

**Ideas, Interests, and Institutions in Ralf Dahrendorf's  
Materialist Liberalism  
Marius Strubenhoff, Pembroke College**

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## **Declaration**

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

# **Marius Strubenhoff, Pembroke College**

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### **Materialist Liberalism**

#### **Abstract**

This thesis offers a comprehensive account of Ralf Dahrendorf's liberal political thought between the early 1950s and the late 1980s, with particular emphasis on the role that his methodological ideas played in his conception of politics. It argues that materialist conceptions, borrowed from Karl Marx and other materialist theorists, informed his liberal outlook throughout his career, transcending his early abandonment of political socialism. Situating Dahrendorf within a tradition of debate about necessity and contingency in German social thought from the end of the First World War to the Positivism Dispute of the late 1950s and early 1960s and the cultural turn of the 1970s and the 1980s, the work studies his attempt to overcome the social-scientific ideas of Talcott Parsons and other structural-functionalists and to recast sociology as a causality-oriented discipline that takes interests and social structure rather than ideas and values as its subject. This also affected Dahrendorf's academic politics. Examining his role in the foundation of the University of Constance between 1964 and 1966, it shows how an anti-idealist critique of German higher education and political culture informed his attempt to create an institution for the social sciences that could break the perceived dominance of the humanities and overcome the central role of Law departments in the formation of the Federal Republic's elite.

The final two chapters discuss Dahrendorf's engagement with neoconservatism and neoliberalism. Covering his interaction with scholars such as Daniel Bell and Samuel Huntington at settings including the London School of Economics and Political Science and the Trilateral Commission in the wake of the student movement, it discusses the development of his ideas *vis-à-vis* an emerging consensus that politics had turned into a cultural – rather than socio-economic – conflict. Finally, the thesis discusses Dahrendorf's critique of Friedrich Hayek, Thatcherism, and constitutional economics during the 1980s. Here, it highlights a divergence between Dahrendorf's agonistic liberalism and a new liberalism built on the assumption that the vast influence of ideas meant that politics was highly contingent and unpredictable. Combining the history of political thought and the history of the social sciences, this thesis revises established readings of Dahrendorf as a straightforward 'Cold War liberal'. By doing so, it provides a new perspective on the history of liberalism and political thought more broadly before and after the paradigmatic shifts of the 'cultural turn'.

Στη Γεωργία

## Preface

This thesis would not have been possible without the guidance and advice of Professor Eugenio Federico Biagini. His advice, received months before starting the doctorate, to read ‘especially Marx, who was in the forefront of [Dahrendorf’s] generation’ in preparation for the project is exemplary for this.<sup>1</sup> The results of this thesis more than bear out the validity of his recommendation to read Karl Marx in order to understand Ralf Dahrendorf, demonstrating as a case in point how much this thesis has profited from his supervision.

I have also greatly benefited from the advice of many other scholars in the Political Thought and Intellectual History and Modern European History subject groups of the Department of History at the University of Cambridge, as well as academics associated with the Department of Politics and International Studies of the same university. Professor Duncan Kelly provided invaluable advice during my Research Assessment Exercise at the end of my first year. Other scholars who deserve to be mentioned especially are Dr Waseem Yaqoob, Dr Damian Valdez, Dr Bernhard Fulda, and Professor Peter Mandler. In addition, my thoughts on the intellectual tradition in which I have situated Dahrendorf have evolved as a consequence of my participation in the DAAD Workshop series ‘German Approaches to History’. Here, Charlotte Johann deserves to be mentioned especially as a stimulating partner for discussions of historiographical ideas.

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<sup>1</sup> Personal Correspondence, Eugenio Federico Biagini to Marius Strubenhoff, 16 May 2015.

In research seminars at German universities, my work has profited from feedback from Professors Joachim Scholtyseck, Andreas Rödder, Andreas Wirsching, Dominik Geppert, Jürgen Osterhammel, Christoph Dejung, Stephan Moebius, Jörn Leonhard, Lutz Raphael, Elke Seefried, and Thomas Raithel. Professor Paul Nolte and Professor Dirk Kaesler gave me invaluable advice on secondary literature during their visiting fellowships at St Anthony's College, Oxford and Clare Hall, Cambridge, respectively. Dr Arthur Kuhle helped with making sense of Raymond Aron's thoughts on contingency and his reception of Carl von Clausewitz. Two American scholars, Dr Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins and David Sessions, have helped me in understanding the transatlantic history of the social sciences in conversations and correspondence. In Sheffield, the members of the Max Weber Reading Group, Dr Dina Gusejnova, Dr Dimitrios Tsarapatsanis, and Professor Martial Staub, aided me in making sense of the connections between German sociology and liberalism. Also Sheffield-based, Professor Henk de Berg has helped me by providing invaluable feedback on my work.

This thesis would not have been written in the way that it has been had it not been for Philipp Benjamin Craik. Our recurring discussions on the philosophy of science since our days as undergraduates at St Edmund's College, Cambridge have always been an inspiration.

Last but not least, Philipp Rahlfs and Henning Grote deserve my gratitude for their indispensable logistical support at a crucial moment in the application process for the University of Cambridge's PhD programme.

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## Introduction: Ralf Dahrendorf's Question

'I have sometimes dreamt of the weatherman after the television news being followed by a "social processes man" who points at various parts of the globe and describes the unstable and thunderous condition in the Middle East, the stable high-pressure area over the Soviet Union, and the disturbing influence of Atlantic depressions on Europe.' (Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Disjunction and Analysis', *London Review of Books* 3, 19 February 1981.)

In November 1997, writing for the left-liberal German weekly *DIE ZEIT*, Ralf Dahrendorf cautioned his contemporaries about the advent of an authoritarian century that he saw arising from the social, economic, and political consequences of an ever more globalizing and interconnected world.<sup>2</sup> As a political liberal, he welcomed a more open and dynamic world that had introduced values such as 'self-reliance and individual initiative' that, he argued, had been discounted for too long.<sup>3</sup> Yet as a methodological materialist, Dahrendorf also worried about the rise of a new social conflict as a consequence of the latest instance of the 'revolutions of the productive forces'.<sup>4</sup> A new divide had materialized between members of the 'global class', who were able to take advantage of new international opportunities, and those parts of the world population who either did not wish to or could not do so.<sup>5</sup> Dahrendorf

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<sup>2</sup> Earlier versions of some passages of this introduction have been published as part of Marius Strubenhoff, 'Materialist Method, Agonistic Liberalism: Revisiting Ralf Dahrendorf's Political Thought', *History of Political Thought* 39 (2018). Chapter II draws on revised material from the same publication. Chapter I draws on Marius Strubenhoff, 'The Positivism Dispute in German Sociology, 1954-1970', *History of European Ideas* 44 (2018). The title of this introduction takes inspiration from Wilhelm Hennis, *Max Webers Fragestellung* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1987).

<sup>3</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Die Globalisierung und ihre sozialen Folgen werden zur nächsten Herausforderung einer Politik der Freiheit', *DIE ZEIT*, 14 November 1997: 'Selbständigkeit und Eigentätigkeit'.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*: 'Revolutionen der Produktivkräfte'.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*: 'globale Klasse'.

detected symptoms of this new conflict in the rise of regional separatism in places like Quebec, Scotland, and Northern Italy, and in the rise of political and religious fundamentalism across the globe. What made the new conflict problematic, he argued, was that the negative side effects of globalization were transnational and thus impossible to be controlled by democratic nation-states. With democracy's ineffectiveness in the face of larger social forces becoming clearer, a new basis of support for authoritarian political solutions was growing that would have dramatic consequences in the next century.<sup>6</sup>

In his warning about the coming authoritarianism of the twenty-first century, Dahrendorf was concerned with the future. He directed his attention to new social structures and realities that, though already under way, would only reveal their full political implications in later years. Dahrendorf had been working on such questions for decades. As he told a correspondent in November 1977, 'the intention of class theory both in Marx and in my own approach is to predict events rather than attitudes...'.<sup>7</sup> Dahrendorf's objective was what Reinhart Koselleck has described as the distinct concern of modern political theorists since the French Revolution: the attempt to gauge the future consequences of socio-economic processes and historical changes.<sup>8</sup> Prior to the later eighteenth century, Koselleck argued, political ideas had been informed by cyclical philosophies of history that ruled out that anything

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<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/78, Ralf Dahrendorf to Robert Robinson, 21 November 1977.

<sup>8</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, 'Geschichtliche Prognose in Lorenz v. Steins Schrift zur preußischen Verfassung', in Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2015), 87-8.

‘fundamentally new’ could happen.<sup>9</sup> For Koselleck, the move away from these notions of recurring history profoundly influenced modern political thought. Indeed, from Alexis de Tocqueville and Karl Marx in the nineteenth century to Max Weber and Joseph Schumpeter at the beginning of the century to the modernization theorists and futurologists of the post-war period, many political theorists were concerned with present and future implications of socio-economic change.<sup>10</sup> Philosophers, too, became more interested in making sense of historical change after the turn that Koselleck identified: the questions that G.F.W. Hegel was asking in this respect were not those of, say, René Descartes or Thomas Hobbes. In *The Will to Power*, Friedrich Nietzsche for his part wrote that ‘[w]hat I relate is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: the advent of nihilism. This history can be related even now; for necessity itself is at work here’.<sup>11</sup>

And yet, what for Koselleck was characteristic of the modern outlook was never an uncontested consensus. In a review of Dahrendorf’s *Lifechances* published in the *London Review of Books* in 1980, the Oxford philosopher Stuart Hampshire vehemently criticized the book for its ‘desultory and unfocused argument’ and its

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, 88: ‘prinzipiell Neues’.

<sup>10</sup> For the post-war social sciences, cf. Jenny Andersson, *The Future of the World: Futurology, Futurists, and the Struggle for the Post Cold War Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Elke Seefried, *Zukünfte: Aufstieg und Krise der Zukunftsforschung 1945-1980* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015); Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Kaya Tolon, ‘Futures Studies: A New Social Science Rooted in Cold War Strategic Thinking’, in Mark Solovey and Hamilton Cravens (eds.), *Cold War Social Science: Knowledge Production, Liberal Democracy, and Human Nature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 3.

‘generalised lucubrations and mild meanderings’.<sup>12</sup> More worryingly, Hampshire found, the publication was

also the symptom of a well-established academic disease, which spreads into journalism and corrupts political argument. Consider the two questions put on page 40: ‘What is the direction of the processes which move human societies?’ and ‘Where is the driving force of history?’ It is a very large assumption that there actually exists such a direction, or that there exists ‘a driving force of history’.<sup>13</sup>

Further, Hampshire faulted Dahrendorf for assuming that ‘there is such a thing as the development of humanity as a whole, as opposed to the several and divergent developments of different empires and different populations’.<sup>14</sup> For Hampshire, Dahrendorf’s book was just another example of the misguided search for meaning in history, of which Hegelianism, Marxism, and positivism were major examples.<sup>15</sup> Instead, Hampshire advocated going back to the philosophies of history of Machiavelli and Vico. With his emphasis on ‘Fortune’, Machiavelli was allegedly much better equipped to account for individuality and contingency in history. Vico’s cyclical philosophy of history, in turn, was a useful antidote against Dahrendorf’s assumption of driving forces and directions.<sup>16</sup>

Hampshire’s review of *Life Chances* was not the first time Dahrendorf was confronted with this reproach. Twelve years earlier, in the discussion of his paper on

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<sup>12</sup> Stuart Hampshire, ‘Driving Force’, *London Review of Books* 2, 19 June 1980.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

‘Domination, Class Relations, and Stratification’ at the German Sociological Association’s (GSA) Sixteenth Conference in April 1968, Theodor Adorno framed one of his objections to Dahrendorf’s work as follows:

Now, as far as modesty towards the future is concerned I can only repeat what I said yesterday; that prognosis is not the purpose of emphatic theory. This would actually be relevant to a debate on positivism, as for positivism all categories of verification [Bewährungskategorien] are of the prognostic kind.<sup>17</sup>

Neither was Hampshire an isolated figure on the question of the ‘meaning’ and direction of history, particularly within the tradition of twentieth-century liberalism that Dahrendorf is commonly associated with.<sup>18</sup> Thus, Karl Popper’s *The Poverty of Historicism* and the postscript to his *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* pressed the case of the ‘indeterminacy of history’ against Marxist historical materialism on the logical ground that since history was so profoundly influenced by the ‘growth of human knowledge’, a fact that even ‘those who see in our ideas, including our scientific ideas, merely the by-products of *material* developments’ needed to admit, the future could not be predicted by scientific means, as nobody could predict the future growth of

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<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Heinrich Popitz, ‘Herrschaft, Klassenverhältnis und Schichtung: Protokoll der Diskussion (Diskussionsleiter Heinrich Popitz)’, in Theodor Adorno (ed.), *Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft? Verhandlungen des Sechzehnten Deutschen Soziologentages* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke Verlag, 1969), 103: ‘Nun, was die Zurückhaltung in bezug auf die Zukunft anlangt, so kann ich dazu nur wiederholen, was ich gestern sagte; daß der Sinn emphatischer Theorie nicht die Prognose ist. Das gehörte eigentlich in den Zusammenhang einer Positivismus-Debatte, denn im Positivismus sind die Bewährungskategorien für die Wahrheit allesamt prognostischer Art.’

<sup>18</sup> Cf. the review of literature further below in this Introduction.

knowledge.<sup>19</sup> Popper's critique of historicism entailed opposition to the notion that certain ideas were inherently linked to specific historical periods, as he made clear in a review of Friedrich Engel-Janosi's *The Growth of German Historicism*:

He seems to believe that historicism is 'dated', i.e., that it was a nineteenth century phenomenon whose 'very basis ... came to an end' (p.17) with Nietzsche's *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie fuer das Leben*. (I do not agree, by the way, with the author's interpretation of Nietzsche who, I believe, never ceased to be a historicist: 'futurism' is always a version of historicism.) But the very idea that doctrines are in this sense 'dated' is a historicist doctrine – indeed a nineteenth century doctrine which, however, is unfortunately still very much alive. Other historicist doctrines which the author seems to adopt are: the unanalysed, naive acceptance of the existence of historical collectives (the author speaks of 'individuals', using a Germanism analysed by Professor Hayek in this Journal, Vol. X, p.57) such as nations, and especially periods; the doctrine that history has to grasp the unique character ('individuality') of 'a person, a nation or a period' (p.67)...<sup>20</sup>

Consequently, students of Popper who attempted to analyze social change using collective nouns for discrete periods in history had to be prepared to be criticized by their teacher, as Ernest Gellner was for the use of 'historicism' in *Thought and Change*.<sup>21</sup> Dahrendorf's sociology invoked similar suspicions on the part of Popper's student Hans Albert. In a letter to Popper, Albert outlined the current state of sociology

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<sup>19</sup> Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), v-vi.

<sup>20</sup> Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Sir Karl R. Popper Papers, [accessed at Popper Library, University of Klagenfurt], 35/19, Karl Popper, 'Review of F. Engel-Janosi, *The Growth of German Historicism*', in *Economica* 12/48 (1945).

<sup>21</sup> Gellner argued that he was merely using historicist language for lack of alternatives: cf. Hoover Institution Archives, Sir Karl R. Popper Papers, 298/21, Ernest Gellner to Karl Popper, 21 January 1965.

in Germany for the purpose of briefing him for the GSA's meeting in October 1961 in Tübingen, where Popper was to speak alongside Adorno. Even though Dahrendorf's work displayed awareness of *Logik der Forschung*, Albert noted that he lately seemed to have developed an 'inclination to resume the older, more historically oriented German sociology'.<sup>22</sup>

In his famous Auguste Comte Lecture on 'Historical Inevitability', delivered on 12 May 1953 at the London School of Economics and Political Science, Isaiah Berlin took the issue even further than Popper, who to his mind was not stringent enough in differentiating the social from the natural sciences.<sup>23</sup> An Oxonian friend of Hampshire, Berlin dismissed the notion that history was governed by 'inexorable' forces in which human agency did not feature, and that prediction should be part of the work of historians and social scientists.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, in *The Counter-Revolution of Science*, Friedrich Hayek attacked sociology and the philosophy of history that he thought it was based on. According to Hayek, the attempt to discover causal laws of historical progress and change was the 'darling vice' of the nineteenth century, informing the work of Hegel, Comte, Marx, and other social theorists. Hayek thought that there was no reason to believe that 'one kind of "system" must as a matter of historical necessity be superseded by a new and different "system"'.<sup>25</sup> Hayek cautioned against the use of methods copied from the natural sciences that were inapplicable to

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<sup>22</sup> Hoover Institution Archives, Sir Karl R. Popper Papers, 267/13, Hans Albert to Karl Popper, 6 May 1961: 'Neigung ... die Tradition der älteren, mehr historisch ausgerichteten deutschen Soziologie wieder aufzunehmen'.

<sup>23</sup> Isaiah Berlin, 'Historical Inevitability', in Isaiah Berlin, *Liberty: Incorporating Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 101.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, 96.

<sup>25</sup> Friedrich Hayek, *The Counter-Revolution of Science: Studies in the Abuse of Reason* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1955 [1952]), 74.

the different nature of social research. Criticizing ‘positivist’ sociology, Hayek insisted that there were no ‘objective facts’ in society: ‘So far as human actions are concerned the things *are* what the acting think they are’.<sup>26</sup> If it made sense at all to speak of social structure, it consisted of ideas and concepts men held in their minds.<sup>27</sup>

For Popper, Berlin, and Hayek, the assumption that history was a contingent process was inextricably linked to the conviction that ideas were predominant factors in history. In his ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’, Berlin argued:

when ideas are neglected by those who ought to attend to them – that is to say, those who have been trained to think critically about ideas – they sometimes acquire an unchecked momentum and an irresistible power over multitudes of men that may grow too violent to be affected by rational criticism. Over a hundred years ago, the German poet Heine warned the French not to underestimate the power of ideas: philosophical concepts nurtured in the stillness of a professor’s study could destroy a civilization.<sup>28</sup>

Five years earlier, Berlin had already criticized the notion that history is determined by material forces in his Comte Memorial Lecture at the LSE.<sup>29</sup> While working on the lecture manuscript, Berlin wrote to Popper that he would have Morris Ginsberg, head of the LSE Department of Sociology, proofread the manuscript ‘so that I say nothing too grossly unfair about sociology, much as I dislike it’.<sup>30</sup> Popper’s *The Open Society and its Enemies* attached a similar degree of importance to ideas, depicting Plato,

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, 26-7.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, 34.

<sup>28</sup> Isaiah Berlin, ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’, in Berlin, *Liberty*, 167.

<sup>29</sup> Isaiah Berlin, ‘Historical Inevitability’, *passim*.

<sup>30</sup> Hoover Institution Archives, Sir Karl R. Popper Papers, 276/10, Isaiah Berlin to Karl Popper, 13 [May 1953].

Hegel, and Marx's ideas as the main sources of totalitarianism. Hayek agreed with Popper that the ideas of great minds were dominant in history, adding Descartes, Saint-Simon, and Comte to the list of negative influences.<sup>31</sup> The conviction that ideas mattered led him to non-determinist conclusions:

If the politician has no choice but to adopt a certain course of action (or if his action is regarded as inevitable by the historian), this is because his or other people's opinion, not objective facts, allow him no alternative. It is only to people who are influenced by certain beliefs that anyone's response to given events may appear to be uniquely determined by circumstances.<sup>32</sup>

Hayek also distrusted 'that peculiarly unhistorical approach to history which paradoxically is called historicism, much of what has been known as sociology during the last hundred years, and especially its most fashionable and most ambitious branch, the sociology of knowledge'.<sup>33</sup>

In contrast to Berlin, Popper, and Hayek, Raymond Aron's work paid more attention to sociological aspects. Reviewing Hayek's *Constitution of Liberty* for the *European Journal of Sociology*, which he had set up with Dahrendorf and the British Marxist sociologist Thomas Bottomore in 1960, Aron argued in 1961 that the rule of men over men could never be completely eliminated from human societies. Thus, he rejected Hayek's absolute insistence on the importance of the rule of law as a tool to

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<sup>31</sup> For Descartes, cf. Friedrich Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty* (London: Routledge, 2013 [1973-1979]), 17-9. For Saint-Simon and Comte, cf. Hayek, *The Counter-Revolution of Science*.

