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The Fourth R: Reality Construction and the Sociology of Knowledge, Prolegomena to Social Studies Curriculum Theory.

by

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The nineteen sixties were marked by a revival of interest in the theory of curriculum construction and innovation which was derived from a psychological perspective. The theories of Piaget on the mental development and maturation of cognitive structures in the growing child were challenged by the ideas of Bruner and Taba concerning the cognitive development of children within the conceptual frameworks and structures of the (subject) disciplines, leading to a plethora of tightly structured, teacher directed, classroom located programmes in mathematics, science, social science and language studies which were to lead the student, page by page, from kindergarten to high school, (K. through 12).

Some reaction to these theories occurred towards the end of the decade as a result of the stress given by philosophers to science as process, rather than product. Enquiry methods became the order of the day, particularly in science and social science. The terms "teaching" and "instructing" were replaced by a new emphasis upon "learning" and the classroom was redefined as a "structured environment in which learning takes place". Desire to demonstrate that learning had in fact taken place, was met by an emphasis on behavioural objectives and a facile concentration on those learnings which were immediate, and could be measured, to the exclusion of the more difficult and long term learnings in the affective domain. These developments were incorporated into various interpretations of the concept of "open education" which took the student away from texts, and out of the classroom and into the community, now redefined as a learning resource.

Generally, these changes have been within the area of pedagogical methodology, and matters concerned with the selection of curricular content and substantive attitudes and values were left unquestioned. However, recent developments would seem to suggest a growing consciousness of the need for a sociological perspective on curriculum theory. This has been brought about by a new interest in the field known as the sociology of knowledge. There is an initial problem in delimiting the field of the sociology of knowledge and tracing the precise implications of it for education in general, and for curriculum theory in particular. This paper represents explorations within the wide field of the sociology of knowledge in an attempt to isolate the main issues of conflict and controversy. The particular approach adopted is an historical one.

A standard encyclopedic reference to the sociology of knowledge defines it as the subdiscipline that is concerned with the process by which knowledge arises in a particular culture, why knowledge takes the form that it does, how knowledge is sustained by the culture and the effects that knowledge has on social action within the culture. Knowledge, in this sense, is broadly conceived and includes such diverse elements as myth, philosophy, belief, science and the ordinary common sense ideas that people have about the world in which they live. Aron adds a point of further clarification (Aron, 1972 p.105). He states that the sociological study of the origins of concepts should not be confused with the theory of knowledge. The conditions of scientific truth are not to be confused with the circumstances of the social advent of truth. It is a dangerous illusion to imagine that there is a sociological theory of knowledge. There is only a sociological theory of the conditions in which knowledge develops.

B. Russell (Popper, 1962 p.212) has argued that rationality, in the sense of an appeal to a universal and impersonal standard of truth, is of supreme importance, not only in the ages in which it easily prevails, but also and even more, in those less fortunate times in which it is despised and rejected as the vain dream of men who lack the virility to kill where they cannot agree. The above quotations set the parameters of this essay. Essentially it is the interface between philosophy and sociology. In as much as knowledge is a philosophic concept, a sociology of knowledge cannot be otherwise.

Traditionally, knowledge of the world, ourselves and other people was assigned to philosophy and problems were to be resolved by epistemology. Following Hume and the development of empiricist epistemologies, knowledge had to be considered in the existential context - the experience of the thinkers, and once this was seen as the social experience of the thinkers, then a sociology of knowledge became possible. Building onto the demythologizing ground-work of the Enlightenment philosophers, Karl Marx was able to develop the notion of ideological thought, that is that the existential conditions, the social, political, economic interests of the knowledge producers, may affect the validity of thought. Marx was able to argue, by the historical, materialistic and dialectic method, that primary explanatory power be given to the politic - economic structure of society.

Marx's approach can be described as "materialistic" in the sense that it accepts society as being an historically determined, specific structure of social relations between real men, rather than the interrelationships of abstract ideas or human consciousnesses. His approach is "dialectic" in the sense that thought and being do not have separate ontological statuses but are conceived of as part of a whole, each interacting with the other, to produce a reality which is not subsumable under material substratum or human consciousness alone. However, Marx made a crucial epistemological assumption in believing that material facts were prior to thought and that change in socio-cultural facts was due, not to reason, but to practical human activity (praxis) that transforms the natural conditions of human

existence into social conditions. Marx's distinctive sociology of knowledge was constructed on these assumptions and centred around his concepts of alienation and false consciousness.

