general factors). The *principia media* are in a certain sense nothing but temporary groups of general factors so closely intertwined that they operate as a single causal factor. That we are essentially dealing here with general factors in an historical and individual setting is evident from our example. Our first observation implies the general principle of the functioning of a social order with freely contracting legal personalities; the second, the psychological effect of unemployment in general, and the last, the general law that hopes of social advancement tend to affect individuals in a way which obscures their real social position." It is just as mistaken, Mannheim continues, to believe that conceptions of man in general are valid in themselves as "to neglect or ignore the general principles of the human psyche within the concrete modes of behavior of these historical types." Accordingly, the historical event seems to be determined in part by "general," in part by "particular" causes which together form some sort of "group." This, however, implies the confusion of levels of abstraction with causes. Mannheim sees the decisive weakness of dialectical thought in its misunderstanding of "general forces"—as if the commodity forms were not "general" enough for all the questions with which he deals. "General forces," however, are not independent in opposition to "particular" ones, as though a concrete event were "caused" once by a causal proposition and then again by the specific "historical situation." No event is caused by general forces, much less by laws; causality is not the "cause" of events but rather the highest conceptual generality under which concrete causal factors can be subsumed. The significance of the observation Newton made on the falling apple is not that the general law of causality "acts" within a complex which includes factors of a lower degree of abstraction. Causality operates only in the particular and not in addition to it. Only to this extent can the falling apple be called "an example of the law of gravity," the law of gravity

is as much dependent on the falling of this apple as vice-versa. The concrete play of forces can be reduced to schemata of varying levels of generality, but it is not a question of a conjunction of "general" and "particular" forces. Mannheim's pluralism, of course, which conceives what is crucial as merely *one* perspective among many, is hardly eager to give up its sums of general and particular factors.

The fact, baptized in advance as a "unique situation," thereby becomes a mere example of these forces. Dialectical theory, in contrast, can no more accept the concept of the example as valid than could Kant. Examples function as convenient and interchangeable illustrations; hence they are often chosen at a comfortable distance from the true concerns of mankind today, or they are pulled, as it were, out of a hat. But they are quickly forced to pay the consequences. Mannheim writes, for instance: "An illuminating example of the disturbances which can arise from substantial irrationality may be seen where, for example, the diplomatic staff of a state has carefully thought out a series of actions and has agreed on certain steps, when suddenly one of its members falls prey to a nervous collapse and then acts contrary to the plan, thereby destroying it." It is useless to portray such private events as "factors"; not only is the "radius of action" of the individual diplomat romantically overestimated, but also unless the blunder itself served the course of political developments stronger than the diplomats' considerations, it could be corrected in five minutes over the telephone. Or, with the pictorial vividness of a children's book, Mannheim writes: "As a soldier, I must control my impulses and desires to a quite different degree than as a free hunter whose acts are only periodically purposive and who will only occasionally need to take hold of himself—for instance, at the moment when he has to fire at his prey." As is generally known, the occupation of hunter has in recent years been replaced by the sport of hunting, but even the sportsman who takes hold of himself only "at the moment when he has to fire at his prey," apparently in order not to be startled by the crack of his own rifle, will hardly bag much, probably frighten away his prey, and perhaps not even find it. The insignificance of such examples is closely related to the influence the sociology of knowledge has had. Selected for their subjective neutrality and therefore inessential in advance, the examples serve to distract. Sociology originated in the impulse to criticize the principles of the society with which it found itself confronted; the sociology of knowledge settles for reflections on hunters dressed in green and diplomats in black.