<sup>32</sup> Friedrich Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (London: Routledge, 2009 [1960]), 97.

<sup>33</sup> Hayek, *Counter-Revolution of Science*, 194.

circumscribe the arbitrary rule of men.<sup>34</sup> In a follow-up article, Aron emphasized that for Tocqueville, the political consequences of ‘democracy’ mainly arose from democracy as a new form of society more than democracy as a new constitutional type.<sup>35</sup> Aron’s intellectual pursuits were preoccupied with the analysis of the implications of different forms of *societies* for politics. And yet, he thought that there was a considerable element of freedom and choice open to humans. Thirty years earlier, in a review of the work of Henri de Man, he had maintained that ‘the margin of indeterminacy contained within a given situation corresponds precisely with the power of our will. It is the belief in determinism which is the cause of our servitude. Faith in our will can be the basis of our autonomy.’<sup>36</sup> Influenced by the contemporary publication of Marx’s earlier writings, he argued that materialist interpretations of Marx did not capture the theorist.<sup>37</sup> Aron’s *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (1938), in his own words, sought to demonstrate ‘the impossibility of a purely causal historical or social science’.<sup>38</sup>

By the early 1960s, Aron had moved away from this radical position. In *Eighteen Lectures on Industrial Society*, he remarked: ‘Twenty years ago, in my *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire*, I entirely accepted this relativistic epistemology ... Today, I am not so sure, and having indicated ... how dangerous it is to give universal validity to one view of social phenomena, I should like to suggest that

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<sup>34</sup> Raymond Aron, ‘La définition libérale de la liberté: I: A propos du livre de F.A. Hayek “The Constitution of Liberty”’, *European Journal of Sociology* 2 (1961), 210.

<sup>35</sup> Raymond Aron, ‘La définition libérale de la liberté: II: Alexis de Tocqueville et Karl Marx’, *European Journal of Sociology* 5 (1964), 159.

<sup>36</sup> Cited in Robert Colquhoun, *Raymond Aron Vol. I* (London: Sage, 1986), 162.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, 162-5.

<sup>38</sup> Raymond Aron, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History: An Essay on the Limits of Historical Objectivity* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1961 [1938]), 12.

it is hardly less dangerous to regard all interpretations as relative'.<sup>39</sup> Aron also abandoned his earlier insistence on the importance of Marx's early writings. Now, he offered a *Capital*-centric reading that downplayed the 'youthful or marginal writings' that hailed from a period in which Marx 'certainly knew Hegel better than he knew capitalism'.<sup>40</sup>

Aron's engagement with the student movement effected a second discontinuity. In his early years, like Dahrendorf, he was fascinated by the works of Karl Mannheim. Aron, however, turned against Mannheim in the late 1960s, having come to associate Mannheim's thought with Claude Lévi-Strauss, Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, and Jacques Lacan.<sup>41</sup> While having moved away from the radical position of *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, Aron continued to emphasize historical contingency. When commenting on determinism and causality, Aron frequently took recourse to Weber's probabilistic understanding of causation.<sup>42</sup> Aron was convinced that ideas were influential in public life, and opposed the idea that socio-economic factors would automatically give rise to certain ideas and institutions.<sup>43</sup> Attributing importance to ideas in a way that many other post-war social scientists did not, Aron disagreed with convergence theories (which argued that the economic-political models of East and West would converge due to developmental

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<sup>39</sup> Raymond Aron, *Eighteen Lectures on Industrial Society* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1961), 27.

<sup>40</sup> Raymond Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought I* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976 [1965]), 112-4.

<sup>41</sup> Max Likin, "'Nothing fails like Success": The Marxism of Raymond Aron', *French Politics, Culture & Society* 26 (2008), 45-6.

<sup>42</sup> Daniel Mahoney, 'The Politic Liberal Rationalism of Raymond Aron', *Polity* 24 (1992), 697.

<sup>43</sup> Tony Judt, 'Introduction', in Raymond Aron, *The Dawn of Universal History* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), xiii-xiv; Daniel Mahoney, 'Aron, Marx, and Marxism: An Interpretation', *European Journal of Political Theory* 2 (2003), 415-422.

factors inherent in modernization) that were prevalent among social scientists in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>44</sup> In his book on Carl von Clausewitz, Aron returned to the subject of causality, which indicates that he still considered the topic very important to political reflection in 1976. In the section ‘Necessary Laws and Laws of Probability’, Aron lauded Clausewitz for paying attention to the role of contingency in warfare.<sup>45</sup> As Matthias Oppermann puts it, for Aron, history was ‘never exclusively fateful nor exclusively contingent’.<sup>46</sup>

Dahrendorf has been depicted as a follower of these liberals in both political thought and philosophy of science. Giovanna Galione claims that Popper’s *The Open Society and its Enemies* exerted tremendous influence on Dahrendorf.<sup>47</sup> Jürgen Kocka emphasizes Popper’s tremendous influence on Dahrendorf during his time at the LSE and Dahrendorf’s general fascination with ‘Western’ rather than German political ideas.<sup>48</sup> Jens Hacke makes the same argument, maintaining that Dahrendorf’s conversion to liberalism was due to two factors – meeting Popper at the LSE and general exposure to the Western political tradition.<sup>49</sup> Hacke portrays Dahrendorf as a ‘Cold War liberal’, deeply indebted to Popper as well as Hayek, Aron, and Berlin.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, xvi.

<sup>45</sup> Raymond Aron, *Penser la Guerre, Clausewitz I: L’age Européen* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 298. I am indebted to Arthur Kuhle for alerting me to this element in Aron’s reception of Clausewitz. Further on Aron and Clausewitz, cf. his Arthur Kuhle, *Die preußische Kriegstheorie um 1800 und ihre Suche nach dynamischen Gleichgewichten* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2018).

<sup>46</sup> Matthias Oppermann, *Raymond Aron und Deutschland: Die Verteidigung der Freiheit und das Problem des Totalitarismus* (Paris: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2008), 75: ‘niemals ausschließlich schicksalhaft oder ausschließlich kontingent’.

<sup>47</sup> Giovanna Galione, *Ralf Dahrendorf: Una Biografia Intelletuale* (Rome: Albatros, 2012), 12.

<sup>48</sup> Jürgen Kocka, ‘Ralf Dahrendorf in historischer Perspektive: Aus Anlass seines Todes am 17. Juni 2009’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 35 (2009), 350-1.

<sup>49</sup> Jens Hacke, ‘Das politische Scheitern eines liberalen Hoffnungsträgers: Ralf Dahrendorf und die FDP’, in Thomas Kroll et al. (eds.), *Intellektuelle in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Verschiebungen im politischen Feld der 1960er und 1970er Jahre*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 126.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, 127.

Hübinger also argues that Popper fascinated Dahrendorf most during his PhD at the LSE.<sup>51</sup> Hübinger also emphasizes Aron's influence on Dahrendorf.<sup>52</sup> Thomas Hauser's recent work on Dahrendorf also locates him in this intellectual tradition. According to Hauser, in contrast to Marx, Dahrendorf viewed history as 'open and uncertain'.<sup>53</sup> He claims that Dahrendorf's continued relevance is above all connected to his 'insistence that history is that which we ourselves create, rather than something that follows some kind of necessity'.<sup>54</sup>

Franziska Meifort's biography of Dahrendorf makes a similar argument. Quoting autobiographical sources that Dahrendorf produced late in his life, Meifort emphasizes Popper's influence, quoting Dahrendorf's self-description of having been a "Popperian before reading Popper".<sup>55</sup> More generally, Meifort emphasizes Popper, Milton Friedman, Immanuel Kant, and Weber as intellectual influences on Dahrendorf.<sup>56</sup> However, no analysis of what these influences entailed and what consequences they may have had for Dahrendorf's political theory is offered. Based on the fact that titles of two of Dahrendorf's books took inspiration from *Democracy in America* and *Reflections on the Revolution in France* respectively, Meifort also attributes important influences to Tocqueville and Edmund Burke.<sup>57</sup> Meifort also argues that Dahrendorf turned into a liberal at a very early stage, prompted by a double

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<sup>51</sup> Gangolf Hübinger, *Engagierte Beobachter der Moderne: Von Max Weber bis Ralf Dahrendorf* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2016), 219.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, 19.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Hauser, *Ralf Dahrendorf: Denker, Politiker, Publizist* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2019), 70: 'offen und ungewiss'.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, 130: 'dass Geschichte das ist, was wir aus ihr machen, nichts, was irgendwelchen Gesetzmäßigkeiten folgt'.

<sup>55</sup> Franziska Meifort, *Ralf Dahrendorf: Eine Biographie* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2017), 49.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, 82-3.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, 82.

experience of ‘totalitarianism’ in the form of German Nazism as well as the Soviet Communism that he experienced in Berlin after the end of the Second World War. Based on Dahrendorf’s published autobiography, two unpublished autobiographic manuscripts, and other later documents, Meifort largely follows Dahrendorf’s own account of his early years.<sup>58</sup> Correspondingly, Meifort heavily discounts Dahrendorf’s indebtedness to Marx.<sup>59</sup> In her interpretation, his experience of ‘totalitarianism’ led Dahrendorf to reject the ideas of the nineteenth-century economist at a very early point in his life.<sup>60</sup> Accordingly, Meifort reads Dahrendorf’s Ph.D. thesis on Marx’s concept of justice and *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (1959) as critiques of Marx.<sup>61</sup> In line with this interpretation, Meifort expresses surprise at the fact that in 1976, Dahrendorf mentioned critical engagement with Marx as the linchpin of his work, ‘even though’, she argues, ‘he did not publish on Marx anymore at this time’.<sup>62</sup>

Dahrendorf himself also frequently emphasized his intellectual debt to Popper, as well as to Berlin and Aron in later years. In his BBC Reith Lectures in 1974, Dahrendorf argued that attending Popper’s lectures while studying at the LSE between 1952 and 1954 had been an important factor in his conversion to liberalism.<sup>63</sup> In his

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<sup>58</sup> Meifort, *Ralf Dahrendorf*, 29-49.

<sup>59</sup> Meifort, *Ralf Dahrendorf*, passim. Cf. Chapter II of this thesis for further discussion. For two more discussions of Dahrendorf that argue that Marx was not important for him, cf. A.H. Halsey, ‘Provincials and Professionals: The British Post-War Sociologists’, *European Journal of Sociology* 23 (1982), 170; Olaf Kühne, *Zur Aktualität von Ralf Dahrendorf: Einführung in sein Werk* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2017).

<sup>60</sup> As the heading of her chapter implies: ‘Ein doppelt gebranntes Kind des Totalitarismus’: *ibid.*, 19.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, 47-50; 74-5.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, 83: ‘obwohl er zu dieser Zeit gar nicht mehr über Marx publizierte’.

<sup>63</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *The New Liberty: Survival and Justice in a Changing World* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 4.

last book, published in 2006, Dahrendorf described Berlin and Popper as father figures.<sup>64</sup>

The first concern of this thesis is to show that closely associating Dahrendorf with Popper, Hayek, Berlin, and Aron is to seriously misunderstand his intellectual project. Placing emphasis on socio-economic matters and on the role of interests rather than ideas in politics, his political thought was rooted in assumptions that were anathema to them. His interest in social laws and prognosis was fundamentally at odds with their conceptions of science. Throughout his entire career, Dahrendorf assumed that politics was governed by inexorable socio-economic processes and, following Marx as well as other materialist theorists such as Mannheim, Theodor Geiger, and Karl Renner, tended to regard ideas as socio-economically determined ideologies. Assuming that interests were the central determining factor in politics, Dahrendorf insisted that the attempt to stamp out interest politics must never be attempted. In order to do allow liberal democracy to flourish, interest politics had to be accepted as a necessary and irremediable aspect of public life. For Dahrendorf, this acceptance was inextricably linked to a pessimistic conception of agency. Political theories that included assumptions of wide-ranging potential for action or attempts to change the political behaviour of certain groups on ethical or political grounds struck him as utopian. Following Marx, he rejected attempts to define the concept of ‘justice’ on the ground that such a step implied the demand that political actors should alter their behaviour in order to conform with a stipulated ideal.<sup>65</sup> Political demands made by

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<sup>64</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Versuchungen der Unfreiheit: Die Intellektuellen in Zeiten der Prüfung* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2006), 40.

<sup>65</sup> cf. Chapter II.

interest groups should be acted upon not if they conformed to a defensible concept of justice or fairness. Instead, the demands of interest groups should be answered precisely because and when they were made. For him, evaluating political demands on the basis of some conception of justice equaled ideological attempts to suppress or change historical processes. Attempts to do so and to suppress the manifestation of interests within the political sphere would only exacerbate social conflict, and in extreme cases would lead to political violence and revolutionary situations. Indeed, the question of revolution and how to avoid revolutionary situations was at the forefront of Dahrendorf's mind throughout his life. This particular character of Dahrendorf's liberalism only becomes intelligible once the influence of materialist thinkers and the significant methodological differences between Popper and Dahrendorf are recognized.

Acquired during his socialist youth but retained until the end of his career despite his political conversion to liberalism in the later 1950s, Dahrendorf's materialist convictions meant that he took a close interest in the scientific study of social forces. The liberal reform programme that he developed and partly put into practice during the 1960s aimed to bring institutions into line with social structure, and to ensure that political systems remained adaptable to changing structures that would lead to altering political landscapes with redrawn battle lines between social interest groups. He was adamant that in terms of method, sociology had to be understood as a scientific discipline that did not differ from the natural sciences, and sought to contribute to sociology with the aim to create a new body of theory that could be utilized for this purpose. When engaging with the rise of neoconservatism in the 1970s

and neoliberalism in the 1980s, materialist arguments still featured prominently in his critiques. The desire to gauge probable social developments that still lay in the future was still central to his intellectual concerns at this point.<sup>66</sup> From the early 1950s until the late 1980s, his work revolved around the question of how liberty could be protected in modern societies in which both social structure and the constellation of social conflicts were in constant flux. The constitutional task of constructing viable democratic states was a constantly evolving question that depended on the nature of social conflict. Dahrendorf developed this social and political doctrine within a transatlantic intellectual network of American and German-American émigré scholars that included many theorists who were sympathetic to his emphasis on the centrality of the socio-economic realm of society. While he is often seen as a quintessentially British figure in intellectual terms, this thesis seeks to highlight the relevance of the United States to his world. In this way, the thesis should also be relevant to scholars of American social thought.

The importance of this first objective, to account for Dahrendorf's idiosyncratic contribution to twentieth-century liberal thought vis-à-vis other liberals, is due to the particular route that the existing literature on Dahrendorf has taken. The second – ultimately more substantial and important – aim of the thesis relates much more straightforwardly to interests and concerns of Dahrendorf *himself*. To achieve

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<sup>66</sup> In drawing attention to the connection between Dahrendorf's concern with the future and his critique of utopianism, this thesis suggests a different reading of the post-war social sciences than the one made in Paul Nolte, *Die Ordnung der deutschen Gesellschaft: Selbstentwurf und Selbstbeschreibung im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2000), 210. Employing Koselleck, Nolte sees the post-war decades as a point in the development of the sociological discipline in which practitioners lost their concern with the future, and in turn as a moment of shedding utopian expectations. While Dahrendorf serves as one of Nolte's central cases, this thesis hopes to show that the historical evidence does not support this argument.

this goal, this thesis is written not only as a study of twentieth-century liberalism but also as a contribution to the history of the social sciences – sociology in particular – during a period of profound methodological change in the second half of the century. Dahrendorf’s liberalism was the product of his sociological work, not vice versa. It is by studying his sociology that this thesis hopes to arrive at a more accurate depiction of his liberalism. This involves taking an approach that differs from numerous books written on the history of liberalism. Frequently, as in the cases of Edmund Fawcett or Alan Ryan, twentieth-century liberalism is written about as if it was a coherent and closed entity, based on the assumption that twentieth-century liberals had been in constant exchange with one another’s ideas.<sup>67</sup> The existing historiography on Dahrendorf, described above, continues this tradition. This thesis shows instead that he spent remarkably little time engaging with the liberal theorists that he allegedly used as central reference points. Like (or unlike?) the French Revolution, liberalism was not a bloc.

As one of the Federal Republic’s most prominent sociologists, Dahrendorf constitutes an invaluable case-study that promises to shed light on the profound intellectual changes that took place in the social sciences between the mid-1960s and early 1980s, and to provide another perspective on the differences between the assumptions underpinning the works of prominent social scientists in the immediate post-war period and those of subsequent decades. Historians of the social sciences have already taken a close interest in the post-war period. Anglophone scholars have tended to depict the social sciences of the 1940s to mid-1960s as a value-free enterprise that

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<sup>67</sup> Edmund Fawcett, *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Alan Ryan, *The Making of Modern Liberalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

was insufficiently guided by morality and values. Proximity to government and dependence on funding by either the state or by organizations such as the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, or the Social Science Research Council has been seen as a source of scientific bias.<sup>68</sup> More recently, these interpretations of social science-as-ideology have been called into question by scholars seeking to nuance our understanding of the politics, practices, and theories of social scientists working between the mid-1940s and the mid-1960s.<sup>69</sup> Historians of Germany who have devoted attention to the history of the social sciences have tended to approach the subject from a slightly different angle, concentrating instead on the question of whether the social sciences contributed to the political stability of the Federal Republic during its foundational years.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Classical examples of this social science-as-ideology thesis are Edward Purcell, *The Crisis of Democratic Theory: Scientific Naturalism and the Problem of Value* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014); Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). For more recent statements cf. Michael Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); David Price, *Cold War Anthropology: The CIA, the Pentagon, and the Growth of Dual Use Anthropology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016). Nils Gilman's study of modernization theory still takes a very critical stand but attempts to take a more nuanced view in contrast to the preceding literature. As he observes about the evolution of his views: 'given my initial scepticism of and even disdain for the authors I describe, it has been rather uncomfortable for me to realize my growing respect for the motives behind their ideas', cf. Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*, 22.

<sup>69</sup> Peter Mandler, *Return from the Natives: How Margaret Mead Won the Second World War and Lost the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Peter Mandler, 'Deconstructing "Cold War Anthropology"' in Joel Isaac and Duncan Bell, *Uncertain Empire: American History and the Idea of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Joel Isaac, *Working Knowledge: Making the Human Sciences from Parsons to Kuhn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Volker Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe: Shepard Stone between Philanthropy, Academy, and Diplomacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Andrew Jewett, *Science, Democracy, and the American University from the Civil War to the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>70</sup> Nolte, *Ordnung der deutschen Gesellschaft*; Clemens Albrecht, Günter Behrmann, Michael Bock, Harald Homann, and Friedrich Tenbruck, *Die intellektuelle Gründung der Bundesrepublik: Eine Wirkungsgeschichte der Frankfurter Schule* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1999); Jens Hacke, *Philosophie der Bürgerlichkeit: Die liberalkonservative Begründung der Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

The case of Dahrendorf does not bear out the social science-as-ideology interpretation. While he was closely involved in both state policy-making and the decision-making of funding bodies for several decades (for instance by serving on the Ford Foundation's Board of Trustees from 1974 and 1984) as well as participating in conferences and events funded by organizations such as the Rockefeller Foundation, Dahrendorf at the same time held on to Marxian notions and methodological views that involved criticizing American sociology as a conservative ideology. Indeed, his own critique of American sociology and Parsonian structural functionalism, still made when he became involved in policy-making himself, prefigured the arguments of critical historians of later years. His paradoxical position as a Marxian liberal and vehement advocate of a sociology modelled on the natural sciences, caught between the Frankfurt School's rejection of empirical sociology and the methodological-political views of conservative sociologists in the post-war Federal Republic, suggests that in his case the connection between social research on the one hand and politics on the other was more complex. Despite his involvement in funding bodies and government agencies, his sociology did not amount to an affirmation of the status quo. On this point, the findings of this thesis buttress revisionist arguments.