Alienation resulted when the relationship between the material basis of life and work, and man's conception of himself as a social being, was distorted in capitalist societies to produce a reduction in his consciousness of his human nature, to that of the status of things and mere objects. To Marx, this was a false consciousness, or ideology. Classical economics and bourgeois social science were all part of this false consciousness. The way knowledge is produced and its content were seen to be in direct relationship to the power structure of the society. Ideas were an expression of the social relationship and had the same factitiousness as economic categories. The division of labour meant that there were ideologists who made a living constructing distorted ideas and theories, and both the powerful and the powerless accepted these as true.

Marx was then faced with a situation of the extreme relativity of all knowledge which he endeavoured to solve by arguing that the possibility of possessing true "scientific" knowledge of society can only be achieved after a complete transformation of society. The forms and production of knowledge and thought cannot be dissolved by any purely mental effort but only by a removal of the social conditions which gave rise to them. The communist revolution of the proletariat will facilitate the future production of non-ideological social knowledge since the revolution will do away with labour as a socially specific, human activity.

While a non-ideological consciousness would emerge after the revolution, Marx nevertheless considered that the methodology of the natural sciences was also that for the social sciences. He believed in the unity of the sciences and considered that the false consciousness distorted the operation of the natural science model in bourgeois capitalist societies. There is a definite positivist streak in Marx's thought.

Marx's writings on the sociology of knowledge form the basis of this field and contain the seeds of all later developments - the strong exploration of the theme of the sociological determination of knowledge in the writings of Durkheim, Mannheim, and the phenomenologists; the positivist, scientific school of philosophy and sociology which has been critical of some aspects of the sociology of knowledge, and the body of critical social theory contained in the writings of Lukacs and Marcuse.

Emile Durkheim extended the scope of the sociology of knowledge to include the basic categories of thought such as space, time, direction and the like. Whereas Kant had assumed that the basic categories of thought were innate and a priori, Durkheim argued that the categories were socially constructed; they were neither a priori, nor were their origins in the senses. He located his sociology of knowledge within the sociology of religion and based it on the concept of collective consciousness. The latter was defined as the body of beliefs and sentiments common to the average of the members of a society and Durkheim tried to show that the original forms of classification are related to religious images of the universe drawn

from the societies' representations of themselves and of the duality of the profane and religious universes. Durkheim's approach is at a greater level of generality and concerns more basic aspects than Marx's which focused on the resolution of conflict within the structures of society.

Karl Mannheim devoted a large part of his intellectual career to the development of a sociology of knowledge which he saw as the inquiry into the social conditions under which certain world-views appear. He located the truth content of ideas wholly within the societal context, rather than in some transcendental or universalistic conception of truth. Mannheim argued that the socio-cultural forms of life or cultural formations, were socially and historically specific, and he predicted a phenomenological methodology in order to go beyond the cultural objectifications and to comprehend the totality of the world-view. Understanding was to be achieved by transcending all the immanent means of such objectifications and the aim of a sociology of knowledge was to investigate the connections between the socio-historical contexts and the cultural products by reconstructing the totality of meaning. The central problem for a sociology of knowledge would be that of the existentially conditioned genesis of the various standpoints which encompass the patterns of thought available to any given epoch. Mannheim, like Weber, believed in a multi-causality in social conditioning rather than in the Marxian emphasis on the strictly economic factors.

Mannheim refined the concepts of ideology and utopia. Both are forms of false consciousness but whereas an ideology is promoted by a power elite to legitimate the status quo, a utopia is a proposal for a new order and implies a critique of the extant system.

Aware of the nihilism implicit in a relativist sociology of knowledge; Mannheim sought to avoid it by devoting a special and limited role to the sociology of knowledge, arguing that although all knowledge is socially relative, it is possible for a free-floating intelligentsia to produce a knowledge of social life which has a general validity. This was the core of his relational, rather than relativist, attitude to knowledge by which he hoped to resolve the conflicts between ideologies and utopias. The problem here is to explain exactly how and why the intellectual, the marginal man loosely attached to the social structure, could achieve a more valid knowledge of reality. Objectivity was to be achieved by critical awareness and control of evaluation in the free competition of various modes of intellectual production.