The direction in which, in terms of content, the formalism of such conceptualization tends reveals itself when programmatic demands are voiced. An "optimum" for the thorough organization of society is demanded, but no thought is given to the gap that would have to be breached to attain such an optimum. If things are only put together rationally, everything will fall into place. Mannheim's ideal of a "desired direction" between "unconscious conservatism" and "misdirected utopianism" corresponds to this: "We can see at the same time, however, the general outline of a possible solution to the present tension, namely, a sort of authoritarian democracy making use of planning and creating a stable system from the present conflict of principles." This is in accordance with the stylistic elevation of the "crisis" to a "human problem," in which Mannheim shows himself in agreement with modern German anthropologists, his declaration against them notwithstanding, and with the existentialist philosophers. Two characteristics more than all others, however, reveal the conformism of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge. First, it remains concerned with symptoms. It is thoroughly disposed to overestimate the significance of ideologies as opposed to what they represent. It placidly shares with them precisely that equivocal conception of "the irrational" to which the critical lever should be applied: "We must, moreover, realize that the irrational is not always harmful but that, on the contrary, it is among the most valuable powers in man's possession when it acts as a driving force towards rational or objective ends, creates cultural values through sublimation and cultivation, or, as pure élan, heightens the joy of living without breaking up the social order by lack of planning." There are no further hints as to the nature of this irrational, which is said to produce cultural values through cultivation, although such values are by definition the product of cultivation, or to "heighten" the joy of living, which is irrational anyway. In any case, however, the equation of the instincts with the irrational is ominous, for the concept is applied in "value-free" manner both to the libido and to the forms its repression takes. The irrational seems to endow ideologies with substantiality in Mannheim. They receive a paternal reproof but are left intact; what they conceal is never exposed. But the vulgar materialism of prevailing praxis is closely related to this positivistic tendency to accept symptoms uncritically, this perceptible respect for the claims of ideology. The façade remains intact in the glow of amenable observation, and the ultimate wisdom of this sociology is that no impulse could arise within the interior which could seriously threaten to proceed beyond its carefully

marked bounds: "In actual fact, the existing body of ideas (and the same applies to vocabulary) never exceeds the horizon and the radius of activity of the society in question." Whatever "exceeds" the limits, to be sure, can easily be seen as "adjustment to the emotional evocation of spiritual values, etc.". This materialism, akin to that of the family head who considers it utterly impossible for his offspring to have a new thought, since everything has already been thought, and hence recommends that he concentrate on earning a respectable living, this seasoned and arrogant materialism is the reverse image of the idealism in Mannheim's view of history, an idealism to which he also remains true in other respects, especially in his conceptions of "rationality" and progress, an idealism according to which changes in consciousness are even capable of lifting "the structural principle of society off its hinges from the inside out, so to speak."

The real attraction of the sociology of knowledge can be sought only in the fact that those changes in consciousness, as achievements of "planning reason," are linked directly to the reasoning of today's planners: "The fact that the complex actions of a functional, thoroughly rationalized society can be thought through only in the heads of a few organizers assures the latter of a key position in society." The motif which becomes apparent here extends beyond the consciousness of the sociology of knowledge. The objective spirit, as that of those "few organizers," speaks through it. While the sociology of knowledge dreams of new academic fields to conquer, it unsuspectingly serves those who have not hesitated a moment to abolish those fields. Mannheim's reflections, nourished by liberal common sense, all amount to the same thing in the end—recommending social planning without ever penetrating to the foundations of society. The consequences of the absurdity which has now become obvious and which Mannheim sees only superficially as a "cultural crisis," are to be mollified from above, that is, by those who control the means of production. This means, however, simply that the liberal, who sees no way out, makes himself the spokesman of a dictatorial arrangement of society even while he imagines he is opposing it. Of course, the sociology of knowledge will reply that the ultimate criterion for judging planning is not power but reason and that reason includes the task of converting the powerful. Nevertheless, since the Platonic philosopher-kings it had been clear what such a conversion involves. The answer to Mannheim's reverence for the intelligentsia as "free-floating" is to be found not in the reactionary postulate of its "rootedness in Being" but rather in the reminder that the very intelligentsia

that pretends to float freely is fundamentally rooted in the very being that must be changed and which it merely pretends to criticize. For if the rational is the optimal functioning of the system, which postpones the catastrophe without asking whether the system in its totality is not in fact the optimum in irrationality. In totalitarian systems of every kind, planning directed at maintaining the system leads to the barbarous suppression below the surface of the contradictions it inevitably produces. In the name of reason, the advocates of planning turn power over to those who already possess it in the name of mystification. The power of reason today is the blind reason of those who currently hold power. But as power moves towards the catastrophe it induces the mind which denies it with moderation to abdicate to it. It still calls itself liberal, to be sure, but for it freedom has already become "from the sociological point of view nothing but a disproportion between the growth of the radius of effective central control on the one hand and the size of the group unit to be influenced on the other." The sociology of knowledge sets up indoctrination camps for the homeless intelligentsia where it can learn to forget itself.