However, on the methodological and theoretical substance of the social sciences before and after the methodological crisis of the social sciences around the late 1960s and early 1970s, this thesis seeks to nuance revisionist interpretations. Against social science-as-ideology interpretations, Howard Brick and Peter Mandler have sought to highlight continuities between the immediate post-war period and the

1970s, questioning the idea of a stark break.<sup>71</sup> The German social sciences have received less attention in this respect. This case-study of Dahrendorf and his social-scientific network highlights the profound changes in basic assumptions about the nature of politics and society that got underway in reaction to the shifting political conflicts of the student movement years, and the lasting impact this had on the thematic orientation of the social sciences. Examined from today's viewpoint, the social sciences as practiced in West Germany before the late 1960s stem from another world operating on assumptions that most scholars today reject.

The existing literature on Dahrendorf has blurred this difference by assimilating him to assumptions that are much more current today. This is particularly pronounced in Hübinger's recent work, which divides twentieth-century theorists into two groups (while strongly sympathizing with one side).<sup>72</sup> Hübinger seeks to show that thinkers like Herbert Spencer, Marx, and post-war modernization theorists failed to recognize history's profoundly contingent character. In his narrative, what others have called the 'cultural turn' of the 1970s and 1980s functions as the moment at which the social sciences and humanities finally shed their allegedly faulty methodological assumptions.<sup>73</sup> Whatever one's own methodological predilections, there is a strong element of Whig history in this account. Hübinger takes Dahrendorf to be a prime example of the category of intellectuals who 'know ... that they cannot immediately

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<sup>71</sup> Cf. Howard Brick, *Transcending Capitalism: Visions of a New Society in Modern America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Mandler, 'Deconstructing Cold War Anthropology'; Isaac, *Working Knowledge*.

<sup>72</sup> Herbert Keuth, *Wissenschaft und Werturteil: Zu Werturteilsdiskussion und Positivismusstreit* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989) makes the assumption, as discussed in Ch. I.

<sup>73</sup> Hübinger, *Engagierte Beobachter der Moderne*, 75.

derive their political values and judgments from the progress of history'.<sup>74</sup> While this is not wrong as such, Dahrendorf certainly does not fit in the category of intellectuals who, according to Hübinger, emphasized contingency to dispel the notion that history was a 'homogenous continuum that can be analyzed objectively through causal-genetic reconstruction'.<sup>75</sup> This thesis hopes to show that Dahrendorf's methodological views were opposed to those Hübinger associates him with.

This blurring of distinctions characterizes the more general literature as well. As the author of this thesis has shown elsewhere, scholars commenting on the Positivism Dispute have not recognized that its origins lay in acrimonious debates about necessity and contingency among German sociologists from the mid-1950s onwards.<sup>76</sup> Such interpretations chime with assessments of the reform-oriented 1960s as a period in which social scientists and policy-makers allegedly held optimistic beliefs about their ability to transform and change society. Several historians have argued that during these years, optimistic social scientists assumed that society was 'malleable' and could be shaped and reformed at will.<sup>77</sup> In this vein, Gabriele Metzler designates the 1960s the 'decade of plannability and feasibility'.<sup>78</sup> In particular, Jenny Andersson and Elke Seefried argue that futurology and futures studies, one of the social-scientific casualties of the cultural turn, were characterized by the widespread

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<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, 7: 'wissen ... dass sie aber ihre politischen Werte und Urteile nicht unmittelbar aus dem Verlauf der Geschichte ableiten können'.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, 65: 'homogenes Kontinuum, das einer kausalgenetischen Rekonstruktion objektiv zugänglich ist'.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Strubenhoff, 'Positivism Dispute in German Sociology', 262.

<sup>77</sup> Brick, *Transcending Capitalism*, 20; Anselm Doering-Manteuffel and Lutz Raphael, *Nach dem Boom: Perspektiven auf die Zeitgeschichte seit 1970* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 57.

<sup>78</sup> Gabriele Metzler, "'Geborgenheit im sichern Fortschritt': Das Jahrzehnt von Planbarkeit und Machbarkeit", in Matthias Frese, Julia Paulus, and Karl Teppe (eds.), *Demokratisierung und gesellschaftlicher Aufbruch: Die sechziger Jahre als Wendezeit der Bundesrepublik* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2003): 'Jahrzehnt von Planbarkeit und Machbarkeit'.

assumption of a malleable future that could be shaped, and that futurologists conceived of their science as a contribution to the manipulation of the world.<sup>79</sup> These readings are at odds with critical assessments of the post-war social sciences that gained increasing currency within the profession itself from the late 1960s onwards. By the early 1970s, modernization theorists were confronted with the charge of critics such as Dean Tipps, Ian Weinberg, Joseph LaPalombara, or Samuel Huntington that their social theories were determinist and assumed a unilinear development of modernization that applied to the whole world irrespective of cultural differences.<sup>80</sup> Futurologists were confronted with a similar critique of their alleged determinism during the same period.<sup>81</sup> Dahrendorf also came under fire from this angle. Having had great influence on the Bielefeld School of History and social structure-oriented historians of modern German society more generally with works such as *Society and Democracy in Germany* (1965), exponents of the cultural turn criticized him for making determinist assumptions. In their influential revisionist study of modern German history, Geoff Eley and David Blackbourn attacked Dahrendorf for assuming that societies must necessarily move through a historical stage in which the ‘bourgeoisie’ dominated politics.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Andersson, *The Future of the World*, 3; Seefried, *Zukünfte: Aufstieg und Krise der Zukunftsforschung*, 9.

<sup>80</sup> Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*, 221-34.

<sup>81</sup> Tolon, ‘Futures Studies’, 47. Elke Seefried, ‘Bruch im Fortschrittsverständnis? Zukunftsforschung zwischen Steuerungseuphorie und Wachstumskritik’, in Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, Lutz Raphael, and Thomas Schlemmer, *Vorgeschichte der Gegenwart: Dimensionen des Strukturbruchs nach dem Boom* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 425 makes the same observation but links it to the disappearance of reform optimism and thus the assumption of the malleability of society discussed in her book.

<sup>82</sup> Geoff Eley and David Blackbourn, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 45. Further cf. Chapter V of this thesis.

A study that examines Dahrendorf's work before, during, and after the methodological crises of the late 1960s to early 1980s can provide insights into the nature of this shift. The picture that emerges from this study differs from that provided by historians who see the post-war social sciences as governed by an optimistic ethos of 'feasibility'. Dahrendorf, and most of the key members of his network, did not assume that their ability to reform society during the post-war decade was unbounded. The economic miracle of the post-war years *did* mean that the fiscal capabilities of the state allowed many reform projects to flourish that foundered as the economic crises of the 1970s unfolded. However, Dahrendorf and many of his associates insisted that certain reforms should be enacted not because they were possible, but rather because they were rendered necessary by certain socio-economic trends and developments. His intellectual circle during this period was not an esoteric one that ran against the current of its time. It included some of the most prominent scientists and politicians of its day, not least Kurt-Georg Kiesinger, West Germany's Chancellor from 1966 until 1969.

In Howard Brick's study of the post-war social sciences, Dahrendorf's argument that the concept of 'capitalism' no longer adequately described the social reality of the post-war period, made in *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*, serves as the starting-off point for his argument that sociologists started to be less interested in economic matters during this period.<sup>83</sup> Society, Brick argues, became increasingly seen as autonomous from the economic realm in the post-war decades.<sup>84</sup> This is said to have come to an end during the 1970s, a decade that witnessed the return

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<sup>83</sup> Brick, *Transcending Capitalism*, 4.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, 13-14. Brick is echoed by Daniel Geary, *Radical Ambition: C. Wright Mills, the Left, and American Social Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 140. For Dahrendorf's fascination with Mills' emphasis on socio-economic issues, cf. Chapter III of this thesis.

of economy-focused political views and solutions.<sup>85</sup> This thesis suggests a different picture. Socio-economic aspects were central to the theoretical imaginations of Dahrendorf and the theorists he was surrounded by, whereas other factors such as culture or ideas were downplayed as factors determining politics and society. It was this downplaying of the autonomous role of culture and ideas that made it possible to regard social developments as predictable and to conceive of the future as a legitimate field of enquiry.

The rise of conceptions of society and politics as largely contingent during the cultural turn connects the first and second concern of this thesis. Studying Dahrendorf's relationship with other liberal theorists of the twentieth century highlights his divergence on central questions of philosophy of history (Chs. I, II, VI). His role in the development of sociological theory during its post-war heyday (Chs. I, II, III, IV) and his critique of its neoconservative and neoliberal alternatives during the 1970s and 1980s (Chs. V, VI) in turn suggest that the rise of new versions of liberalism from the 1970s onwards and the demise of the post-war social sciences were connected. Strongly committed to the notion that ideas rather than socio-economic factors were central in shaping society and heavily dismissive of determinism, liberal theorists like Hayek, Berlin, and Popper saw their fortunes rise during these years.<sup>86</sup> During the post-war years, Hayek's critique of the conception of 'objective facts' was idiosyncratic – by the later 1970s, it had become a mainstream position. It was at this

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<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, 220, 236.

<sup>86</sup> This thesis thus sees more of a break in continuity between post-war social science and Hayek and Popper than does Sonya Amadae, *Rationalizing Capitalist Democracy: The Cold War Origins of Rational Choice Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). By associating Hayek with anti-relativist understandings of the social sciences (16), Amadae underestimates the central role of a critique of positivism in Hayek's political thought.

point of crisis in the social sciences that new political options became conceivable. Rather than seeing the 1970s as a period in which reform-oriented optimism and belief in the ‘malleability’ of society were shattered, this thesis suggests that this period saw the rise of a new belief in feasibility that had been absent in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>87</sup>

With the rise of anti-determinist and contingency-oriented versions of liberalism, politics from the mid-1970s onwards saw an opening up of new possibilities. In contrast to the subjects of Koselleck’s work, in the case of twentieth-century liberal thought it was not the centrality of the future as a horizon of expectation that facilitated utopian ideas. Rather, it was the demise of a conception of the future as predictable and dependent on non-random, non-contingent social factors during the 1970s and 1980s that functioned as a fertile ground for new utopian ideas.<sup>88</sup> Dahrendorf was unique in that the late 1960s and 1970s did not alter his political and scientific vision. When, in the early 1960s, he pressed for higher education reforms because changes in social structure had rendered the ‘idealist’ set-up of German universities anachronistic, this was not an uncommon position. When, in the early 1980s, he argued that Margaret Thatcher would soon be out of office because her policies were utopian because they ignored social structure, it had become an idiosyncratic position. It is this that makes him an invaluable subject to study historically.

By drawing attention to Dahrendorf’s emphasis on the socio-economic realm and on causality, the characterization of his social and political thought made here

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<sup>87</sup> For this point, cf. Daniel Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2012), 5-14.

<sup>88</sup> This is not to say that Koselleck’s own argument was necessarily incorrect in connection to the subjects of his own research. Rather, it is to say that the application of his argument to the post-war social sciences by Nolte and Seefried is in at least some sense problematic.

resembles the picture of the post-war social sciences drawn by its late 1960s and 1970s critics. However, while they had a clearer picture of the reality of the social sciences as practised after the war than later commentators, this is no reason to adopt their overall verdict. While its critics were fond of highlighting the political biases of post-war social scientists, Chapter V of this thesis shows that political concerns and impressions gathered from contemporary political events and developments were as prominent during the cultural turn. While contemporary critics like Hampshire or Eley and Blackbourn were aware of some of the assumptions at play in Dahrendorf's social thought that subsequent historians have not picked up on, they also succeeded in caricaturing the arguments of their predecessors. While Dahrendorf thought that given social forces constrained and dictated politics in considerable and often over-towering ways, his was not a teleological determinism. While certain aspects were given and inexorable, politicians and decision-makers still had a very important and creative role to play. On the basis of given social forces, different options were open. It was not for nothing that he decided to accept the Free Democratic Party's offer to run for office on their ticket in a safe seat in October 1967.

To make this case, the chapters of the present thesis are organized along thematic lines, progressing broadly in chronological order. Given that his career encompassed several distinct phases characterized by slightly different intellectual concerns, a study of Dahrendorf is in the comfortable position of not having to choose too strictly between thematic and chronological organization.

Chapter One locates Dahrendorf within the intellectual context of a longstanding debate among German social theorists about whether modernity

necessarily entailed certain inexorable processes, such as increasing prominence of bureaucratic decision-making in all spheres of society. It seeks to highlight the centrality of the question of the scope for individual and collective action to transform society to the concerns of intellectuals in Germany throughout the first seven decades of the twentieth century. The rise of large-scale organizations in both the public and the private sphere gave rise to a long-standing political debate on the role of bureaucratic entities in modern industrial society that interlinked to the question of the extent to which certain aspects of modernization were inescapable. The consequences of modernization were thought to immensely complicate the every-day tasks of politicians and administrators. These *political* analyses of modernization formed the backdrop of *methodological* disputes among German sociologists from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s about the degree of necessity and contingency of social and political developments. This debate formed the central backdrop of Dahrendorf's intellectual development during the first two decades of his academic career.

Chapter Two charts Dahrendorf's early politics, his reading of Marx, Mannheim, Renner, Geiger, and other materialist theorists during his student days and early academic career in the 1950s, as well as his continuous redeployment of materialist theories in later years. By doing so, it shows how materialist assumptions informed his agonistic liberalism throughout his entire life beyond his abandonment of political socialism in the late 1950s. The chapter also contrasts Dahrendorf's reading of materialism with the perspectives of Popper, Hayek, Berlin, and other liberals he has been associated with.

Chapter Three focuses on Dahrendorf's attempt to reform sociology from the beginning of his sociological career in the mid-1950s until 1967, when the beginning of his political career put an end to his close concern with rewriting sociological theory. The chapter covers his involvement in both German and transatlantic debates, focusing on the 'Homo Sociologicus' controversies in Germany, his critique of Talcott Parsons' structural-functionalism as well as American sociology more generally, and his relationship with American sociologists such as C. Wright Mills who shared his materialist convictions. Centrally, the chapter studies how Dahrendorf resolved the apparent contradiction between his strong conviction in the importance of empirical and theoretical sociology, based on strict assumptions about necessity and causality, and his rejection of the stipulation of value freedom as a basis for social scientific research.

Chapter Four discusses Dahrendorf's involvement in transatlantic intellectual networks of anti-idealist German-American scholars such as Hajo Holborn, Fritz Ringer, Leonard Krieger, and Fritz Stern, and the conclusions he drew from their ideas for education reform, particularly relating to the foundation of the University of Constance in 1966. For Dahrendorf, Constance was a conscious attempt to disrupt the German academic landscape in the social sciences, which to his mind was dominated by idealism to the detriment of both research and society. By founding a radically reformed university that broke with tradition, Dahrendorf sought to create a research centre which could inform politics and educate public opinion by highlighting the historical processes that society was undergoing and provide an institutional setting that would contribute to the liberal reformation of German society more generally.

The rise of anti-positivist thought in the 1960s and the 1970s constituted a challenge to Dahrendorf's ideas. Chapter Five focuses on his engagement with the changing political landscape of the 1970s and contrasts his reaction to the student radicalism of the late 1960s with those of his intellectual associates. In particular, the chapter discusses his engagement with 'neoconservatism' during this period, an intellectual movement dominated by sociologists such as Daniel Bell who were intellectually closely affiliated with him. It draws attention to the way in which Dahrendorf sought to reconcile his agonistic liberalism with contemporary developments that pointed in the direction of a new social conflict that was defined by ideal rather than material interests.

Chapter Six analyses Dahrendorf's critique of neoliberalism in the 1970s and 1980s. It draws attention to the central role that materialist assumptions played in this critique, thus highlighting continuity in his political thought. In many ways, Dahrendorf's critique of Hayek and other 'constitutional economists' who sought to constrain political processes by imposing constitutional limits on what political actions were permitted drew on his earlier materialist argument that parliaments had to act as arenas for the manifestation of sectional interests. It further argues that the disagreements between Dahrendorf and neoliberals were based on different assessments as to whether economic concentration and bureaucratization were inherent parts of modernization or contingent consequences of political decisions. Falling in the latter part of this division, neoliberals in the 1970s and 1980s gradually won the debate against those with the increasingly fragile conviction that modernity was a process within which bureaucratization had to be accepted as irremediable.

A word about the intentions of this thesis is due. While we will deal with a wide range of political statements by Dahrendorf, it will not always be possible to discuss their validity in depth. While this thesis would not have been written if its author took Dahrendorf's political thought to be entirely irrelevant to the present day, a good number of his assumptions remain open to question. In this respect, much depends on the question of whether material conflicts are in fact the main issues characterizing the politics of our day. Dahrendorf, as we shall see in Chapter V and VI, had his own views on this question but did not substantiate them empirically. Surely, the jury is still out on this question, which in turn deserves its own doctoral theses. This thesis therefore concentrates its energy on portraying Dahrendorf's ideas as historically accurately as possible. What to make of them in the light of the present it leaves to the reader. This is important because in many instances, we will be concerned not just with his views but with the methodological assumptions that entered them. Taking this approach focuses our attention on two core questions: what happens to politics if its thematic focus shifts? What happens to politics when a paradigm shift alters how social scientists look at society?

## Chapter I: Sociology and Modern Industrial Society

‘In a modern state rule ... necessarily and inevitably lies in the hands of officialdom, both military and civilian.’ (Max Weber, ‘Parliament and Government in Germany under a New Political Order’, in Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs (eds.), *Weber: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 145.)

‘The most significant function of sociological analysis for social action today is no longer pointing out what is to be done and what is to be decided, but rather to make visible that which is happening anyway and cannot be changed.’ (Helmut Schelsky, *Ortsbestimmung der deutschen Soziologie* (Cologne: Diederichs, 1959), 125-6.<sup>1</sup>)

### 1. Introduction.

For observers of social developments during the first years and decades of the twentieth century, it was clear that the character of modern societies was changing rapidly.<sup>2</sup> One socio-economic trend that particularly captivated attention was the rise of large-scale organizations. In the economic sphere, large-scale conglomerates and trusts were becoming more prominent.<sup>3</sup> In Imperial Germany, heavy industries such as iron, metal, mining, machinery, chemicals, electronics were on the rise: by 1907, Krupp employed 64,300 workers, while Siemens had 42,900 employees. The mining company Gelsenkirchener Bergwerks Aktien-Gesellschaft occupied third place with 31,250

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Die wichtigste Leistung der soziologischen Analyse für das soziale Handeln liegt heute gar nicht mehr in der Angabe dessen, was zu tun und wie zu entscheiden ist, sondern viel mehr darin, sichtbar zu machen, was sowieso geschieht und was gar nicht zu ändern ist’.

<sup>2</sup> Parts of this chapter draw on Strubenhoff, ‘Positivism Dispute’.

<sup>3</sup> Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte 1849-1914* (Munich: Beck, 1995), 622-637; Erik Grimmer-Solem, *The Rise of Historical Economics and Social Reform in Germany 1864-1894* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 237. The impression these economic developments made on liberals is noted by Richard Bellamy, *Liberalism and Modern Society: An Historical Argument* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 3.

workers.<sup>4</sup> In the political sphere, organized parties were becoming ever more dominant. At the same time, the introduction of welfare legislation meant that the number of experts and administrators employed by the state rose as well.<sup>5</sup> The First World War only increased this impression of the growing importance of administration. In contrast to previous wars, the deployment of millions of soldiers in an age of mass warfare increased the prominence of bureaucracy in the deployment of modern armies. Max Weber – an observer particularly interested in the rise of bureaucracy and administration – argued at the end of the First World War that bureaucratization was taking place in every realm of society, including religious organizations such as the Catholic Church, military academies, and universities.<sup>6</sup> Bureaucracy, he wrote, ‘is ... distinguished from other historical bearers of the modern, rational way of ordering life by the fact of its far greater inescapability. History records no instance of it having disappeared again once it had achieved complete and sole dominance’.<sup>7</sup>

Weber’s was a radical version of an argument about the inescapable nature of modernity that held great sway in German-speaking political debates in the first seven decades of the twentieth century. During this period, many German theorists were closely concerned with the question of whether modernity was an inexorable process in which the ability of individuals and societies as a whole to act freely was

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<sup>4</sup> Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte 1849-1914*, 624.