Both Marx and Mannheim were concerned with the conflict and competition between particular versions of reality although they have suggested the possibility of more objective knowledge. More recently, the sociology of knowledge has been directed towards the understanding of just how the individual develops a knowledge of reality and is, in a sense, epistemological and socio psychological. This is the phenomenological movement in sociology associated with the names of Mannheim, Husserl, Schutz, Berger and Luckmann.

The primary focus of a phenomenologically based sociology has been an emphasis on the commonsense construction of everyday reality, rather than on the analysis of specifically intellectual consciousnesses as entities separate from mundane everyday knowledge. There is a rejection of the dichotomy, implicit in the classical approach, between generalized social knowledge and the social knowledge of elites. It sees a precise connection between the social relationships of individuals and the meanings those relationships have, to the extent that the nature of those relationships and the structure of their intersubjective meanings define the structure and content of knowledge. Our perceptions of reality are formed by the activity of social interaction but not in some abstracted sense in which reality is external to the individual. Interaction is the mechanism by which reality is constructed by the social actors. The phenomenological approach is to start with the individual and his own conscious experience of phenomena as apprehended in their immediacy.

Berger and Luckmann have attempted to elaborate a dialectical theory, within the phenomenological tradition, of the relationship between ideas and their social base. They argue that man creates social products (externalizations); these products then confront man as an objective reality (objectivation) and are finally incorporated into man's subjective consciousness (internalization). Man is seen as living in a socially created, symbolic universe and the intersubjectivity of the members of society is sustained by such common symbolic elements as language and the knowledge encoded in it. For these writers, the sociology of knowledge is the analysis of the social construction of reality and must concern itself with everything that passes for knowledge in society.

Berger and Luckman take the social order for granted. Legitimation for these writers is not purely evaluative or normative as it is with Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Mannheim, but it is cognitive and based in the explanation of how things are what they are. Marx and Mannheim stressed the competition between versions of reality. Durkheim, Berger and Luckmann are mainly concerned with the social construction of any version of reality.

Positivist philosophy and social science have developed as normative and evaluative means of resolving the conflict between ideologies and in particular, the positivist stance is against what it regards as the implicit relativity and denial of objectivity by the sociology of knowledge. The quotation from Aron (Aron, 1970, p.105) indicates a concern over the possible confusion between the sociological study of the origins of concepts and a philosophical theory of knowledge. Counterarguments have been made that positivist social science has degenerated into a narrow scientism.

Kolakowski (Kolakowski, 1972, p.11), describes positivism as a collection of rules and evaluative criteria referring to human knowledge. It is essentially a normative attitude regulating how we use such terms as knowledge, science, cognition and information. He identifies four basic rules which characterize the positivistic stance. Firstly, there is the rule of

phenomenalism (not to be confused by phenomenology) which rejects the ancient distinction between essence and the surface phenomenon and which states that we are entitled to record only that which is actually manifested in experience. Secondly, there is the rule of nominalism which rejects the idea of universals, which is again, of ancient philosophic lineage. There is no otherworld of ideal things in themselves, and abstracts or general terms of universals are mere words or names. This does not preclude the use of ideal constructs and typologies as part of positivist methodology. These first two rules provide the basic empirical and behaviouristic stance of positivistic social science. Such entities as individual states of consciousness can only be studied in so far as they are manifested in observable behaviour.

The third rule refuses to accept value judgements and normative statements as knowledge. This is really a consequence of the phenomenalist rule that evaluation of behaviour are different from description and explanation. It is important to distinguish between procedural and substantive values. Many normative statements can be restated instrumentally and hence are capable of empirical testing. These are really technical judgements. This particular rule is of significance later when the basis of a value-free social science is discussed.

The fourth and final rule concerns the unity of the scientific method. This is that the hypothetic — deductive — inductive method is the means of acquiring valid knowledge and that its main stages in handling experience through theoretical reflection, are the same in all spheres of experience, physical and social. It means that the aim of a positivistic social science is the generation of causal laws, to permit the prediction and control of social behaviour. This particular rule has meant that as social science has increasingly tried to model itself on natural science and to use sophisticated statistical and quantifiable means, it has led to criticism of its reduction to a narrow scientism.

The development of positivism and positivistic social science is accounted for by some sociologists of knowledge by referring to it as an extension of the technologically — oriented society, whereas positivists see their normative rules as an essential attempt to achieve objectivity against what they regard as the nihilistic relativity and subjectivity of the sociology of knowledge.

Auguste Comte is credited with having made the first full statement in support of a positivistic social science. He argued that the history of human thought could be described as having passed through three stages. The first of these was the theological stage, when people's interpretation of reality was dominated by reference to non-empirical beings and forces; the second stage was the metaphysical, when people attempted to comprehend and reason about reality with the aid of universals and abstract concepts, and the third and final stage was the positive, when thinking about reality was validated by empirical reference. His vital quest was for the systematization of the social background of human history into one body of knowledge in order to arrive at theoretical and moral principles

with which to accomplish lasting social reform. His real influence on the later development of positivism has been his anti—metaphysical and exclusive definition of "knowledge" and his anti-psychological, autonomous sociology.

The aim of a totally liberating knowledge was in the fore-front of Enlightenment thinking and both Comte and Marx were seeking the same end. Marx gave great importance to natural science which he believed was ultimately the agent of human emancipation, although momentarily alienating. He made no distinction between human and natural existence and hence accepted the unity of the sciences. For Marx, the natural science model was not inappropriate for social science but bourgeois thought and the false consciousness of the capitalist economy, cause the model not to be properly adhered to.

Durkheim has been one of the most eminent and explicit proponents of the view that it is the business of sociologists to establish causal laws and that the social sciences are generalizing sciences which aim at the establishment of a theoretical system. In his *Rules of the Sociological Method* Durkheim argues that social facts should be considered as things exterior to individuals, with a coercive power over the individual and requiring a sociological science to explain them. Max Weber also believed that causal explanations were possible and necessary in sociology and would contribute to a greater development of rationality — of technical, purposive control over nature, society and culture. Some aspects of Weber's thought are antithetical to a sociology of knowledge. Not only was social science to aim for objective knowledge, it was also to be neutral — to be value-free. Sociology has a technical character and provides instrumental knowledge and Weber thought that the findings of sociological research did not carry any logically given implications for practical policy or for the pursuit of values.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the social sciences developed within the tradition of positivism. There was much effort to achieve great methodological rigour through the use of quantification, statistics, supposedly highly precise technical jargon and tabulations and graphs. The difficulties in developing a natural science of society were alleged to lie in the inadequacy of the tools rather than in the inappropriateness of the techniques. With highly sophisticated tools, it was argued, objective knowledge will be achievable in the social realm.

By the 1950's and 1960's, however, criticism was mounting against the possibility and even desirability of an objective, neutral science of society and the movement contributed to a revitalization of the sociologies of knowledge, of science, of education, of religion; indeed of the whole knowing, learning, believing processes and of the social construction of reality. Sociologists such as C. Wright Mills and I.L. Horowitz have criticized the neutral stance. They argue that it is impossible for sociology to be value-free and to pretend otherwise is a delusion. The sociologist has access to knowledge and techniques that place him in an advantageous position to propose and work for more equitable solutions to social prob-

lems. The stance of neutrality was criticized as being false and demeaning and that, as it recommended no clear alternatives, it, by implication, supported the status quo.

More fundamental have been the analyses of T. Kuhn, R. Friedrichs and A. Gouldner. In his, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Kuhn argues that any scientist works within a matrix of existing beliefs, both theoretical and procedural, that is specific to his particular branch of established knowledge and which Kuhn calls a paradigm. These disciplinary paradigms determine what is to count as a problem, a solution, a discovery and an appropriate research method. As a consequence, preconceptions and resistance seem to be the rule rather than the exception in mature scientific development, and scientific education inculcates a deep commitment to a particular way of viewing the world and of practising science in it.

The paradigm, says Kuhn, characterizes some of the best science. Nature is too vast to respond to random investigations and the paradigm defines the problems available and the means of attacking them. In pre-paradigmatic situations little progress is made but after a fruitful paradigm emerges, science can progress. Research guided by a paradigm produces a rapid accumulation of knowledge by directing the attention of a defined community to the systematic consideration of a specific field. Such research will continually generate new problems and anomalies that can be assimilated to the existing paradigm only through its modifications or reconstructions. Eventually, however, anomalies may become so numerous or significant that a theory becomes a patchwork incapable of containing them. In such a crisis, scientists search for a new paradigm that will more economically account for the full range of phenomena. However, Kuhn believed that there will always be immense resistance to change. Not all scientists will switch allegiance for a large variety of reasons which are amenable to sociological analysis and investigation and hence to a sociology of knowledge, or at least of the knowing process and knowledge producers.