<sup>5</sup> On this historical trend more generally, cf. Lutz Raphael, ‘Die Verwissenschaftlichung des Sozialen als methodische und konzeptionelle Herausforderung für eine Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 22 (1996).

<sup>6</sup> For the Catholic Church, cf. Weber, ‘Parliament and Government in Germany’, 146. For military academies, universities, and other examples cf. *ibid.*, 155.

<sup>7</sup> Max Weber, ‘Parliament and Government in Germany’, 156.

increasingly constrained. This debate formed the central setting in which Dahrendorf's political thought developed.

This chapter lays out the nature of this debate. In doing so it forms the natural counterpart of Chs. V and VI, which cover the demise of this paradigm, as well as the political consequences that this intellectual change entailed. After providing a brief genealogical overview of the debate since the beginning of the century, this chapter examines the debate during the foundational years of the post-war West German sociological discipline between the early 1950s and later 1960s in further detail. During this period, the discipline saw increasingly acrimonious disagreements about the degree to which social circumstances in modern industrial societies were necessary or contingent. Closely connected to this issue was the question of what role or 'function' the sociological discipline had to play in such modern societies. Fought between advocates of empirical and causality-oriented conceptions of sociology such as Helmut Schelsky, René König, Arnold Gehlen, and Dahrendorf on the one hand and the Frankfurt School on the other, this debate significantly influenced the intellectual trajectories of all theorists involved. By providing this overview, this chapter draws attention to a context without which the questions that Dahrendorf's political ideas and sociological theories sought to answer cannot be comprehended.

## 2. Bureaucratization, Rationalization, and Modernity.

Weber's concerns about bureaucracy were not limited to his famous exposition in 'Parliament and Government'. In numerous works, Weber emphasized the increasing power held by bureaucratic office holders over individuals in modern societies.<sup>8</sup> According to Reinhard Bendix and Wolfgang Mommsen – thinkers interested in bureaucracy and modernity in their own right – Weber envisaged that the future of politics would be characterized by political conflicts between charismatic leadership and bureaucratic power, and hoped that to some extent the former would counteract the latter.<sup>9</sup> In his advocacy of a strong and directly elected President as part of the constitutional settlement of the Weimar Republic in February 1919, Weber sought to establish a figure strong enough to confront the bureaucratic hierarchies of the state governments, particularly those of Prussia.<sup>10</sup> Only a directly elected leader, he argued, could disrupt Germany's sclerotic party system dominated by notables and professional politicians.<sup>11</sup>

Although the theme of bureaucratic rule also featured prominently in his writings on Ancient civilizations, Weber made it clear that he thought that there was an inherent link between modernity and bureaucratization.<sup>12</sup> In September 1909, at a

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<sup>8</sup> Bellamy, *Liberalism and Modern Society*, 184-194; Stefan Breuer, *Bürokratie und Charisma: Zur politischen Soziologie Max Webers* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994).

<sup>9</sup> Wolfgang Mommsen, 'Universalgeschichtliches und politisches Denken bei Max Weber', *Historische Zeitschrift* 201 (1965); Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait* (London: Methuen, 1966 [1959]), 388.

<sup>10</sup> Max Weber, 'Der Reichspräsident', in Max Weber, *Gesammelte politische Schriften* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980), 500-1.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 499.

<sup>12</sup> Fritz Ringer, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 220. Note in particular Ringer's observations on Weber's fundamentally ambivalent attitude towards bureaucracy in *ibid.*, 220-3. Further cf. Bellamy, *Liberalism and Modern Society*, 191.

meeting of the Association for Social Policy, Weber suggested that while Ancient Egypt had been more bureaucratic than any other human society ever since, the spectre of bureaucracy in the present was even more threatening because today's bureaucratic means were technologically superior and more rationalized.<sup>13</sup> Over the next decade, Weber did not lose his anxiety about the rise of bureaucracy. In January 1919, Weber told students in Munich that the 'bureaucratic constitution of the state' was 'also and in particular characteristic of the modern state'.<sup>14</sup> Even in the United States, he pointed out, the Civil Service Reform had at last introduced a professional bureaucratic class – this was part of an inexorable trend caused by '[p]urely technical, irremediable [unabweisliche] administrative requirements'.<sup>15</sup> In his posthumously published work on the pure types of legitimate domination, he observed that the 'whole developmental history of the modern state in particular is identical with the history of modern bureaucratism [Beamtentum] and the bureaucratic organization ... to the same extent that the development of modern high capitalism is identical with the increasing bureaucratization of economic enterprises'.<sup>16</sup>

Weber's interest in economic bureaucratization was shared by many of his contemporaries. Werner Sombart, Weber's co-editor of the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, devoted two chapters of *Der Moderne*

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<sup>13</sup> Max Weber, 'Debattereden auf der Tagung des Vereins für Sozialpolitik in Wien 1909 zu den Verhandlungen über "Die wirtschaftlichen Unternehmungen der Gemeinden"', in Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Soziologie und Sozialpolitik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 414.

<sup>14</sup> Max Weber, 'Politik als Beruf', in Weber, *Gesammelte politische Schriften*, 510: 'bürokratische Staatsordnung', 'auch und gerade dem modernen Staat charakteristische'.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, 517: 'Rein technische, unabweisliche Bedürfnisse der Verwaltung'.

<sup>16</sup> Max Weber, 'Die drei reinen Typen der legitimen Herrschaft', in Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 477: 'Die ganze Entwicklungsgeschichte des modernen Staates insbesondere ist identisch mit der Geschichte des modernen Beamtentums und bürokratischen Betriebes ... ebenso wie die ganze Entwicklung des modernen Hochkapitalismus identisch ist mit zunehmender Bürokratisierung der Wirtschaftsbetriebe.'

*Kapitalismus* to the rise of large-scale companies and the rise of science and expert administration in business.<sup>17</sup> In both social science and politics, the political implications of this new group became hotly debated. Speaking at the Eighth Protestant-Social Congress in 1897, Gustav Schmoller introduced the concept of the ‘newly-forming middle class’, a term that would be central to debates about social structure for decades to come.<sup>18</sup> Schmoller held a broadly positive view of administration and bureaucracy. Disagreements about the role of value judgements in economics among members of the Association for Social Policy were intricately linked to debates about cartels and monopolies and the role of state bureaucracy. While older leading members of the Association, prominently Schmoller and Adolph Wagner, saw civil servants as the decision-makers that would be best-placed to administrate the social and economic problems associated with industrialization, Weber (joined by his younger brother Alfred) objected.<sup>19</sup> According to Weber, it was misguided to believe that civil servants could be truly neutral administrators of public affairs who stood above sectional interests.<sup>20</sup> Growing out of these debates, Weber and other sociologists founded the break-away German Sociological Association in January 1909. When the issue of objectivity and value freedom again led to passionate disagreements at the General Meeting of the Association for Social Policy in Vienna in September 1909, the growth of bureaucracy was central to the arguments of Weber and others. In his

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<sup>17</sup> On the rise of large-scale companies and the rise of science and expert administration in business, cf. Werner Sombart, *Der Moderne Kapitalismus: Historisch-systematische Darstellung des gesamteuropäischen Wirtschaftslebens von seinen Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart Volume III: Das Wirtschaftsleben im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus* (Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1955 [1902]).

<sup>18</sup> Jürgen Kocka, ‘Angestellter’, in Reinhart Koselleck, Otto Brunner, and Werner Conze (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2004), 125: ‘neu sich bildenden Mittelstandes’.

<sup>19</sup> Bellamy, *Liberalism and Modern Society*, 187.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 188.

contribution to a debate about municipal enterprises, Weber insisted on the ‘irreversibility of the progress of bureaucratic mechanization’.<sup>21</sup> The question was not how this trend could be reversed – as this was impossible – but rather what ‘we can furnish against this machinery’.<sup>22</sup> Concerned about what a world filled by bureaucrats would look like, Weber cautioned his colleagues against their enthusiasm for bureaucratic administration.<sup>23</sup> These sentiments were not shared by those members of the Association who thought that economics should be based on explicit value judgements, and that the state was often better placed to act in accordance with values than private enterprises. In the aftermath of the conference, the economist Georg Friedrich Knapp complained to Schmoller that newspapers had portrayed the event as if there had been no proceedings besides the pathos-laden preaching of the Weber brothers against bureaucracy.<sup>24</sup>

However, the economy and the state were not the only spheres that contemporaries thought to be subject to bureaucratization. In 1911, Weber’s associate Robert Michels published a treatise on bureaucracy and modern parties that argued that all political organizations were subject to an ‘iron law of oligarchy’.<sup>25</sup> Frustrated by the politics of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), which he thought had

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<sup>21</sup> Weber, ‘Debattereden auf der Tagung des Vereins für Sozialpolitik in Wien 1909’, 413: ‘Unaufhaltsamkeit des Fortschritts der bureaukratischen Mechanisierung’.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, 414: ‘was wir dieser Maschinerie entgegensetzen haben’.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Johannes Glaeser, *Der Werturteilsstreit in der deutschen Nationalökonomie: Max Weber, Werner Sombart und die Ideale der Sozialpolitik* (Marburg: Metropolis, 2014), 241. Apart from this quotation, Glaeser does not discuss the role played by disagreements about bureaucratization in the origin of the disagreements about value judgements, instead placing emphasis on the concurrent debate about productivity.

<sup>25</sup> For the close relationship between Weber and Michels cf. Duncan Kelly, ‘From Moralism to Modernism: Robert Michels on the History, Theory and Sociology of Patriotism’, *History of European Ideas* 29 (2003), 347-8.

abandoned its true revolutionary fervour, Michels was initially attracted to syndicalism. After moving to Turin in 1907 because his social democratic politics made it impossible to find employment at German universities, Michels gravitated towards the elite theories of Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto, who both maintained that ruling classes necessarily dominated all societies. Michels adopted this perspective: his work on the sociology of oligarchy argued that political parties as well as trade unions of necessity required administrators and leaders. Increasingly, labour would be divided and become more complicated. The amount of technical knowledge required in modern politics rendered democratic control of leaders and administrators impossible.<sup>26</sup> In his later life Michels joined the Italian Fascist movement, which he hoped could serve as a vehicle for improvements in a political sphere subject to the iron law of oligarchy.<sup>27</sup>

The later stages of the First World War and its immediate aftermath saw a surge in concerns about bureaucratization. Not only was this the period when Weber produced most of his works about this issue. Many liberals, in particular those affiliated with the German Democratic Party (DDP), argued that bureaucracy's inevitability had to be accepted.<sup>28</sup> This was the line taken by Walter Rathenau in an essay on 'The New Economy', published in January 1918. In contrast to his *In Days to Come* (1917), which he had published just a year prior but had started writing before the war,

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<sup>26</sup> Robert Michels, *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie: Untersuchungen über die oligarchischen Tendenzen des Gruppenlebens* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kroner, 1957 [1911]).

<sup>27</sup> David Beetham, 'From Socialism to Fascism: The Relation Between Theory and Practice in the Work of Robert Michels', *Political Studies* 25 (1977).

<sup>28</sup> Here this thesis takes issue with the wholesale indictment of the DDP in Wolf Lepenies, *The Seduction of Culture in German History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 26. Lepenies seems to take the *Sonderweg* interpretation of German liberalism too far by presenting intellectuals close to the DDP as frustrated 'metaphysicians' obsessed with culture.

Rathenau advised his compatriots that the war had accelerated inevitable processes. The nineteenth-century ideal of the free market would not work anymore. What was instead needed in the new age were cartelized structures of economic governance. According to Rathenau, the bureaucracy that would emerge would not stand in the way of growth – instead, it would benefit economic development.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, as a member of the Weimar Constituent Assembly, Friedrich Naumann implored his colleagues to recognize that the character of the new constitution had to reflect the changing social structure of German society. During the debate on the basic rights clauses on 1 April 1919, Naumann stated that the entry of the Social Democrats into government and the ‘phenomenon that the mass personality, the association personality [Verbandsmensch] rather than the individual’ now dominated society needed to be considered in the writing of the constitution. For this reason, he said, it was necessary not only to take older constitutions as blue-prints for the new one – it was also necessary to draw on the Bolshevik constitution of 15 July 1918.<sup>30</sup> The liberal theologian Ernst Troeltsch, another DDP grandee who sat in the Prussian Constituent Assembly from 1919 until 1921, used similar rhetoric about the alleged inevitability of certain political facts and developments. As far as political parties were concerned, he implored political commentators to recognize reality by ‘above all differentiating clearly between the irremediable and the remediable of our situation’.<sup>31</sup> Political parties and their

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<sup>29</sup> Shulamit Volkov, *Walther Rathenau: The Life of Weimar's Fallen Statesman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 159-161.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in ‘Die Grundrechte des deutschen Volkes’, *Vossische Zeitung*, 01 April 1919: ‘Erscheinung, daß nicht mehr der einzelne, sondern der Massenmensch, der Verbandsmensch’.

<sup>31</sup> Ernst Troeltsch, ‘Kritik am System: Das Parteienwesen (Juni 1920)’, in Ernst Troeltsch, *Spectator-Briefe und Berliner Briefe, 1919-1922* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 287: ‘das Unwiderrufliche und Widerrufliche an unseren Verhältnissen vor allem klar zu scheiden’.

machineries were part of the irremediable.<sup>32</sup> Trying to confront dissatisfaction with the existing party system of the Weimar Republic, he argued that it was important to recognize that ‘one cannot create parties as one wished, and that the existing parties essentially correspond to certain natural groups within society and therefore have a certain inner necessity’.<sup>33</sup> A year later, in 1921, he called for ‘a politics based on assessments that are coldblooded and devoid of illusions’ and spoke of democracy as having become ‘fate’.<sup>34</sup> Only in this way could democratic responsibility and the ‘will to select leaders’ be fostered.<sup>35</sup>

Joseph Schumpeter, a member of the Socialization Commission during the tumultuous first months of the Weimar Republic in early 1919, argued along similar lines.<sup>36</sup> In an article published in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* in 1920, he argued that due to increasing bureaucratization, the growth of large-scale industry, and the rise of managers and experts, socialism was inevitable.<sup>37</sup> In this earlier setting, the famous argument of Schumpeter’s *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1943) – which portrayed bureaucracy as an inevitable aspect of modern societies – prefigured. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* expanded on this idea and disseminated it among a wider audience more than twenty years later. Bureaucratization, rationalization, and the shift of power from bourgeois entrepreneurs

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<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*: ‘daß man Parteien nicht beliebig schaffen kann und daß die gegebenen Parteien im wesentlichen bestimmten natürlichen Gruppierungen der Gesellschaft entsprechen, also eine gewisse innere Notwendigkeit besitzen’.

<sup>34</sup> Ernst Troeltsch, ‘Ideologien und reale Verhältnisse’, in Troeltsch, *Spectator-Briefe und Berliner Briefe, 1919-1922*, 433: ‘eine Politik der kaltblütigen und illusionslosen Bilanz’, ‘schicksalsmäßig’.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*: ‘Willigkeit zur Führerauslese’.

<sup>36</sup> For Schumpeter’s politics on the Socialization Commission, cf. Richard Swedberg, *Joseph A. Schumpeter: His Life and Work* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 55-8.

<sup>37</sup> William Scheuerman, *Carl Schmitt: The End of Law* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 193.

to administrators were key factors in the historical process that Schumpeter here saw as inevitably leading from capitalism to socialism.<sup>38</sup> In this book, he argued that value judgements were out of place in any rational evaluation of these issues, as ‘mankind is not free to choose ... Things economic and social move by their own momentum and the ensuing situations compel individuals and groups to behave in certain ways ... If this is the quintessence of Marxism then we all of us have got to be Marxists’.<sup>39</sup> A few years after Schumpeter’s original article, these arguments still carried weight in liberal circles. In reaction to conservative pleas that the modern industrial state should be turned back into an agrarian state, the liberal historian and DDP member Friedrich Meinecke argued in *The Idea of Reason of State* (1924) that such plans were utopian. While agreeing that the former state of affairs was culturally preferable, Meinecke argued that the modern state would inevitably become a ‘rational giant organization [rationalen Großbetrieb]’.<sup>40</sup> Even though some clamoured to go back to the agrarian past, the demographic growth of the recent past rendered this impossible.<sup>41</sup> Modern rationalized statecraft and industry had become mankind’s fate.

For liberals, the rise of bureaucracy constituted a potential challenge, as it seemed to turn an emphasis on individual liberty into an anachronistic ideology of the previous century. However, Weimar political theorists of the Left were as preoccupied by the issue of bureaucracy and modernity, as the rise of administrative white collar

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<sup>38</sup> Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (London: Routledge, 2010 [1943]), 118-9. It should be noted that Schumpeter had a markedly positive view of bureaucracy, cf. Swedberg, *Joseph A. Schumpeter*, 161.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, 115. For Schumpeter’s conception of historical change, cf. Gerhard Winterberger, *Über Schumpeters Geschichtsdeterminismus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983).

<sup>40</sup> Friedrich Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson in der neueren Geschichte* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1963 [1924]), 483: ‘rationalen Großbetrieb’.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, 490-1.

workers complicated Karl Marx's prediction of the disappearance of the middle class in capitalist economic systems. In 1926, Emil Lederer and his student Jacob Marschak published a widely noted essay on 'The New Middle Class' that discussed the political sociology of the holders of bureaucratic posts in business.<sup>42</sup> In the early 1930s, this topic was taken up by Theodor Geiger and Hans Speier, two sociologists closely affiliated with the SPD. By then, analysing the new middle class had gained even further urgency, given that at the time it was seen as one of the electoral taproots of National Socialism.<sup>43</sup> Marxist authors also took note of the changing nature of capitalism. For Rudolf Hilferding, Weimar Germany's Finance Secretary during the onset of the Great Depression, observations about the rise of 'organized capitalism' played a key role in the development of his revisionist Marxism.<sup>44</sup> Hilferding hoped that the trend towards large-scale bureaucratic enterprises and managerialism would make a non-violent transition to socialism possible in the future.<sup>45</sup> In Austria, the prominent Austro-Marxist Karl Renner also sought to make sense of the rise of white collar workers for the politics of the present: Dahrendorf later adopted his concept of the white collar 'service class' in his theory of the politics of industrial society.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Emil Lederer and Jacob Marschak, 'Der neue Mittelstand', *Grundriß der Sozialökonomik* 9 (1926).

<sup>43</sup> Theodor Geiger, *Die soziale Schichtung des deutschen Volkes: Soziographischer Versuch auf statistischer Grundlage* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1932); Hans Speier, *Die Angestellten vor dem Nationalsozialismus: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der deutschen Sozialstruktur, 1918-1933* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977). Speier's book was only published in 1977 at the initiative of Jürgen Kocka, as publication of his work after 1933 proved impossible for Speier.

<sup>44</sup> Heinrich August Winkler, 'Einleitende Bemerkungen zu Hilferdings Theorie des organisierten Kapitalismus', in Winkler (ed.), *Organisierter Kapitalismus: Voraussetzungen und Anfänge* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974).

<sup>45</sup> Harold James, 'Rudolf Hilferding and the Application of the Political Economy of the Second International', *Historical Journal* 24 (1981), 856.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Chapter II.

In spite of this strong current in German social thought, not everybody agreed that rationality and bureaucracy were inexorable aspects of modernity that simply had to be accepted. Frequently, the insistence that this trend was not irreversible was combined with emphases on the importance of ‘culture’.<sup>47</sup> Alfred Weber – a prominent member of the German sociological profession in his own right and provisional chair of the DDP after its foundation – had views that differed significantly from his brother Max. While both agreed about the negative consequences of bureaucracy, Alfred had higher hopes in culture as an antidote against the loss of meaning and life that he saw modern societies to be undergoing as a consequence of the increasing rationalization of society. Influenced by the vitalism of Henri Bergson and Hans Driesch, Alfred actively supported the youth movement, which he hoped could instil in students a broader sense of meaning than the increasingly narrow and specialized training at universities that he viewed as a consequence of the rise of bureaucracy and rationality.<sup>48</sup> Like many others at the time, Alfred distinguished between civilizational (negatively connoted) and cultural (positively connoted) forces in society.<sup>49</sup> In his memoirs, Max Weber’s assistant Hans Staudinger recalled Max’s annoyance at Alfred’s juxtaposition of culture and civilization.<sup>50</sup> Even more so, critics of rationality

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<sup>47</sup> For a good introduction cf. Klaus Lichtblau, *Kulturkrise und Soziologie um die Jahrhundertwende: Zur Genealogie der Kultursoziologie in Deutschland* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1996) as well as the earlier works Lepenies, *Seduction of Culture*; Rudolph Hermann, *Kulturkritik und konservative Revolution: Zum kulturell-politischen Denken Hofmannsthal's und seinem problemgeschichtlichen Kontext* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1971); Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961); George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1966). Oswald Spengler’s positive views on technology constitute a counter-example, cf. Dina Gusejnova, ‘Concepts of Culture and Technology in Germany, 1916-1933: Ernst Cassirer and Oswald Spengler’, *Journal of European Studies* 36 (2006), 12.