In his *Sociology of Sociology*, R. Friedrichs has adapted Kuhn's own paradigm to the recent history of social science wherein he has suggested that the communal life of science, rather than being dictated by a formal logic, is more akin to the life cycle of a political community, especially a revolutionary community. A. Gouldner in his *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*, has shown the ideological component in modern sociology. He identifies positivism as an ideology of conservative social reconstruction which was translated into positivism as an ideology of empirical social research. Sociology was shaped both consciously and unconsciously by the need to respond to the Marxist challenge. Gouldner considered that sociology had to cope not just with the problem of interpreting society within the framework of bourgeois social relations but with the problem of an alternate theory which does not adopt that limitation. Parsonian structural functionalism emerged to account for the order of the capitalist system but has been more recently challenged by newly emerging paradigms of the conflict theorists and the ethnomethodologists.

However, Gouldner rejects both of these as inadequate. The real crisis of capitalism, of which the crisis of sociology is a part, is giving birth to the spectre of a revolutionary theory and practice which will overcome the fragmentation of social being and social consciousness which is capitalism. In this crisis, he claims, the ideology of sociology is threatened.

Certainly such analyses at different levels have been indicative of a new interest in the sociology of knowledge. However, the positivist philosophers and social scientists had earlier been active in moving towards a more sophisticated statement of objectivity or more precisely, the process of knowing. As early as 1949, R. Merton in his *Social Theory and Social Structure* had claimed that scientists had to recognize their dependence on particular types of social structure and he had described (Merton, 1959: p.551) the ethos of science as an effectively toned complex of values and norms which is held to be binding on the man of science. The norms are expressed in the form of prescriptions, proscriptions, preferences and permissions that are legitimated in terms of institutional values. He identified four major imperatives - universalism, communalism, disinterestedness and organized scepticism. Universalism refers to an objectivity that views considerations of race, religion, nationalism and the like, as being unconnected to the normatively defined knowing process. Further, all categories are to be species-wide. Communalism refers to the need for scientific discoveries to be made available to the whole community. Disinterestedness refers to the requirement that scientists be ultimately accountable to the body of their peers. Organized scepticism refers to the suspension of judgement until all the facts are at hand, after which they are to be analyzed in terms of established empirical and logical criteria. Merton makes it quite clear that he is considering norms or ideals of conduct, as distinct from Kuhn, who was analyzing actual behaviour. Furthermore, they are the norms of science as process, the norms of methodology; they are procedural or instrumental norms. Merton also states that science represents an ideology which is often in conflict with other religious, economic and political ideologies and which is both historically and functionally interrelated with a technological and liberal, democratic social structure. Quite plainly, Merton does not regard the attempt to be objective and empirical, as being neutral.

I do not regard Merton and Kuhn as having taken opposite points of view. Kuhn's concept of paradigm, as described by Friedrich, would seem to refer to the particular perspectives embodied in the prevailing theoretical constructs which serve to fashion hypotheses and research interests. Merton is more concerned with an evaluation of the means by which the theories and hypotheses are tested empirically and logically to ensure a certain objectivity.

Karl Popper, the philosopher of science, could be described as a neo-positivist and it would make an interesting sociological study to examine the slowness with which his criticisms of science have been assimilated by social scientists. Through his various writings from the thirties to the sixties, Popper has not only criticized the social scientists for aping the natural sciences but he has carried the attack to the nature of science

itself. He accepts the traditional philosophic evaluation of knowledge as equivalent to the body of empirically verified hypotheses or scientific theory, but he emphasizes the uncertainty of it all. Hypotheses can never be verified because of the nature of the universe and it is of the essence of science to be continually testing hypotheses to invalidate them. Our only hope and trust in scientific knowledge is a tentative one. Rather than being an ever increasing accumulation of certainties, all scientific knowledge and theory represents little more than a constantly changing set of guides to the solution of practical problems. He attacks the notion of science as product or knowledge as product. He criticizes the search for law-like generalizations in his *Poverty of Historicism*. He is particularly critical of Marxist sociology of knowledge if it means that a totally planned revolution is necessary to ensure the demise of ideological thinking. To Popper, the universe, and hence society, is an open and changing reality in which the idea of laws and planning threatens the notions of freedom and rationality. The notion of change is opposed to certainty, to uniformity, to lawlike generalizations and to the possibility of holistic planning. Change and uncertainty are linked to conflict. For Popper, science as a normatively defined process of testing out assumptions and guesses by reference to empirical and logical criteria, represents our only acceptable means of problem solving and conflict resolution. He is no naive empiricist. All observations are theory impregnated. Facts are created by theories. Knowing is an active process. We approach empirical reality with the categories and constructs of existing theories or Kuhn's paradigms.