<sup>48</sup> Colin Loader, *Alfred Weber and the Crisis of Culture, 1890-1933* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 64-70.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, passim.

<sup>50</sup> Quoted in Joachim Radkau, *Max Weber: A Biography* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 28.

and bureaucracy could be found on the right of the Weimar Republic's political spectrum.

One of them was Carl Schmitt, who was horrified by the alleged dominance of 'economic-technical thinking' and 'instrumental rationality' in the present.<sup>51</sup> In 1933, Schmitt celebrated the National Socialist *Machtergreifung* as the triumph of a new order over the bureaucracy.<sup>52</sup> Schmitt differentiated between the liberal state of the nineteenth century, in which civil servants had held dominant positions, and the new political system introduced in Germany. The liberal state, Schmitt reasoned, was based on two separate spheres: the state on the one hand, and society made up of individuals on the other. Basic rights enshrined in constitutions guaranteed the freedom and rights of individuals. However, the rise of 'strong collective associations or organisations' rendered this liberal model anachronistic.<sup>53</sup> By taking advantage of rights designed to protect individuals, such overpowering associations dominated both the state and their individual members.<sup>54</sup> In such pluralist societies a strong total state was called for.<sup>55</sup> In contradistinction to Weber, Schmitt thought that political life was not subject to a necessary course that could not be changed.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Quoted in John P. McCormick, *Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism: Against Politics as Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 42.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Richard Wolin, 'Carl Schmitt: The Conservative Revolutionary Habitus and the Aesthetics of Horror', *Political Theory* 20 (1992), 425.

<sup>53</sup> Carl Schmitt, 'Staat, Bewegung, Volk', *Der deutsche Staat der Gegenwart I* (1933), 24: 'starke kollektive Verbände oder Organisationen'.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, 33.

<sup>56</sup> This difference between Weber and Schmitt is observed by Duncan Kelly, *The State of the Political: Conceptions of Politics and the State in the Thought of Max Weber, Carl Schmitt, and Franz Neumann* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 213 and Catherine Colliot-Thélène, 'Carl Schmitt versus Max Weber: Juridical Rationality and Economic Rationality', in Chantal Mouffe (ed.), *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt* (London: Verso, 1999), 145.

Sombart decried the predominance of the economic realm over culture and morality, which he attributed to the influence of ‘the Jewish spirit’.<sup>57</sup> He hoped that the increasing rationalization of modern life, which he saw as a direct consequence of capitalism and Judaism, could be reversed.<sup>58</sup> Speaking at the Association for Social Policy’s conference in Zurich in September 1928, he paraphrased Genesis 3:19 to say: ‘In the sweat of thy face shalt thou work like Americans, rationalist, profitably, and turn into practice the economic principle that thus far could only be found in the textbooks of national economics.’<sup>59</sup> Although he still paid lip service to the principle of value freedom, Sombart nevertheless told his colleagues how ‘humanity could be liberated from the curse of economic rationalism’.<sup>60</sup> Convinced that capitalism was the outgrowth of a certain spirit, he argued that overcoming the ‘overvaluation of the material’ was crucial, combined with tackling the problem of overpopulation and Germany’s enslavement.<sup>61</sup> By contrast, Alfred Weber’s anxiety about the cultural crisis of the present was markedly moderate. Like his brother, he saw bureaucracy and rationality as something that ultimately was crucial for modern existence and that could therefore not be removed.<sup>62</sup> In his cultural sociology, he described social processes as ‘inherent’, ‘predetermined’, and ‘necessary’.<sup>63</sup> Unlike Sombart, he did not see National Socialism as a force that could overcome the bureaucratic predicament of modernity.

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<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 136-7.

<sup>58</sup> For Sombart’s critique of rationalization, cf. *ibid.*, *passim*.

<sup>59</sup> Werner Sombart, ‘Die Wandlungen des Kapitalismus’, *Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv* 28 (1928), 254: “‘Im Schweiß deines Angesichts sollst du amerikanisch wirtschaften, rationalistisch, rentabel, sollst du das ökonomische Prinzip, das bisher nur in den Lehrbüchern der Nationalökonomie zu finden war, in die Praxis übertragen!’”.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, 255: ‘die Menschheit vom Fluche des ökonomischen Rationalismus befreit werden könnte’.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*: ‘Überwertung der materiellen Dinge’.

<sup>62</sup> Loader, *Alfred Weber*, 68.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, 122.

Nonetheless, Alfred Weber was fascinated by Benito Mussolini, whom he met in Rome in November 1932. During the same visit, Alfred claimed that liberalism was perishing in Europe.<sup>64</sup>

The sociologist Hans Freyer similarly decried the predominance of capitalism, technology, and science over culture. Modern societies, Freyer feared, faced the prospect of meaninglessness.<sup>65</sup> However, Freyer did not share Weber's resignation in the face of modernity. He argued that the 'prospect of a dawning age devoid of meaning was not an inexorable consequence of the development of technology'.<sup>66</sup> If capitalism was overcome, the predicament of modernity could be rectified.<sup>67</sup> In *Soziologie als Wirklichkeitswissenschaft* (1930), a general treatise on sociology, Freyer emphasized the possibility for change in the future. This earned him a laudable review by Herbert Marcuse, who praised Freyer for his orientation towards the future and towards what was possible.<sup>68</sup> Thinking that rationalization was not an inescapable facet of modernization, Freyer supported National Socialism, which he hoped could open up an alternative path to modernity. In this he was not alone. Arnold Gehlen – like Freyer a member of the Leipzig School – made similar points in an essay on 'Idealism and the Present' published in 1935. Quoting Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* on idealism and perception, Gehlen argued: 'it is precisely not the realistic way of perception [Erfahrungsrichtung] that remains attached to the given that leads to the

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<sup>64</sup> Eberhard Demm, *Von der Weimarer Republik zur Bundesrepublik: Der politische Weg Alfred Webers, 1920-1958* (Dusseldorf: Droste, 1999), 189.

<sup>65</sup> Jerry Z. Muller, 'Carl Schmitt, Hans Freyer and the Radical Conservative Critique of Liberal Democracy in the Weimar Republic', *History of Political Thought* 12 (1991), 702-3.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 705.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Rüdiger Graf, *Die Zukunft der Weimarer Republik: Krisen und Zukunftsaneignungen in Deutschland, 1918-1933* (Munich: De Gruyter, 2008), 355.

most profound perception'.<sup>69</sup> Instead, science had to be based on an idealist conviction that sought to 'change the "given", namely to "merge" an idea ... with reality (as Fichte said)'.<sup>70</sup>

### 3. Necessity and Contingency in Post-War German Social Thought.

West German theorists seeking to make sense of the nature of modern industrial society after the Second World War could thus draw on a long-standing intellectual tradition.<sup>71</sup> During the war, James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution* (1941) added another high-profile publication that spurred anglophone interest in the issue of bureaucratization.<sup>72</sup> Burnham's book was also closely studied by German theorists. The experience of the reality of National Socialism and war changed the terms of the debate as well. In the case of many scholars, it effected a change of heart and move away from advocating radical change on the basis of conceptions that saw society as contingent. Helmut Schelsky, one of the founding fathers of the sociological discipline after the Second World War and another member of the Leipzig School, recalled how the experiences of the war had cured him of his youthful interest in 'abstract philosophical, particularly idealist thought', for instance that of Fichte and

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<sup>69</sup> Arnold Gehlen, 'Der Idealismus und die Gegenwart', *Gesamtausgabe Vol 2: Philosophische Schriften II* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1980), 357: 'gerade nicht die realistische Erfahrungsrichtung, die sich an das Gegebene klammert, führt zu tiefster Erkenntnis'.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid*: 'das "Gegebene" zu verändern, nämlich eine Idee ... in die Wirklichkeit zu "verflößen" (wie Fichte sagte)'.

<sup>71</sup> On this point, cf. Waseem Yaqoob, 'The Archimedean Point: Science and Technology in the Thought of Hannah Arendt, 1951-1963', *Journal of European Studies* 44 (2014).

<sup>72</sup> James Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution: What is Happening in the World* (New York: John Day, 1941).

Schelling.<sup>73</sup> The same applied to Freyer, who changed his views on the philosophy of history radically after the war. As Jerry Muller shows, the experience of National Socialism effected a fundamental change of heart in Freyer. During the 1950s, Freyer adamantly insisted on the inevitability of ‘industrial society’, the source of alienation that he had sought to overcome during Weimar. Freyer now opposed any ‘chiliasm [that] served to delegitimize the present through its promise of salvation within history’.<sup>74</sup>

Consisting mostly of sociologists and historians, through the work of Schelsky and Gehlen the Leipzig School exercised great influence on the methodological outlook of the social sciences in West Germany in the immediate post-war period. With Schelsky and Carl Jantke, two members of the Leipzig School worked at the Academy for Common Economics in Hamburg, where Dahrendorf took up his first professorial appointment on 1 May 1958. Schelsky developed his methodological ideas in dialogue with and opposition to the Frankfurt School. In his *Ortsbestimmung der deutschen Soziologie*, Schelsky discussed Theodor Adorno’s critique of empirical sociology at length.<sup>75</sup> In this book, Schelsky recommended that sociology should be understood as a science of ‘reality control’ as it was practiced by Gehlen or König:

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<sup>73</sup> Helmut Schelsky, ‘Einleitung’, in *Auf der Suche nach Wirklichkeit: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Düsseldorf: Diederichs, 1965), 8.: ‘abstrakte philosophische, insbesondere das idealistische Denken’.

<sup>74</sup> Jerry Z. Muller, *The Other God that Failed: Hans Freyer and the Deradicalization of German Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 346.

<sup>75</sup> Schelsky, *Ortsbestimmung der deutschen Soziologie*, 58-66. Cf. below for a discussion of the Frankfurt School’s contribution to the debate.

The most significant function of sociological analysis for social action today is no longer pointing out what is to be done and what is to be decided, but rather to make visible that which is happening anyway and cannot be changed. At this point, the most essential task of scientific examination of reality may well be a function against the planning and manipulation mandate for modern Man, against the philosophy of ‘feasibility’ of people and issues. This means that the limits rather than the goals of social action are the legitimate object of contemporary sociology.<sup>76</sup>

Gehlen was similarly opposed to political schemes that ignored reality. Like Freyer and Schelsky, Gehlen abandoned his earlier celebration of idealist fervour to overcome modern society for a conservative appraisal of the status quo. As Karl-Siegbert Rehberg relates, the two scholars closely studied American pragmatism at the American Library in Karlsruhe in 1947. Indeed, Gehlen dismissed the anti-empirical tendencies of German philosophers by saying that ‘as far as German philosophy is concerned, Socrates was devoured by Plato, and Hobbes, Hume, W. James, and Dewey lived in vain’.<sup>77</sup> Seeking to turn sociology into an ‘administrative auxiliary science’, Gehlen praised American sociology for its realistic outlook.<sup>78</sup> Along the lines of his

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<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, 125-6: ‘Die wichtigste Leistung der soziologischen Analyse für das soziale Handeln liegt heute gar nicht mehr in der Angabe dessen, was zu tun und wie zu entscheiden ist, sondern viel mehr darin, sichtbar zu machen, was sowieso geschieht und was gar nicht zu ändern ist. Die wesentlichste Aufgabe der wissenschaftlichen Kontrolle der Wirklichkeit könnte im gegenwärtigen Zeitpunkt also gerade eine Funktion *gegen* die Planungs- und Manipulierungsmacht des modernen Menschen, *gegen* die universal gewordene Anschauung von der “Machbarkeit” der Menschen und Dinge sein. Dann sind nicht die Ziele, sondern die Grenzen des sozialen Handelns der legitime Gegenstand der gegenwärtigen Soziologie.’

<sup>77</sup> Quoted in Karl-Siegbert Rehberg, ‘Vom soziologischen Neugründungs-Pragmatismus zur “Anti-Soziologie”’, Gallus (ed.), *Helmut Schelsky*, 19: ‘Für die deutsche Philosophie ist Sokrates von Plato verschlungen worden, haben Hobbes und Hume, W. James und Dewey vergebens gelebt’.

<sup>78</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 21: ‘administrative Hilfswissenschaft’.

teacher Gehlen, Schelsky interpreted Hobbes as a predecessor of pragmatism.<sup>79</sup> Gehlen's call for reality culminated in *Moral und Hypermoral*, published in 1969 as a critique of alleged utopian humanitarian politics that were based on ethics of conviction. In this book, Gehlen warned against losing a sense of reality, stating that 'those who strive for the "realization" of an idea are likely to perceive real practical constraints as immoral, as an unevenness of reality that must be grinded off by the guillotine'.<sup>80</sup>

Anti-idealism was central to Schelsky's political thought. For him, idealists were guilty of ignoring the 'practical necessities' that reality imposed on politics. Schelsky's work was an attempt to highlight precisely which practical necessities existed so that public life could be administered on their basis. Specifically, Schelsky sought to break up the idealist monopoly at German universities. In 1963, in *Einsamkeit und Freiheit*, Schelsky suggested that the traditional Humboldtian university was at odds with the new social realities of post-war industrial society.<sup>81</sup> Schelsky's book vigorously rejected idealism and the ideas of Humboldt, Fichte, Schelling, and Schleiermacher on university education. Schelsky noted that for idealists, universities functioned as institutions of withdrawal from society and were geared at the moral purification and self-realization of the individual.<sup>82</sup> Schelling,

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<sup>79</sup> Helmut Schelsky, *Thomas Hobbes: Eine politische Lehre* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1981). This book was based on Schelsky's Habilitation thesis of 1939. For a discussion cf. Carl-Göran Heidegren, 'Helmut Schelsky's "German" Hobbes Interpretation', *Social Thought & Research* 22 (1999).

<sup>80</sup> Arnold Gehlen, *Moral und Hypermoral: Eine pluralistische Ethik* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum Verlag, 1973 [1969], 70: 'Wer die "Realisierung" einer Idee anstrebt, wird leicht die realen Widerstände als unmoralisch empfinden, als Unebenheit der Wirklichkeit, die man mit der Guillotine abschleifen muß.'

<sup>81</sup> Helmut Schelsky, *Einsamkeit und Freiheit: Idee und Gestalt der deutschen Universität und ihrer Reformen* (Düsseldorf: Bertelsmann Universitätsverlag, 1971 [1963]).

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, 55-6.

Fichte, and Humboldt assumed that this was the best way of creating servants of the state. Schelling wanted future statesmen to familiarize themselves with ideas since ‘only ideas make action vigorous and provide it with moral significance’.<sup>83</sup> In the works of Fichte, Hegel, Steffens, Schleiermacher, and Humboldt, Schelsky detected a conception of the state as a ‘cultural state’, realizing ‘ideas’ and ‘ideals’, removed and freed from the needs of and ‘particular interests’ present in society.<sup>84</sup> Schelsky cautioned that this conception of the state could lead to utopian ideas on university reform.<sup>85</sup> Most importantly, Schelsky argued that idealism was a spectrum of ideas closely connected to a particular context of a social upper class.<sup>86</sup> Those who called for new universities to be founded according to the idealist ideals of the nineteenth century ignored the importance of this social context. Institutional foundations based on certain ideas only made sense if those ideas were aligned with the social reality of their present society.<sup>87</sup> Ignoring such sociological elements, idealists were wrong to insist that their ideas were timeless rather than historical.<sup>88</sup> As society had further evolved since the nineteenth century, universities also had to evolve.

This critique of idealism was underpinned by the assumption that expert-led administrative forms of politics were a given part of modernity that could not be ignored.<sup>89</sup> According to Schelsky, industrial society depended on administrative experts who were conscious of the constraints imposed on politics by ‘reality’. For this reason, he envisioned sociology as a science that would instruct and supply

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<sup>83</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 59: ‘nur Ideen geben dem Handeln Nachdruck und sittliche Bedeutung’.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, 102-15.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, 106.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, 89.

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*, 53-4.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*, 64.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*, 209.

administrators for ‘social policy and social planning’.<sup>90</sup> In an outline of his thoughts on the ‘new university’ dating from 17 August 1965, Schelsky maintained that the rise of bureaucracy and its dependence on scientific research for administrative purposes necessitated much closer collaboration between science and politics.<sup>91</sup> In turn, Schelsky again criticized the ‘idealist’ defenders of Humboldt’s university for ignoring such practical necessities when they argued that universities should be constituted according to a timeless ‘idea’.<sup>92</sup> Any institution needed to be founded upon an idea which was congruent with social reality. If this was no longer the case, institutions would wither away. Ideas that were unaligned with reality in turn led to utopianism and moralistic preaching.<sup>93</sup>

Schelsky attempted to put these ideas into practice as the principle figure in the foundation of the University of Bielefeld. In early 1965, the education secretary of North-Rhine Westphalia Paul Mikat (CDU) appointed Schelsky to conceptualize a new university for the North East of the federal state.<sup>94</sup> Schelsky intended Bielefeld as a realist university which would function as an institution for academics who were intent on creating awareness of practical constraints on collective human agency.<sup>95</sup> After the university started operating in 1969, Schelsky heavily invested in an intellectual engagement with Habermas’ writings. In January 1970, the new university’s Center

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<sup>90</sup> Schelsky, *Ortsbestimmung der deutschen Soziologie*, 20: ‘Sozialpolitik und Gesellschaftsplanung’.

<sup>91</sup> University and State Library, University of Münster, Helmut Schelsky Papers, 17/17.010, Schelsky Dokument X (17.VIII.65): Grundzüge einer neuen Universität (2. Fassung).

<sup>92</sup> Schelsky, *Ortsbestimmung der deutschen Soziologie*, 64.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, 53-4.

<sup>94</sup> Alfons Söllner, ‘Mehr Universität wagen! Helmut Schelsky und die Hochschulpolitik der 1960er Jahre’, in Alexander Gallus (ed.), *Helmut Schelsky: Der politische Anti-Soziologe: Eine Neurezeption* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2013), 109.

<sup>95</sup> Clemens Albrecht, ‘Gefundene Wirklichkeit: Helmut Schelsky und die geistige Physiognomie politischer Konversion’, in Sonja Asal und Stephan Schlak, *Was war Bielefeld? Eine ideengeschichtliche Nachfrage* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2009).

for Interdisciplinary Research hosted a seminar on Habermas.<sup>96</sup> For Schelsky, one of the attendants of the seminar, intellectual engagement with Habermas culminated in a hundred-page long unpublished manuscript that, by quoting the Austrian writer Heimito von Doderer, portrayed Habermas' social thought as the product of an intellectual living 'in a "second reality" which is supposed to enable [Man] to live in the extension of that which he has made up'.<sup>97</sup> According to Schelsky, Habermas epitomized the reluctance of intellectuals to recognize unchangeable practical necessities. At the University of Bielefeld, many scholars shared Schelsky's outlook. Based at Bielefeld, the sociologist Niklas Luhmann continued a new thread of debate with Habermas, who criticized his systems theory as a 'social technology'.<sup>98</sup> Besides Luhmann, perhaps one of the most famous academics who Schelsky managed to attract to Bielefeld was the intellectual historian Reinhart Koselleck. As Willibald Steinmetz shows, Koselleck's theoretical writings always emphasized the tremendous extent to which human action was constrained by external necessities.<sup>99</sup> Koselleck's first book *Critique and Crisis* focused on the rise of utopian philosophies of history during the Enlightenment, portraying it as the root of the crisis of a modernity characterized by misery and conflict. During the Enlightenment, Koselleck argued, mankind had started to dangerously overestimate the degree to which destiny could be controlled:

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<sup>96</sup> University and State Library, University of Münster, Helmut Schelsky Papers, 16/16.001-16.009, Habermas-Kolloquium Rheda Jan. 1970.

<sup>97</sup> University and State Library, University of Münster, Helmut Schelsky Papers, 16/16.012, Helmut Schelsky, *Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Habermas* (Erste Fassung: August 1971), 74: 'in eine "zweite Wirklichkeit", die ihm ermöglichen soll, in der Verlängerung dessen zu leben, was er sich ausgedacht hat.'

<sup>98</sup> Jürgen Habermas and Niklas Luhmann, *Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie: Was leistet die Systemforschung?* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971).

<sup>99</sup> Willibald Steinmetz, 'Nachruf auf Reinhart Koselleck', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 32 (2006), 421.

During the course of the unfolding of Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum* as the personal guarantee of Man fallen from religious bonds, eschatology turns into utopia. Planning history becomes as important as gaining control over nature. The technologized state contributes to the misconception that history can be planned...<sup>100</sup>

In Koselleck's analysis, this impulse was important to explain the rise of ethics of conviction in modern history. Finally, he stressed that utopian philosophies of history could only have developed within the safety that absolutism provided.<sup>101</sup> Consequently, Koselleck's views on Hobbes were very similar to Schelsky, accordingly praising the prominent seventeenth-century theorist of absolutism for deriving ought from is.<sup>102</sup> In contrast to Schelsky, however, Koselleck had a decidedly negative view of bureaucracy. In his *Habilitation* thesis on Prussia, written under the aegis of Werner Conze, Koselleck identified bureaucratic administrators like Karl August von Hardenberg as the social group who overestimated the degree to which social reality could be politically changed.<sup>103</sup> Their optimistic view on what was politically feasible prompted a political approach to reform that generated a social movement that eventually grew out of control.<sup>104</sup>

With this methodological programme, Schelsky became a leading member of the field of sociology in post-war West Germany. It was at a meeting in Hamburg

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<sup>100</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise: Ein Beitrag zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt* (Freiburg: K. Alber, 1959), 8: 'Im Zuge der Entfaltung des *Cogito ergo sum* des Descartes als der Selbstgarantie des aus der religiösen Bindung herausgefallenen Menschen schlägt die Eschatologie in die Utopie um. Die Geschichte zu planen wird genauso wichtig wie die Natur in den Griff zu bekommen. Daß die Geschichte planbar sei, diesem Mißverständnis leistet der technizistische Staat Vorschub...'

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, 38.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, 31.

<sup>103</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *Preußen zwischen Reform und Revolution* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1967).

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, 14.

which he organized in 1955 that Dahrendorf met many others of his generation of sociologists for the first time, most importantly Heinrich Popitz (who became a close ally, as well as godfather of his daughter Nicola nine years later) and Jürgen Habermas.<sup>105</sup> Others in attendance were René König, Carl Jantke, Hellmuth Plessner, Karl Martin Bolte, Heinz Kluth, Dietrich Goldschmidt, Christian von Ferber, and Hans Paul Bahrtdt, making the gathering an assembly of many prominent members of the discipline.<sup>106</sup> In a journal review that did not attempt to conceal its methodological preferences, Dahrendorf contrasted the Twelfth German Sociological Conference in Heidelberg in 1954 with the Hamburg seminar of the following year.<sup>107</sup> Dahrendorf pointed out that, whereas the Conference was dominated by sociologists inclined towards philosophical speculation and system-building, Schelsky's seminar assembled sociologists with 'a more modest orientation towards the empirically given'.<sup>108</sup> Discussing Gehlen and Schelsky's new sociology textbook, Dahrendorf described the new approach to sociology as 'perhaps less spectacular, but at the same time more useful' than the work of their methodological adversaries.<sup>109</sup>

Industrial sociology was the topic that most attracted the attention of both Schelsky and the younger scholars assembled in Hamburg. For Schelsky, it was clear that 'changes in the ways of production' had been by far the most important driving

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<sup>105</sup> Archives of the Social Sciences, University of Constance, Heinrich Popitz Papers, 14.3.4, Ralf Dahrendorf an Heinrich Popitz, 03 May 1964.

<sup>106</sup> Stephan Moebius, 'Schulen, Akteure und regionale Zentren in der frühen Geschichte der bundesrepublikanischen Soziologie', in Stephan Moebius and Andrea Ploder (eds.), *Handbuch Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Soziologie* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2018), 272.

<sup>107</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Soziologie in Deutschland', *Annales Universitatis Saraviensis* 4 (1955), 99.

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*, 103: 'der bescheidenere Ansatz am empirisch Gegebenen'.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*, 103: 'vielleicht weniger spektakulär, doch zugleich sinnvoller'.

force in modern history.<sup>110</sup> During the same year, a group of young researchers started to meet regularly at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt. With Dahrendorf, Popitz, Bahrtdt, Habermas, Ludwig von Friedeburg, Ernst August Jüres, and Hanno Kesting, the group formed a politically curious mix. Von Friedeburg was a junior researcher at the Institute in Frankfurt (where Habermas joined him a year later), while Popitz had written his doctorate on Marx's early writings on alienation.<sup>111</sup> Several of the most prominent members of this group worked at the Social Research Institute in Dortmund. It was here that Popitz, Bahrtdt, Jüres, and Kesting published a path-breaking study in industrial sociology on workers' conceptions of society.<sup>112</sup> With figures like Gunther Ipsen, a student of Freyer and a member of the Leipzig School, the Institute had a reputation as a conservative institution. Kesting in turn was a close friend of Koselleck, whom he had met at Alfred Weber's seminar while studying in Heidelberg.<sup>113</sup> Sharing Koselleck's conservative instinct and intellectual affinity to Schmitt, Kesting's doctorate on *Utopia and Eschatology* (1952) and his *Philosophy of History and Global Civil War* (1959) closely resembled the argument of *Critique and Crisis*. Indeed, by moving to the Institute in Dortmund, Kesting made a career move that Koselleck had also considered: In the summer of 1955, Koselleck was close to taking up an offer by Popitz to join him at the Institute.<sup>114</sup> In December 1953, Popitz

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<sup>110</sup> Helmut Schelsky, 'Industrie- und Betriebssoziologie', in Arnold Gehlen and Helmut Schelsky (eds.), *Soziologie: Ein Lehr- und Handbuch zur modernen Gesellschaftskunde* (Dusseldorf/Cologne: Eugen Diederichs, 1955), 159: 'Veränderung der Produktionsweisen'.

<sup>111</sup> Heinrich Popitz, *Der entfremdete Mensch: Zeitkritik und Geschichtsphilosophie des jungen Marx* (Basel: Verlag für Recht und Gesellschaft, 1953).

<sup>112</sup> Heinrich Popitz, Hans Paul Bahrtdt, Ernst August Jüres, and Hanno Kesting, *Das Gesellschaftsbild des Arbeiters: Soziologische Untersuchungen in der Hüttenindustrie* (Tübingen: Mohr Paul Siebeck), 1957.

<sup>113</sup> Niklas Olsen, *History in the Plural: An Introduction to the Work of Reinhart Koselleck* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 24.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*, 116.

had already approached him about the possibility of coming to Dortmund.<sup>115</sup> Although he was very interested, Koselleck in the end opted for an assistant position in history at Johannes Kühn's Chair at the University of Heidelberg.<sup>116</sup> For intellectual historians of the Kesting and Koselleck type, Dortmund constituted an appealing opportunity to closely study the reality of industrial society, and thus to pursue science in a way that eschewed the political utopianism that they sought to contain. In 1962, Kesting moved to Aachen to become Gehlen's assistant.<sup>117</sup>

In the publications of the industrial sociology working group, the issue of structures and contingency in modern industrial society featured prominently. This was even the case for someone like Bahrdt, who argued that bureaucratization was not inescapable. Speaking at the Fourteenth Sociological Conference in May 1959 on the Industrial Sociology Panel that Dahrendorf chaired, Bahrdt argued that industrial bureaucracy was in fact in decline. In industries where technical knowledge was crucial, hierarchies were becoming flatter and the degree to which administrators dominated lower tiers had diminished. For instance, the tendency of the atomic industry to introduce cooperative bodies in which experts shared responsibility for decision-making was not 'the work of otherworldly utopians who seek to abolish the type of domination by bureaucratic hierarchies. The dissolution of this type of domination and its changing into a cooperative system of leadership of a new type is in fact a "technical necessity dictated by the nature of the form of labour"'.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*, 103.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*, 117.

<sup>117</sup> Dirk van Laak, *Gespräche in der Sicherheit des Schweigens: Carl Schmitt in der politischen Geistesgeschichte der frühen Bundesrepublik* (Berlin: Akademie, 1993), 275.

<sup>118</sup> Hans Paul Bahrdt, 'Die Krise der Hierarchie im Wandel der Kooperationsformen', in Alexander Busch (ed.), *Verhandlungen des vierzehnten Deutschen Soziologentages* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1966), 121: 'das Werk von weltfremden Utopisten ist, die lediglich aus freiheitlicher Gesinnung die

Paralleling Schelsky's ambitions, René König had an equally prominent position in the German sociological profession in the post-war period. While the two disagreed profoundly on political questions – most prominently on how to engage with Germany's recent Nazi past – König shared his methodological orientation towards reality. For König, sociology's relevance was rooted in its orientation towards social reality, while the quality of political measures depended on the recognition of the unchangeable character of certain social facts. As the successor of Leopold von Wiese at the University of Cologne, König edited the *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, by far the most important sociological periodical at the time. Moreover, König emphasized his intellectual debt to French positivism and his distance from idealism.<sup>119</sup> For König as for Schelsky, Gehlen, and Dahrendorf, idealists were guilty of categorically refusing to accept social reality, an attitude that led to utopianism. In exile in Zurich between 1937 and 1949, König elaborated on this point in a book on Machiavelli published in 1941, which described the Renaissance as a period of aesthetic utopianism that distracted men from reality by appealing to a mythologized classical world.<sup>120</sup> In the context of a social crisis after the breakdown of the social order of the Middle Ages, Machiavelli had offered a new utopian political ideal, the state:

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Herrschaftsform der bürokratischen Hierarchie abschaffen möchten. Die Auflösung dieser Herrschaftsform und ihre Verwandlung in ein cooperatives Führungssystem neuen Typs ist vielmehr eine "durch die Natur des Arbeitsmittels diktierte technische Notwendigkeit".

<sup>119</sup> René König, 'Vom Wesen der deutschen Universität' [1934], in *René König Schriften, Vol.2* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 2000), 9.

<sup>120</sup> René König, 'Niccolò Machiavelli: Zur Krisenanalyse einer Zeitenwende' [1941], in *René König Schriften, Volume 4* [1941] (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2013), 53.

Machiavelli's work was located within the tension of the disordered everyday world and the long-term goal of a new order. The scale of his thought therefore spanned from acknowledgment of the irredeemably disordered state of the historical-social world of the Renaissance to risking a new order of life in the form of the foundation of the state. Nonetheless he was bound to fail, since the crisis structure of his time did not allow him to realize that society cannot be ordered by utopian schemes, that it dismembers societies even further, and that the state can only be founded if new orders come to life from within real life.<sup>121</sup>

König thus disagreed with the picture of Machiavelli as a 'reason of state realist' drawn by commentators such as Fichte, Leopold von Ranke, Friedrich Meinecke, and Freyer.<sup>122</sup> During the post-war decades, König continued his campaign against the influence of social utopias and social philosophy on sociological practice.<sup>123</sup> König extended his critique of Machiavelli to the Frankfurt School and other intellectuals who refused to accept the changed social conditions of the twentieth century. After 1918, König argued, revolutionary Marxism had 'become an inadequate ideology' caught in a process of 'aesthetic and philosophical dilution'.<sup>124</sup> A new social

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<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*, 16: 'In der Spannung zwischen dem ordnungslosen Alltag und dem Fernziel neuer Ordnung ... bewegt sich das Werk Machiavellis. Die Skala seines Denkens reicht dementsprechend von der Anerkennung des unüberholbar ordnungslosen Zustandes der geschichtlich-gesellschaftlichen Welt in der Renaissance bis zum Wagnis einer Neuordnung des Lebens, der Gründung des Staates. Da allerdings mit der Krisenstruktur seiner Gegenwart ihm die Möglichkeit verschlossen ist einzusehen, daß die Gesellschaft durch utopische Entwürfe nicht nur nicht geordnet, sondern nur noch mehr zerrissen wird, und daß nur dann der Staat gegründet werden kann, wenn innerhalb des faktischen Lebens neue Ordnungen lebendig werden, muß er ins Leere stoßen.'

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*, 245.

<sup>123</sup> Günther Lüschen, 'Einleitung', *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie: Sonderheft 21* (1979), 13.

<sup>124</sup> René König, 'Zur Soziologie der zwanziger Jahre', in *Studien zur Soziologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1971), 19: 'war eine inadäquate Ideologie geworden', 'ästhetischer und philosophischer Verdünnung'.

reality had turned it into an ideology of intellectuals who were unable to accept given facts and were engaged in intellectual projects which lacked any connection to reality. Drawing a contrast between himself and the Frankfurt School, König advocated a version of social science whose ‘increasing knowledge of social reality could “really” change society, and not just in “critical conscience”’.<sup>125</sup>

#### **4. Escalation of Disagreements during the Later 1950s: The Origins of the Positivism Dispute in the German Sociological Association.**

Such arguments in favour of empirical sociology did not go unchallenged in post-war West Germany. Theodor Adorno and Jürgen Habermas were to become their most prominent critics. In 1957, Adorno published a broadside against empirical sociology, arguing that it entailed an inherently conservative tendency to reproduce, and thus positively affirm, given states of society.<sup>126</sup> With this tendency, he stated, empirical social research mirrored the reality of a society which was dominated by administration.<sup>127</sup> For Habermas it was equally clear that modern societies were subject to bureaucratization. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), Habermas charted the effect that bureaucratization had on public discourse and democracy.<sup>128</sup> In a contribution to the *Festschrift* for Wolfgang Abendroth, he observed in 1968:

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<sup>125</sup> René König, ‘Vorwort’, in *Studien zur Soziologie*, 8: ‘wachsenden Erkenntnis der gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeit Gesellschaft auch “wirklich” verändert werde und nicht nur im “kritischen Bewußtsein”’.

<sup>126</sup> Theodor Adorno, ‘Soziologie und empirische Forschung’, in Rolf Thiedemann (ed.), *Theodor Adorno Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. 8* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972 [1957]), 204-5.

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*, 199.

<sup>128</sup> For an exemplary summary of Habermas’ argument, cf. Loader, *Alfred Weber*, 26.

The creation of technologically usable knowledge, the development of technology, the industrial and military use of technologies, and *an encompassing administration of all aspects of society* [my italics], private as well as public, seem to merge into a crisis-proof and sustained expansive system...<sup>129</sup>

It was this process, he thought, that threatened human autonomy. Increasing the scope of free human agency within bureaucratic societies was central to Habermas' intellectual project.<sup>130</sup>

Adorno's critique of empirical sociology in turn sparked objections after its publication in 1957. Schelsky for his part took aim at it in the *Ortsbestimmung* volume, mentioned above. Over the next years, a fierce debate about the merits of empirical sociology ensued, which involved acrimonious disagreements about necessity and contingency in society. As the author of this thesis has shown elsewhere in further detail, it was this disagreement between the Frankfurt School and its allies on the one hand and advocates of empirical sociology on the other that evolved into the debate that subsequently acquired the name of the 'Positivism Dispute'.<sup>131</sup> Organized by Dahrendorf, who had received a Chair in Sociology at the University of Tübingen the previous year, the German Sociological Association assembled for a seminar at

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<sup>129</sup> Jürgen Habermas, 'Praktische Folgen des wissenschaftlich-technischen Fortschritts', in Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie und Praxis* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2014 [1963]), 341: 'Die Erzeugung technisch verwertbaren Wissens, die Entwicklung der Technik, die industrielle und militärische Verwertung der Techniken und eine umfassende Administration aller gesellschaftlichen Bereiche, der privaten wie der öffentlichen, wachsen heute, so erscheint es, zu einem krisenfesten und dauerhaften expansiven System zusammen...'

<sup>130</sup> Cf. the discussion further below.

<sup>131</sup> Strubenhoff, 'Positivism Dispute'.

Tübingen in October 1961. With Karl Popper and Adorno delivering papers on the ‘logic of the social sciences’, this seminar has had a lasting impact on the historiography of the methodological and political debates surrounding the seminar, to the effect that Popper’s role is seen as central and that the reasons why the seminar was organized at all are not problematized.<sup>132</sup>

The seminar at Tübingen picked up where previous exchanges had ended. As Rainer Lepsius notes, this meeting was a follow-up of a seminar that had taken place on 28 and 29 October 1960 at Niederwald Castle.<sup>133</sup> Attended by Adorno, Max Horkheimer, König, Gehlen, Schelsky, Arnold Bergstraesser, Wilhelm Emil Mühlmann, Hans Achinger, Bahrdt, Hellmut Becker, Dahrendorf, and Popitz, this seminar assembled most of West Germany’s leading sociologists of the early 1960s.<sup>134</sup> This meeting was an attempt to overcome, or at least better formulate, the methodological and political disagreements that had divided German sociologists for the larger part of the 1950s, when disagreements had often led to bitter fighting about the thematic focuses of the GSA’s official conferences.

The split between philosophically oriented sociologists and advocates of empirical research had emerged with full force at the Thirteenth German Sociological Conference in 1956 and the Fourteenth German Sociological Conference in 1959. Empirical sociology was gaining ground within the profession, prompting Plessner to describe the 1956 meeting as an empiricist ‘craftsmen’s uprising’.<sup>135</sup> As an advocate

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<sup>132</sup> For a discussion of this literature cf. *ibid.*, 262.

<sup>133</sup> Rainer Lepsius, ‘The Development of Sociology in Germany after World War Two’, *International Journal of Sociology* 13 (1983), 35.

<sup>134</sup> BAArch, Papers of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, B320/161, Protokoll der Vorstandssitzung der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie am 27. Oktober 1960.

<sup>135</sup> Quoted in Helmut Schelsky, *Ortsbestimmung der deutschen Soziologie*, 29: ‘Aufstand der Handwerker’.

of a philosophically inclined understanding of sociology, Plessner increasingly worried about the future of German sociology. Towards the end of his two-year term as Chairman of the GSA, Plessner pleaded with Bergstraesser to run as his successor in order to ensure that sociology guided by ‘purely pragmatic and contemporary interests’ would not completely replace ‘historical and theoretical contemplation’.<sup>136</sup> Plessner feared that due to a surge in younger empirically minded members, it was not unlikely that König or Schelsky might manage to secure a majority for the Chairmanship.<sup>137</sup> Bergstraesser however declined to put his name forward, suggesting that Plessner should run for a second term.<sup>138</sup> Duly re-elected, Plessner organized the Fourteenth German Sociological Conference in 1959. In line with the methodological arguments of the previous years, the conference was far from uncontroversial. After the release of the programme in April 1959, Schelsky caused a major scandal by revoking his attendance and the paper he was scheduled to give at the conference.

Most scholars have argued that Schelsky’s cancellation was a reaction to the GSA’s opposition to a conference in Nuremberg in 1958, which he had helped to organize.<sup>139</sup> At the time, König above all had campaigned against the conference

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<sup>136</sup> BArch, Papers of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, B320/40, Hellmuth Plessner an Arnold Bergstraesser, 29.4.1957: ‘rein pragmatischer und aktueller Interessen’, ‘geschichtliche und theoretische Besinnung’.

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> BArch, Papers of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, B320/40, Arnold Bergstraesser an Hellmuth Plessner, 7.5.1957.