However, as with Merton, Popper is critical of subjectivity and the influence of unexamined motives, dogmas or ideologies. The objectivity of science as a knowing process can be approximated in the social aspect and intersubjectivity of the scientific method. There is a public character to the scientific process. For both Merton and Popper it would be legitimate to say that the proper role of a sociology of knowledge is to investigate why the norms of science as process (as defined by them) are not always followed. It is not to be confused with epistemology.

To a large extent, an empirical sociology of knowledge, of the knowing process and of knowledge makers works within the neopositivist paradigm and normative framework. It is possible to reconcile neopositivism and an empirical sociology of knowledge. However, neopositivism is under challenge by such alternatives as humanistic - phenomenological sociology and critical social theory.

The Marxist theoretical sociology of knowledge was developed in another direction under the influence of writers such as Lukacs, Habermas, Dilthey, Weber, Schutz, Husserl, Garfinkel, Berger and Luckmann. The movement started as an attempt to move away from a too "scientific" interpretation of Marx and of an acknowledgement of major differences between the natural and socio-cultural worlds. First, the natural world can only be observed and explained from the outside while the world of human activity can be observed and comprehended from the inside and is only intelligible because we belong to this world and have to do with the

products of minds similar to our own. Secondly, the relations between phenomena of the natural world are mechanical relations of causality, whereas the relations between phenomena of the human world are relations of values and purpose. It follows from this that social studies should be concerned, not with the establishment of casual relations nor the formulation of universal laws but with the construction of typologies of personality and culture which could serve as a framework for the understanding of human strivings and purposes in different historical situations.

Lukacs and the Frankfurt school see positivistic science as bourgeois rationality which is alienating because it isolates elements rather than treats the totality; that this technical rationality is the main cause of reification of knowledge and that it is used as an instrument for domination. Habermas argues for a threefold typology of science in his case against positivism and against the "reduction" of socio-cultural to material relations. Interests should determine what should count as "knowledge" as against the positivists more exclusive definition and attempt to achieve some objectivity. The three types of "science" according to Habermas are firstly, the empirical, analytical science which yields technical control, secondly, the historical interpretative science which seeks an understanding through an analysis of the orientation of actions within the context of a common normative tradition, and thirdly, a systematic and critically oriented science of action which aims to set the consciousness free from reified, ideologically constructed forces — a form of critical philosophy.

Max Weber was influenced by the nineteenth century German debate on the appropriate method for the social sciences and his writings on methodology have been influential. He argued that the social sciences were inherently different from the natural sciences and that a full understanding of social action must involve a degree of "verstehen" or empathetic understanding. He firmly believed that, although true objectivity was impossible, the sociologist should attempt to remain value-free. Weber considered that a sociology of knowledge should concern itself with the relationship between action, knowledge and the forms of domination.

The work of Schutz is built on that of Weber and Husserl within the neo-idealistic school. He examined the key concepts of objectivity and subjectivity and the nature of human action as a form of philosophical anthropology and provided the basis of Garfinkel's ethnomethodology and of the micro-sociology or the social psychology of Berger and Luckmann. Within this school there has been a rejection of the distinction between general knowledge, and the philosophically exclusive definition of knowledge used by the positivists with a focus on the commonsense construction of everyday reality. Members of this school regard social reality as being constructed through the activity of social interaction and involving the sharing of intersubjective meanings. It should not be considered naturalistically but studied by acts of reflection — an interpretational approach. We are part of what we study. We can empathize with other

people and place ourselves in their position. We need a full understanding of the subjective meanings in the minds of others.