<sup>139</sup> Uta Gerhardt, ‘Remigranten auf dem Heidelberger Soziologentag 1964’, in Claus-Dieter Krohn and Axel Schildt (eds.), *Zwischen den Stühlen? Remigranten und Remigration in der deutschen Medienöffentlichkeit der Nachkriegszeit* (Hamburg: Christians, 2002), 218; Stefan Müller-Doohm, *Adorno: Eine Biographie* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011), 643; Jürgen Ritsert, ‘Der Positivismusstreit’ in Georg Kneer and Stephan Moebius (eds.) *Soziologische Kontroversen: Beiträge zu einer anderen Geschichte der Wissenschaft vom Sozialen* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 102; Johannes Weyer, ‘Der “Bürgerkrieg in der Soziologie”’, in Sven Papcke (ed.), *Ordnung und Theorie: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Soziologie in Deutschland* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1986), 301-2; Lepsius, ‘The Development of Sociology’, 35.

because of the involvement of several academics with Fascist and National Socialist pasts, most prominently Corrado Gini from Italy.<sup>140</sup> Thus, at the time the battle lines of German sociology were not only drawn between advocates of empirical sociology and critical theorists, but also between conservatives like Schelsky and liberals like König, as emphasized by Dahms.<sup>141</sup> However, in terms of their methodological orientation, both were markedly similar. While it is true that Schelsky and König's opinions diverged on whether to engage with unrepentant former Nazis and Fascists, we should not underestimate their shared resentment of what they considered methodologically misguided conceptions of sociology. In 1959, König and Schelsky made common front against the Fourteenth German Sociological Conference for methodological reasons unconnected to the Nuremberg conference. Schelsky accused Plessner of changing the programme against the will of the rest of the Steering Committee, of deliberately assigning unfavourable timeslots to König's and his papers, and of giving the Conference a generally philosophical character.<sup>142</sup> In his next letter, Schelsky added that the conference had acquired the character of a 'Frankfurt Sociological Conference in Berlin'.<sup>143</sup> König also wrote to Plessner to complain about the 'philosophical' character of the conference, stating that it was at odds with what the Steering Committee had agreed upon.<sup>144</sup> Twelve days later, König told Plessner

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<sup>140</sup> Stephan Moebius, *René König und die 'Kölner Schule': Eine soziologiegeschichtliche Annäherung* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2015), 25.

<sup>141</sup> Hans-Joachim Dahms, *Positivismusstreit: Die Auseinandersetzungen der Frankfurter Schule mit dem logischen Positivismus, dem amerikanischen Pragmatismus und dem kritischen Rationalismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), 308-9.

<sup>142</sup> BArch, Papers of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, B320/40, Helmut Schelsky an Hellmuth Plessner, 02.04.1959.

<sup>143</sup> BArch, Papers of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, B320/40, Helmut Schelsky an Hellmuth Plessner, 13.04.1959: 'Frankfurter Soziologentag in Berlin'.

<sup>144</sup> BArch, Papers of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, B320/40, René König an Hellmuth Plessner, 10.04.1959.

that as a sociologist he did not feel qualified to attend a philosophical conference, and that he would follow Schelsky in not attending since the latter was the only other sociologist among the speakers.<sup>145</sup> Indeed, Schelsky himself remarked at the time that there was no correlation whatsoever between the viewpoints of individual sociologists on the two divisive issues of contemporary sociology: the methodological divide within the profession and the question of how to deal with former associates of the Nazi regime.<sup>146</sup>

Unlike Schelsky, König did in the end attend the conference, which may explain why their shared methodological agenda has not been noticed as an antecedent of the Positivism Dispute. The seminars in Niederwald and Tübingen in October 1960 and in October 1961 were attempts to overcome the bitter conflict between empirically minded sociologists and advocates of philosophically oriented versions of sociology. At Niederwald, the GSA attempted to inaugurate a genuinely methodological discussion and to put an end to the personal element to the disagreements. In the GSA Steering Committee's meeting immediately before Niederwald, Dahrendorf urged that organizational questions connected with the IIS, the international body behind the Nuremberg conference, should not distract from the discussion of methodological and political questions at the seminar.<sup>147</sup> Dahrendorf wanted to avoid theoretical issues of importance to be crowded out by discussions that had already caused a lot of distraction during the preceding year. For the seminar, Otto Stammer, who had succeeded Plessner

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<sup>145</sup> BArch, Papers of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, B320/40, René König an Hellmuth Plessner, 22.04.1959.

<sup>146</sup> Schelsky, *Ortsbestimmung der deutschen Soziologie*, 41.

<sup>147</sup> BArch, Papers of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, B320/161, Protokoll der Vorstandssitzung der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie am Donnerstag, dem 27. Oktober 1960 in Frankfurt a. Main im Institut für Sozialforschung.

as Chair in 1959, proposed recent publications on sociological method by Schelsky, Adorno, and König as topics of discussion.<sup>148</sup> A few months later, Stammer added Wilhelm Mühlmann's 'Sociology in Germany: Shift in Alignment' to the reading list for the seminar.<sup>149</sup>

A year later, at the GSA's member's meeting that was convened in Tübingen on the same weekend as the seminar, Otto Stammer told the audience that he took it as the main task of his Chairmanship to 'soften' the political and methodological divide within the Association. In this vein, Stammer stated that Niederwald had been a successful first effort, and that Tübingen would be the next step.<sup>150</sup> Dahms relates that at the Tübingen seminar, the 'positivist' side might have been represented by a paper by Schelsky or König instead of the one given by Popper. Dahrendorf for his part decided to invite Popper because he feared that neither Schelsky nor König would be able to build up a strong opposition against Adorno.<sup>151</sup> In the preparatory sessions of the GSA, Dahrendorf suggested Popper in October 1960 because he felt that it was necessary to invite someone from the outside, as new arguments were not to be

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<sup>148</sup> Otto Stammer an René König, 5.5.1960, in René König, 'Briefwechsel', in *René König Schriften, Vol. 20* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2014), 330-2. The publications to be discussed were Schelsky, *Ortsbestimmung der deutschen Soziologie*; Adorno, 'Soziologie und empirische Forschung'; René König, 'On Some Recent Developments in the Relation Between Theory and Research', in vol.2, *Transactions of the Fourth World Congress of Sociology* (London: International Sociological Association, 1959).

<sup>149</sup> BArch, Papers of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, BArch B320/161, Otto Stammer an Hans Achinger, Theodor Adorno, Hans-Paul Bahrdt, Arnold Bergstraesser, Ralf Dahrendorf, Arnold Gehlen, Max Horkheimer, Carl Jantke, René König, Wilhelm Mühlmann, Helmuth Plessner, Heinrich Popitz, Helmut Schelsky, 11. Oktober 1960.

<sup>150</sup> BArch, Papers of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, B320/6, Protokoll der Mitgliederversammlung der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie am 20. Oktober 1961 in Tübingen. Zeit: 20.30-23.20h.

<sup>151</sup> Dahms, *Positivismusstreit*, 324.

expected if speakers were drawn from the German sociological profession.<sup>152</sup> When Popper came to Tübingen, expectations were therefore high for new impulses. These expectations were disappointed. In his memoirs, Albert retrospectively observed that it would indeed have been more fruitful to have Schelsky or König present, given that Popper's paper lacked reference to the 'contemporary German constellation'.<sup>153</sup> In his summary of the discussion at the seminar for the *Positivismusstreit* volume, Dahrendorf also remembered the profound sense of disappointment among the seminar audience.<sup>154</sup> In fact, at the time Dahrendorf was so disappointed by the seminar himself that he advised Stammer that there was no point in transcribing the recording of the discussion, a task which had initially been assigned to his office.<sup>155</sup>

## **6. Popper, the Frankfurt School, and the Issue of Value Freedom.**

During the Positivism Dispute, members of the Frankfurt School repeatedly attacked the idea that social processes and facts needed to be accepted as 'given'. Popper's statements at the beginning of the first article of the series 'Poverty of Historicism' from 1944/1945 seem to suggest that he did indeed subscribe to the tenets that members of the Frankfurt School were attacking. Here, Popper advocated

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<sup>152</sup> BArch, Papers of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, B320/161, Protokoll der Vorstandssitzung der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie am Donnerstag, dem 27. Oktober 1960 in Frankfurt a. Main im Institut für Sozialforschung.

<sup>153</sup> Hans Albert, *In Kontroversen verstrickt: Vom Kulturpessimismus zum kritischen Rationalismus* (Berlin: Lit. Verlag, 2007), 98: 'damaligen deutschen Konstellation'.

<sup>154</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Anmerkungen zur Diskussion der Referate von Karl R. Popper und Theodor W. Adorno', in Heinz Maus and Friedrich Fürstenberg (eds.), *Der Positivismusstreit in der deutschen Soziologie* (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1970), 152.

<sup>155</sup> BArch, Papers of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, B320/161, Otto Stammer an Die Mitglieder des alten Vorstandes, 23 November 1961.

a methodology which aims at a *technological social science*. Such a methodology would lead to the study of the general laws of social life with the aim of finding all those facts which would be indispensable as a basis for the work of everyone seeking to reform social institutions. There is no doubt that such facts exist. We know many Utopian systems, for instance, which are impracticable simply because they do not consider such facts sufficiently. The technological methodology we are considering would aim at furnishing means of avoiding such unrealistic constructions.<sup>156</sup>

Popper's critique of historicism posited that society was subject to certain laws that were invariable across time and space, in analogy with the laws observed by natural scientists. Historicists, Popper maintained, denied the existence of such laws. Thus, Popper seemed to agree with the German empirical sociologists on whose behalf he was expected to speak at the Tübingen seminar. Both Popper and they worried about political schemes that disregarded 'given' strictures. However, a closer look reveals significant differences between Popper and the German sociologists. Popper believed in the existence of universal social laws such as that 'You cannot introduce agricultural laws and at the same time reduce the cost of living', or that 'You cannot introduce a political reform without strengthening the opposing forces, to a degree roughly increasing with the significance of the reform'.<sup>157</sup> At the same time, Popper attacked historicists for insisting instead that discrete historical periods were subject to their own social facts and laws, or that human history was subject to any 'inexorable'

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<sup>156</sup> Karl Popper, 'The Poverty of Historicism, I', *Economica* 11 (1944), 100.

<sup>157</sup> Karl Popper, 'The Poverty of Historicism, II', *Economica* 11 (1944), 121.

historical laws of development.<sup>158</sup> In the third and last article on historicism, Popper insisted that

The hope ... that we may some day find the 'laws of motion of society,' just as Newton found the laws of motion of physical bodies, is nothing but the result of these misunderstandings. Since there is no motion of society in any sense similar or analogous to the motion of physical bodies, there can be no such laws.<sup>159</sup>

In *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Popper had also attacked Hegel for his 'ethical and juridical positivism, the doctrine that what is, is good, since there can be no standards but existing standards'.<sup>160</sup> Here, Popper made the exact point that Habermas, Marcuse, and Adorno were later making against positivist sociologists in their debates before and after the Tübingen seminar in October 1961. In 1970, Popper observed in his passionate critique of the *Positivismusstreit* volume that:

the main issue of the book has become Adorno's and Habermas' accusation that a 'positivist' like Popper is bound by his methodology to defend the political *status quo*. It is an accusation which I myself raised in my Open Society against Hegel, whose identity philosophy (what is real is reasonable) I described as a 'moral and legal positivism'.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Karl Popper, 'The Poverty of Historicism, III', *Economica* 12 (1945), 73.

<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*, 72.

<sup>160</sup> Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies: Volume II: The High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx, and the Aftermath* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966 [1945]), 41.

<sup>161</sup> Karl Popper, 'Reason or Revolution', *European Journal of Sociology* 11 (1970), 255.

Habermas also picked up on this convergence of arguments, although he sought to defend Hegel, stating that he had never meant to espouse the ‘metaphysical positivism’ imputed to him by Popper.<sup>162</sup> The passage quoted from Popper’s third ‘Poverty of Historicism’ article seems to contradict his earlier call for a ‘technological social science’ only at first glance. For Popper, there was an important difference between universal laws and arguments about social facts and laws that only applied to certain periods. While Popper’s dismissal of utopian policies that disregarded universal laws sounded familiar to his German hosts, his political theory emphasized the extent and possibility of rational human choice, in turn dismissing determinist arguments. Significantly, the assumption that strictures arise from universal laws rather than necessary historical developments implied a much smaller set of constraints. Only social phenomena present in every single society in human history qualified as laws, meaning that the absence in just one particular society would render a law falsified. On the other hand, ‘historicists’ could interpret a higher number of social phenomena as necessary, even if they were only present at a particular point in time or space. In effect, this created a line of division between Popper, the anti-determinist, and the German empirical sociologists, whose arguments about unchangeable social facts were primarily of the latter category. Dahrendorf’s political theory revolved around a sharp analytical distinction between capitalist and post-capitalist society, attempting to replace older versions of liberalism that had been rendered anachronistic by new social forces.<sup>163</sup> Gehlen’s view on the ‘practical necessities’ that administrations were faced

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<sup>162</sup> Jürgen Habermas, ‘Gegen einen positivistisch halbierten Rationalismus’, *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 16 (1964), 652: ‘metaphysische Positivismus’.

<sup>163</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972 [1959]), 241-318.

with was that they were conditioned by the circumstances of present ‘industrial society’, which he thought constituted a break with the past of the first order.<sup>164</sup> Schelsky also insisted that ‘industrial society’ was essentially different from earlier periods, rendering earlier political theories anachronistic. A point central to Schelsky’s political thought was that political systems were inevitably bound to be transformed by the practical necessities that industrial society imposed on politics; administrators would gradually take over more and more decision-making from politicians. For him, it was clear that the concept of democracy would lose its traditional meaning.<sup>165</sup> König for his part submitted that there were no universal laws across time and space. Referencing Durkheim, he insisted that the concept of ‘law’ can only be applied to ‘particular social types at a particular moment of their development.’<sup>166</sup> Not unsurprisingly, Popper was perplexed to find himself associated with what he called ‘historicism’ during the Positivism Dispute.

Neither Popper nor subsequent commentators on the Positivism Dispute realized that the Frankfurt School primarily engaged with the arguments of German empirical sociologists rather than Popper’s diverging arguments. The issue of practical necessities caused by ‘given’ social facts was nonetheless at the core of the dispute. In 1937, Max Horkheimer had already criticized positivism for solely engaging with the ‘given’ in his seminal essay on the Vienna Circle.<sup>167</sup> Herbert Marcuse’s *Reason and*

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<sup>164</sup> Arnold Gehlen, ‘Die gesellschaftliche Situation in unserer Zeit’, in Karl-Siegbert Rehberg (ed.), Vol. 6, *Arnold Gehlen Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2004), 434-8.

<sup>165</sup> Helmut Schelsky, ‘Der Mensch in der wissenschaftlichen Zivilisation’, in *Auf der Suche nach der Wirklichkeit*, 453.

<sup>166</sup> René König, ‘Geschichts- und Sozialphilosophie’, in René König (ed.), *Das Fischer Lexikon Soziologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1959 [1958]), 96: ‘besonderen sozialen Typs in einem bestimmten Moment seiner Entwicklung’.

<sup>167</sup> Simone Chambers, ‘The Politics of Critical Theory’, in Fred Rush (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 220.

*Revolution* of 1941 also sought to highlight the conservative implications of the ‘positivist’ focus on the ‘given’.<sup>168</sup> Adorno made a similar point in his introduction to the *Positivismusstreit* volume published in 1969, where he argued that ‘since Pareto, positivist skepticism has been arranging itself with existing power, including that of Mussolini’.<sup>169</sup> In line with other members of the Frankfurt School, Adorno insisted that certain forms of domination and coercion were not ‘given’:

In no way can the possibility that social coercion is an animalistic-biological heritage be invoked in favour of sacrosanct theory; the inexorable spell of the animal realm reproduces itself in the brutal domination of society that still carries a natural-historical character. However, from this one cannot apologetically deduce the unchangeable character of coercion.<sup>170</sup>

By attributing necessity to contingent phenomena, positivism artificially reproduced contingent reality, he concluded.<sup>171</sup>

During the 1960s, Habermas assumed a central position in this debate. His exchanges with Albert on the relative merits of critical theory and critical rationalism have already been studied. However, it still remains to be shown just why Habermas was so preoccupied with positivism in the first place. This chapter suggests that an

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<sup>168</sup> Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 133.

<sup>169</sup> Adorno, ‘Einleitung’, in Maus and Fürstenberg (eds.), *Der Positivismusstreit in der deutschen Soziologie*, 39: ‘Seit Pareto arrangiert sich positivistische Skepsis mit je bestehender Macht, auch der Mussolinis’.

<sup>170</sup> *ibid.*, 76: ‘Zugunsten der sakrosankten Theorie ist keineswegs die Möglichkeit zu exorzieren, daß der soziale Zwang tierisch-biologisches Erbe sei; der ausweglose Bann der Tierwelt reproduziert sich in der brutalen Herrschaft stets noch naturgeschichtlicher Gesellschaft. Daraus jedoch ist nicht die Unabänderlichkeit von Zwang apologetisch zu folgern.’

<sup>171</sup> *ibid.*

analysis of the debate about unchangeable ‘givens’ in society must be part of the answer. Habermas worried about the political implications of the arguments of ‘positivist’ sociologists.<sup>172</sup> During the 1960s, Habermas repeatedly insisted that society was not determined by socio-economic facts, but rather that collectively, humans could consciously shape their society and political system. In *Erkenntnis und Interesse*, Habermas thus argued that:

For the individual, the institutional frame of the established society constitutes an unchangeable reality. Desires that are incompatible with this reality are unrealizable and therefore retain the character of wishful phantasies, transformed into symptoms by resistance and forced onto the track of substitute satisfaction. For the whole species the boundaries of reality are by contrast very well changeable.<sup>173</sup>

As Habermas later remembered, Gehlen’s anthropological writings on institutions had been at the center of his mind when he was writing this passage.<sup>174</sup>

Dahms, Müller-Doohm, and Keuth all treat Habermas’ contribution to the Adorno *Festschrift* in 1963 as his first major intervention in the Positivism Dispute.<sup>175</sup>

It is true that this paper inaugurated a new phase of the debate by prompting Popper’s

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<sup>172</sup> Matthew Specter, *Habermas: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 95-101.

<sup>173</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Erkenntnis und Interesse* (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 2008 [1968]), 329: ‘Für den Einzelnen ist der institutionelle Rahmen der etablierten Gesellschaft eine unverrückbare Realität. Wünsche, die mit dieser Realität unverträglich sind, sind unrealisierbar und behalten daher, durch die Abwehr in Symptome verwandelt und auf das Gleis der Ersatzbefriedigung gedrängt, den Charakter von Wunschphantasien. Aber für die Gattung im Ganzen sind die Grenzen der Realität sehr wohl verrückbar.’

<sup>174</sup> Jürgen Habermas, ‘Nach dreißig Jahren’, in Habermas, *Erkenntnis und Interesse*, 359.

<sup>175</sup> Stefan Müller-Doohm, *Jürgen Habermas: Eine Biographie* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2014), 155; Dahms, *Positivismusstreit*, 376; Keuth, *Wissenschaft und Werturteil*.

disciple Albert to write a reply in the *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, which Habermas in turn countered with a new contribution to the same journal.<sup>176</sup> However, Habermas had already engaged with critical rationalism and ‘positivist’ sociology in his *Habilitationsprobevorlesung* in Marburg in December 1961 and a paper given in January 1962 in Berlin, thus shortly after the seminar in Tübingen. In his Marburg lecture, published in *Theorie und Praxis*, Habermas offered an interpretation of the shift that differentiated modern from classical political thought. Inaugurated by Machiavelli and Thomas More and completed by Hobbes, Habermas depicted modern political thought as breaking with the intimate connection between politics and ethics that had characterized classical political theory since Aristotle. Whereas classical political thought had included the ambition to change human conduct by appealing to virtue, modern political thought since Hobbes interpreted human conduct as natural and unchangeable.<sup>177</sup> Since for Hobbes, political goals necessarily arose from human nature, politics was reduced to value-rational technical decisions on how best to obtain those goals.

In another section of *Theorie und Praxis*, Habermas expanded on which political goals ‘positivists’ took as given, a point that the Marburg lecture had left more implicit. According to Habermas, despite its neutralist pretensions, positivism implied a society in which the value system was supplied by technology running its course.<sup>178</sup> Habermas worried that technocracy had the potential to determine and change value

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<sup>176</sup> Hans Albert, ‘Der Mythos der totalen Vernunft: Dialektische Ansprüche im Lichte undialektischer Kritik’, *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 16 (1964); Habermas, ‘Gegen einen positivistisch halbierten Rationalismus.’