A neo-positivist such as Jarvie (Jarvie, 1972, p.131) is very critical of the neo-idealist's disregard of the classical distinction between knowledge and belief and of the focus on "garden" knowledge. He criticizes Berger and Luckmann for identifying science and philosophy as legitimizing symbolic universes and he argues that science and philosophy are methods for critically challenging and scrutinizing symbolic universes. Jarvie also defends the role of social science in seeking causal relations, the results of actions and explanations. He attacks the idea that human actions are to be explained in terms of the reasons given for doing them. Social science is to explain the results of actions rather than the meanings that the actions have for the actors. Bottomore (Bottomore, 1971, p.32) suggests that if sociology is concerned with historical interpretation, or with the interpretation of social actions of individuals on the basis of introspective knowledge of our own states of mind, the positivistic sociologist may ask what generally acceptable results have been produced by these methods and whether in fact they go beyond the insights of poets and novelists. A sociology of knowledge for this school would be a natural history of the micro-sociology of reality construction dealing with the role of individuals rather than with groups, and with the formal properties of common place actions.

The second alternative to neopositivism is developed from the first in the writings of P. Winch and H. Marcuse and identifies sociology with "critical social theory or philosophy". Winch in his *Idea of A Social Science* has also argued that the central concepts of our understanding of social life are incompatible with concepts of scientific prediction and that social scientists should not look for the cause, but for the meaning. For Winch, sociology and philosophy have the same subject matter and the methods of philosophy should be those of sociology. An event acquires meaning through the fact that it is conceptualized by the agent with the help of shared concepts and the conceptualization is essential to the very recognition of the event. In the example used by Gellner (Giddens, 1974, p.136) a man "gets married" not merely by going through the behavioural motions but by possessing the concept and meaning of "being married" and this meaning cannot be caused. But if meaningfulness is an essential attribute of social conduct and if this excludes causal mechanical explanations, then, as Gellner argues, the forms of life (i.e. cultures) have to be accepted as given, along with an extreme relativism. He points out that cultures contain diversity, change, conflict and competing strains or themes. Winch solves the problem of meaning by adopting an extreme relativism and Gellner suggests that, to ignore the differences in cognitive powers between cultures and sub-cultures, is in conflict with a contextual theory of truth, or an appreciation of which seriously undermines the contextual theory of truth.

H. Marcuse has adopted a related position to that of Winch's but is more specific in its criticism of positivist science and technological society.

In his *Eros and Civilization*, he advocated a fusion of certain aspects of Marxism and a modified Freudianism in developing a position of political and sexual liberation that he viewed as contrary to the prevailing trend towards repression and exploitation in technological societies. In *One Dimensional Man*, Marcuse claimed that the logic of domination had itself become dominant in the West and that people were not only being oppressed, but were becoming conditioned to accept their oppression. The urge for liberation was being sapped by the infusion of a carefully planned and limited affluence. Marcuse (Marcuse, 1972, p.136) states that science, by virtue of its method and concepts, has projected and promoted a universe in which the domination of nature has remained linked to the domination of man. The process of technological rationality is a political process. He launches an attack (1972, p. 148) on the linguistic analysis component of neo-positivism and suggests that the method adopted by this philosophy discredits or translates the concepts which could give the understanding of the established reality in its repressive and irrational structure; it destroys the concepts of negative thinking. Marcuse promotes a Marxian type dialectic between established positivistic, technocratic society and negative thinking. Positivistic thinking counteracts the historical content of rationality and the basis of Marcuse's negative thinking lies in the historical component in the meaning of various universals such as Mind, Consciousness, Will, Soul and Self. He says (1972., p. 151) that philosophic concepts remain antagonistic to the realm of ordinary discourse and permit the recognition of the limits and deception of prevailing rationality.

Marcuse's alternative is essentially that provided by the critical social theorists — those historically enlightened philosophers whose task it is to rectify the wrong that pervades the universe of ordinary discourse. They do not seem very different from the free-floating intellectuals of Mannheim and can be criticized in the same way. Further, the meanings given universals in the Western philosophic tradition can be criticized for their extreme relativity as was the case with Winch's argument. They represent, in the main, the meanings embodied in the Judiac-Greco-Roman-Christian tradition which contains its own "logic of domination" - man created lord and master of creation, and man dominated by an anticipation of rewards and punishments in an afterlife. Marcuse's negative thinking has affinity to Popper's belief in the primacy of institutionalized criticism and that falsifiability was the criterion of demarcation between what is science and non-science (but not between sense and nonsense, or meaning and non-meaning). Science, for Popper, is an ordering of conjectures and refutations for the purpose of problem solving.

What then is the possibility and field of a sociology of knowledge? What is sociology? This review has suggested three kinds — the positive, the interpretative and the critical. There are three sorts of problems studied by sociologists. The first group is concerned with phenomena which are independent of the conception men have of them such as age and sex structures. The second group is concerned with phenomena which are independent of the will of any individual, such social facts as class and language, and the third group includes the study of social acts — behaviour

which is meaningful to the actors concerned and considered from their viewpoint. An empirical, neopositivist sociology can surely study groups one and two quite adequately and some aspects of group three such as social contextual causes and results of social acts, if not the meanings the acts have for the actors.

While it can be argued that the study of rules and meanings is necessary to achieve explanation and understanding, the question is raised as to whether the study of meaning is legitimately part of (social) science and ought not be left to the traditional humanities — literature, philosophy and the arts. I do not know whether it is fair to criticize the practitioners of sociology for not including the humanities unless the sociologist is making imperialistic and exclusive claims over the whole field of social studies and the liberal arts. It would be interesting to know how much of the situation has been caused by the specialization within the knowledge institutions.

There is obviously a place for an empirical sociology of knowledge which is concerned with the study of knowledge making (or the knowing process) as a social enterprise. Cotgrove's study comes to mind, (Cotgrove, 1970). There is also a place for an empirical micro-sociology of the socio-cultural context of the intersubjective construction of reality. However, much of the approach that calls itself the interpretative or phenomenological school of sociology is already included in oral and written literature and the arts. It is essentially an interpretation and evaluation which traditionally has been done by priests, dramatists, poets, artists and novelists.

Again, much of the approach of the critical social theorists has traditionally been performed by philosophers and perhaps it is properly a philosophical task. Many modern philosophers claim that it is the role of philosophy to be the critic of the methods, language, concepts and logic of science and I think, few would object to adding that it is also part of its role to make social scientists and social studies curriculum designers aware of the social forces and ideologies which unconsciously beset them. The history and philosophy of social science should form part of the education of any social scientist. Much of the criticism of modern social science deals with its potential for domination and control. However, historically, there would have been few, if any, societies, that have not involved some form of domination. Marcuse argues that modern (social) science is so effective and thorough in its domination and its fundamental, pragmatic instrumentalism pervades all aspects of human relations and society, including its thought. His alternative, negative thinking, has already been considered. Another alternative, is that offered by Popper who has been highly critical of scientism, of crude empiricism, of naive positivism and of central planning and philosophies of total planning, of sociology, of scientific certainty, of scientific imperialism and excess; but who still argues for a pragmatically useful scientific mode of thinking with an empirical touchstone and an objectivity based on the intersubjectivity of the scientific method. Merton and Popper recognize science as a

system of procedural values — an ideology perhaps, at variance with and competing with other ideologies. The problem is, at heart, a political one, but how best to give those who suffer in our technological society, the opportunity to understand social reality and act so as to change that reality. It is the problem to which C. Wright Mills addressed himself in *The Sociological Imagination* and to which P. Freire addressed himself in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

This leads to a consideration of the link between the sociology of knowledge and curriculum theory. The curriculum is generally defined as all those learning experiences arranged by a formal educational organization for its students from pre-primary to post graduate. Traditional bases for curriculum theory have been in the psychology of the learner and the learning process, the micro-sociology of the learning context, the sociological analysis of society's needs and the philosophical analysis of the objectives of the curriculum. The sociology of knowledge is most relevant to curriculum theory in a pluralistic society undergoing fairly rapid socio-cultural change. It is fundamental to the problem of the selection, the management and the evaluation of society's knowledge, viewed as common everyday knowledge, or positivistic social theory or Popper's pragmatically useful conjectures. There is plenty of scope for empirical sociological analysis in this area and particularly with the process of innovation in curriculum.

There is also a place for micro-sociological studies of the process of reality construction — an empirical testing of some of the theoretical constructs in Berger and Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality*.

Finally, the writings of the phenomenologists and critical social theorists must lead to some concern over specialization and the lack of balance in the curriculum. Studies in science, mathematics and social science need to be balanced by studies in the humanities. Social Studies Curriculum Designers should be required to undertake courses in the history and philosophy of social science to sensitize them to the basic problems of the discipline. However, Marcuse may criticize these ideas as mere tinkering with a basic structure that requires a radical change. The problem is very much one of the search for viable alternatives. Marcuse's negative thinking and Popper's falsifiability can combine to provide a dialectic to enable man to cope with an open society. The gaps in neo-positivist sociology may represent a healthy and humble acceptance of the limitation of the subject in the face of the poet's ability to capture the vitality of lived experience.

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