<sup>177</sup> Jürgen Habermas, ‘Die klassische Lehre von der Politik in ihrem Verhältnis zur Sozialphilosophie’, in *Theorie und Praxis* (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1969 [1963]), 34.

<sup>178</sup> Jürgen Habermas, ‘Dogmatismus, Vernunft und Entscheidung’, in *Theorie und Praxis*, 246.

systems.<sup>179</sup> Positivists such as Hobbes and Carl Schmitt posited ‘basic values’ such as survival, reducing social science to the question of ‘how decision-making systems - individuals or groups, certain institutions or whole societies – need to be organized in order to satisfy the basic value of survival and to avoid risks in given situations’.<sup>180</sup> Habermas added that Horst Rittel had already laid out the unmistakable consequences of technocratic rationalization, namely that ‘that which can be willed ... depended on that which can be realized’.<sup>181</sup> For this reason, Habermas advocated critical theory as an intellectual endeavour which saw its task as reflecting on the desirability of the social and political goals that positivism regarded as ‘given’. In this way, it was Habermas’ opposition to arguments about ‘necessity’ that drove him to reject value freedom in the social sciences. Keuth’s insistence that the Positivism Dispute was about the question of value freedom, value judgments, and ‘ethical knowledge’ is therefore correct in itself. However, by ignoring the larger undercurrent debate about necessity and contingency in history and society that preoccupied German sociologists during the 1950s and 1960s, Keuth’s analysis fails to point out why the issue of value freedom was of such importance to Habermas and other contributors. Indeed, Keuth surmises that Habermas rejected value freedom because the question did not arise for him, since as a dialectician he thought that ‘that which will be the case equals ought’.<sup>182</sup> This is to miss the point, and indeed to attribute to Habermas the opposite position of the one he assumed in the methodological debate on necessity and contingency.

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<sup>179</sup> *ibid.*, 247-9.

<sup>180</sup> *ibid.*, 249: ‘wie die Entscheidung fällenden Systeme – Einzelne oder Gruppen, bestimmte Einrichtungen oder ganze Gesellschaften – organisiert sein müssen, um in gegebener Lage den Basiswert des Überlebens zu genügen und Risiken zu vermeiden’.

<sup>181</sup> *ibid.*, 250: ‘Das, was gewollt werden kann ... hängt davon ab, was ermöglicht werden kann’.

<sup>182</sup> Keuth, *Wissenschaft und Werturteil*, 98: ‘ist ja das, was sein wird, zugleich das, was sein soll’.

Habermas was so preoccupied with the question of value freedom precisely because he worried about the implications of the ‘positivist’ position of construing certain social phenomena as necessary, and of certain values as arising necessarily. It was precisely because Habermas insisted that is does not equal ought that he criticized the stipulation of value freedom.

Significantly, in his Marburg lecture Habermas explicitly extended his critique of modern political thought to critical rationalism, arguing that it had abandoned the decidedly normative orientation of classical political theory.<sup>183</sup> According to Habermas, Popper stood in the same modern political tradition as Max Weber and Carl Schmitt, since his ‘decisionist’ methodology took norms as given instead of subjecting them to philosophical scrutiny as the classical political theorists had done.<sup>184</sup> By extending this critique to Popper, Habermas associated him with the empirical sociologists whose methodological opposition to the Frankfurt School had triggered the Positivist Dispute in the first place. In a paper on ‘Critical and Conservative Tasks of Sociology’, given in Berlin in January 1962, Habermas offered an analysis of sociology’s inherently conservative character by looking at the history of sociology from the Scottish Enlightenment to Schelsky. Rejecting Dahrendorf’s and Schelsky’s understandings of the tasks of sociology as akin to Weber’s value freedom, Habermas pointed out that since the Scottish moral philosophers, liberal and conservative sociologists had interpreted history as natural history in the sense that they conceptualized social processes and the historical development of society as necessary. Thus, sociologists were apologists of states of society which they thought

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<sup>183</sup> Habermas, ‘Die klassische Lehre’, 16.

<sup>184</sup> *ibid.*, 17-18.

were prescribed by the natural history of society, making their work inherently conservative by deriving ought from is.<sup>185</sup> In his critique of positivist sociology, Habermas' position was in fact not too dissimilar from Popper, who denied that there were any laws of historical development, rejecting 'the metaphysical doctrine of determinism [which] simply asserts that all events in this world are fixed, or unalterable, or predetermined'.<sup>186</sup> Against the German empirical sociologists of his day, Habermas insisted that human society was not subject to increasingly rigid practical necessities. In fact, Habermas asserted that the 'feasibility of things *and* social relations' was increasing.<sup>187</sup> This conviction also seems to have played a role in Habermas' growing interest in the philosophy of language. Habermas insisted that since language was one of the constitutive elements that shaped society and social relations, 'social facts have a different status from natural phenomena' and could therefore not be investigated with methodologies borrowed from the natural sciences.<sup>188</sup> Behaviour governed by contingent phenomena such as language, he insisted, cannot have the same logical status as natural laws.<sup>189</sup>

For Habermas, as for other members of the Frankfurt School, it was clear that Weber was an important link in the chain of modern positivist theory. Disagreements about Weber among German sociologists came to the forefront at the German Sociological Conference of 1964, which focused on Weber to commemorate his birth

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<sup>185</sup> Jürgen Habermas, 'Kritische und konservative Aufgaben der Soziologie', in *Theorie und Praxis*, 217-19.

<sup>186</sup> Karl Popper, *The Open Universe: An Argument for Indeterminism* (London: Hutchinson, 1982), 7-8.

<sup>187</sup> Habermas, 'Kritische und konservative Aufgaben', 228: 'Machbarkeit der Dinge und der gesellschaftlichen Beziehungen'.

<sup>188</sup> Jürgen Habermas, 'Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften', *Philosophische Rundschau Beiheft 5* (1967), 133: 'haben die sozialen Tatsachen einen anderen Status als Naturereignisse'.

<sup>189</sup> *ibid.*, 134.

in 1864. A vigorous contemporary debate on the merits and problems of Weber's political theory had already been sparked in 1959 by Wolfgang Mommsen's *Max Weber and German Politics*. Mommsen's book sketched Weber's involvement in German politics in order to highlight the political consequences of Weber's methodological commitments, arguing that Weber's method and politics were inseparable.<sup>190</sup> Mommsen laid out the political consequences of Weber's assumption that international competition between states was an inexorable phenomenon that statesmen had to accept as a given. For Weber, refusal to do so was a sign of utopianism and lack of ethics of responsibility. According to Mommsen's interpretation, Weber conceptualized the role of statesmen as making value-rational policy choices which furthered the fortunes of the nation-state within the inexorable competition between states.

Both Weber's post-war followers and detractors vigorously seized upon what they saw as either his cynicism or realism. Mommsen's book was discussed by a panel at the Weber Centenary, a conference that transformed contemporary discourse on positivism. With Talcott Parsons, Raymond Aron, Marcuse, Horkheimer, von Wiese, Mommsen, Carl Friedrich, Karl Deutsch, and Bendix as key speakers, the conference assembled leading sociologists and Weber scholars not just from West Germany but the whole Western world. Habermas' frequently quoted intervention that Carl Schmitt was a 'legitimate descendant' of Weber was exemplary for the passionate debates at the conference, although Bahrtdt noted that Habermas softened his critique over a beer

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<sup>190</sup> Wolfgang Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984 [1959]), 419.

in the evening to say that Schmitt, if anything, was ‘a “natural” son’ of Weber.<sup>191</sup> Marcuse’s paper at the conference criticized Weber in a vein similar to Mommsen, and was also widely perceived as a critique of contemporary ‘positivist’ sociology. Marcuse took issue with Weber’s positing of a particular historically contingent trajectory of modernization as ‘necessary Reason.’<sup>192</sup> Marcuse noted that for Weber, industrialization was ““destiny” [which] lies in the impersonal laws of economy and society, independent of individuals, which can only be defied under pain of self-dissolution. But society is not nature – who decrees this destiny?”<sup>193</sup> Again, the debate circled around the question of necessity and contingency.

In the postscript of the second edition published in 1974, Mommsen discussed the debate on Weber at and in the wake of the Centenary Conference in 1964, expressing his annoyance about critics of his book who were ‘close to neopositivist social science’.<sup>194</sup> Accordingly, Mommsen defended the interpretations of Marcuse and Habermas while criticizing ‘positivist’ and critical rationalist authors such as Albert, Gerhard Hufnagel, Ernst Topitsch, and Wolfgang Schluchter. In fact, Mommsen accused the ‘positivists’ of taking the argument much further than Weber had ever done, in effect backtracking somewhat from his critique of Weber in the book itself:

In no case ... can the criterion of ‘realizability’ proposed by Albert and Schluchter bridge the distance between responsible decisions, which

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<sup>191</sup> BAArch, H.P. Bahrdt, Papers of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, B320/9, E. Bubser, H.P. Dreitzel, K. Thomas, *Rückblick auf einen Kongress*: ‘ein “natürlicher” Sohn’.

<sup>192</sup> Herbert Marcuse, ‘Industrialization and Capitalism’, *New Left Review* 30 (1965), 3.

<sup>193</sup> *ibid.*, 11.

<sup>194</sup> Mommsen, *Max Weber*, 427.

involve the rational control of the goals and ultimate values guiding them by scientific means, and decisions arrived at on the basis of ultimate value convictions. Certainly, politics is bound to be successful; but Weber fought nothing so much as the maxim that political goals should be adjusted toward what is currently realizable. Grand politics is precisely the opposite of adjustment to the given circumstances. It aims beyond the ordinary. Only then can the crust of political structures be pierced and new ground broken.<sup>195</sup>

## **7. Conclusion.**

This chapter has sought to provide a broad genealogical overview of a German tradition of thinking about modernization and its integral (or not) components and a closer examination of the debates within the German sociological profession from the early 1950s onwards that stood within this tradition. From Max Weber onwards, many German social theorists treated modernization as a process that involved traits that could be unpleasant – most prominently bureaucratization – that nonetheless had to be accepted as inexorable. While National Socialism for a period provided hope for some of those seeking to break out of the iron cage of serfdom, after the Second World War the argument that administrative forms of politics would become more dominant in modern industrial societies became much more widely accepted. Indeed, the administrative work of experts now became celebrated by figures like Schelsky and Gehlen, with sociology treated as a discipline that could contribute to the education of future administrators. It was these arguments that sparked violent

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<sup>195</sup> *ibid.*, 443.

disagreement on the part of the Frankfurt School, and it was the debate that unfolded from the mid-1950s onwards that led to the convocation of the now-famous seminar held at the University of Tübingen in October 1961 that subsequently acquired the name of the ‘Positivism Dispute’.

As the main organizer of the Tübingen seminar, Dahrendorf stood at the centre of these debates. Its concerns were at the heart of his writings, which invariably came down on the side of emphasizing structures and necessity. Writing about American sociology in *Die angewandte Aufklärung*, he asserted:

Many American sociologists are animated by the idea that the social scientist is capable of changing reality. While almost all European sociologists, despite all of their distancing from the conception of a predetermined historical process, conceive of the change of social structures as a process that one can study but not create, American behavioral scientists conceive of history as feasible.<sup>196</sup>

As we shall see in the following chapters, this urge to change and control history – through scientific manipulation or other means — was not something that Dahrendorf approved of.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Dahrendorf, *Die angewandte Aufklärung*, (Frankfurt am Main/Hamburg: Fischer, 1968 [1963]), 183: ‘Die Vorstellung, daß der Sozialwissenschaftler selbst in die Wirklichkeit verändernd einzugreifen vermag, beflügelt viele amerikanische Soziologen. Während europäische Soziologen bei aller Distanzierung von der Vorstellung eines determinierten Ganges der Geschichte doch fast durchweg den Wandel sozialer Strukturen als einen Prozeß hinnehmen, den man als Wissenschaftler zwar studieren, aber nicht machen kann, erscheint den amerikanischen Verhaltensforschern auch die Geschichte noch als machbar.’

<sup>197</sup> For Dahrendorf’s critique in this specific instance, cf. *ibid.*, 186.

## Chapter II: Dahrendorf's Materialism

'I do not believe that you have come to grips with the extremely important idea of 'objective interests', and indeed of lines of action prescribed for men by the conditions in which they live and act. I may not have been terribly clear about this subject, but the idea that such prescriptions of the binding character of natural forces exist in social life is central to the type of sociological analysis which I have tried to offer, in a variety of publications.'<sup>1</sup> (Ralf Dahrendorf to C.G.

Bryant, 17 September 1973.)

### 1. Introduction.

Ralf Dahrendorf was born in Hamburg on 1 May 1929, growing up as the precocious son of a prominent politician.<sup>2</sup> From 1932 until 1933, Gustav Dahrendorf served as a member of the Reichstag for the SPD. Gustav was a successful businessman in the co-operative industry and remained a leading member of the social democratic milieu even after the party was banned by the National Socialists on 22 June 1933. Involved in the conspiracy of the 20 July 1944 assassination attempt on Adolf Hitler's life, he was earmarked as the provisional Mayor of Hamburg under the new government that was to take over after Hitler's death.<sup>3</sup> Gustav spent the rest of the Nazi era in several prisons and concentration camps in and around Berlin.<sup>4</sup> In December 1944, Ralf was also arrested by the Gestapo, and spent two months in a prisoners' camp near Frankfurt on Oder.<sup>5</sup> After the end of the Nazi regime, Gustav was a leading figure in the SPD in Berlin and,

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<sup>1</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/921, Ralf Dahrendorf to C.G. Bryant, 17 September 1973.

<sup>2</sup> Earlier versions of parts of this chapter have been published in Strubenhoff, 'Materialist Method, Agonistic Liberalism'.

<sup>3</sup> Walther Oschilewski, *Gustav Dahrendorf: Ein Kämpferleben* (Berlin: Grunewald, 1955), 17.

<sup>4</sup> Meifort, *Ralf Dahrendorf*, 31.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 31-5.

despite initial sympathies, voted against the merger with the KPD that led to the establishment of the SED.<sup>6</sup> Fearing reprisal after Gustav was summoned to come to the Soviet headquarters, Ralf and Gustav were flown out of Berlin by British troops, and Hamburg again became the family's home.<sup>7</sup> While these events were taking place, Ralf was obsessed with intellectual matters. For the year 1945, he drafted a to do list with items such as 'politics!!', 'study Nietzsche and especially Schopenhauer. In general, continue the study of the history of philosophy', and 'Gedanken über Kant: "Von der allmählichen Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden"'.<sup>8</sup> What was this sixteen-year old up to?

As shown in the Introduction, there is a consensus in the secondary literature on Dahrendorf that depicts his version of liberalism as heavily indebted to the liberal theorists Popper, Berlin, Aron, and, in Hacking's case, Hayek as well. Similar to these figures, Dahrendorf is seen as a critic of Marx.<sup>9</sup> This chapter seeks to challenge these views. In order to do so, it examines Dahrendorf's political leanings and intellectual endeavours during his socialist phase from the mid-1940s until the mid- to late 1950s. Secondly, it shows how a materialist reading of history and society continued to inform his social and political theory in later years, transcending the changes in his political outlook that took place after he started calling himself a radical liberal in 1957 and 1958. Thirdly, it contrasts Dahrendorf's materialism with the methodological outlooks of Popper, Berlin, Hayek, and other liberals he has been associated with in order to highlight the central role his materialist method played in his distinct version of liberalism.

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<sup>6</sup> Oschilewski, *Gustav Dahrendorf*, 25-6.

<sup>7</sup> Meifort, *Ralf Dahrendorf*, 40-1.

<sup>8</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/866, Facenda [small notebook]: 'Politik!!', 'Nietzsche und insbesondere Schopenhauer studieren! Überhaupt das Durcharbeiten der Philosophiegesch. fortsetzen'.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Chapter I.

## 2. A Materialist Reading of Marx.

On Easter 1950, Dahrendorf wrote a letter to an English friend in which he agonized about the state of German politics, complaining in particular about German liberal economists who argued that unemployment was necessary. The letter concluded:

What is really alarming, is the political situation. The audaciousness of the Nazis – to found even a party called RSDAP (Right Socialist German Workers' Party). And history proves that it is not possible to defend against these blinded by means of what Adenauer would call a 'Rechtsstaat'. There is no help: radical means are necessary, even on [sic!] the expense of a democracy in the traditional sense.<sup>10</sup>

While Dahrendorf did not elaborate on what radical means he was thinking of, he did have a firm view on what needed to be done in order to advance the cause. Attempting to dissuade his friend from becoming a journalist he wrote: 'Oh, Adrian, how has Germany corrupted you all! Do you really think it is the right way to make politics via culture? Hang all that journalism on the nail and become either an adventurer or an economist or sociologist.'<sup>11</sup>

Little of Dahrendorf's correspondence from these early years has survived. The papers of Gustav Dahrendorf are also incomplete, with private correspondence only running up to 1947. Piecing together a picture of Dahrendorf's political sympathies in his early years is therefore a challenge.

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<sup>10</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/920, Ralf Dahrendorf to Adrian, Easter Sunday 1950.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

However, Dahrendorf did relate in 1965 that when he travelled back to Berlin in late January 1945 on a freight train, he was unwilling to believe tales about crimes committed by Soviet soldiers that he heard from refugees travelling in the same direction. Too much, he said, did he associate the Soviet Union with those Communists and Social Democrats who had given him parts of their food rations and taught him the songs of the worker movement in the prisoner camp in Frankfurt on Oder. Three months later he did know more, he related, but he still registered as a volunteer with the Soviet occupation forces, distributing food and supplies.<sup>12</sup>

Not only did Dahrendorf call for radical means that would replace traditional democracy and the rule of law in 1950 – his writings from the early 1950s were also characterized by a distinctly materialist interpretation of history and society. In fact, Dahrendorf's first publication in a periodical was a critique of idealist re-interpretations of Marx by Kurt Hiller and Jean-Paul Sartre. Kurt Hiller attempted to show that Marx had initially held idealist views before meeting the “‘born materialist” Engels’.<sup>13</sup> As Dahrendorf pointed out, Sartre's *Materialism and Revolution* made similar remarks about Marx's idealism before his, for Sartre, ‘unfortunate encounter with Engels’.<sup>14</sup> Dahrendorf tried to undermine Hiller's argument by arguing that the early Engels had been as much of an Hegelian idealist as Marx, stating that ‘Engels and Marx proceeded strikingly parallel from pure Hegelianism via the critique of religion of D.F. Strauss and Bruno Bauer to Feuerbach and finally to their own political philosophy’.<sup>15</sup> In particular,

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<sup>12</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/656, ‘Vorwort’ [discarded preface draft for German version of *Society and Democracy in Germany*].

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Friedrich Engels und der Marxsche “Bruch”’, *Geist und Tat: Monatsschrift für Recht, Freiheit und Kultur* 6 (1951), 324: “‘geborenen Materialisten” Engels’.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 323: ‘unglückseligen Begegnung mit Engels’.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, 325: ‘Engels und Marx sind in verblüffender Parallelität ihren Weg vom reinen Hegelianismus über die Religionskritik von D.F. Strauss und Bruno Bauer zu Feuerbach und schließlich zu den Ansätzen ihrer eigenen politischen Philosophie gegangen’.

Dahrendorf took issue with Hiller's critique of Marx's disdain for the concepts of 'fairness', 'freedom', and 'humanity', which Hiller wanted to reappraise even though Marx had rejected them after meeting Engels.<sup>16</sup> In a follow-up article, Dahrendorf stated that he had found it imperative to correct Hiller's misconceptions because socialism had to be built on the basis of Marx's ideas.<sup>17</sup> It was unfortunate for this purpose that Hiller tried to resuscitate an alleged 'ethical activist' who had subsequently been corrupted by Engels.<sup>18</sup>

While writing these two articles, Dahrendorf studied philosophy and classical philology at the University of Hamburg, leaving the university in 1952 with a doctorate on 'The Idea of Justice in the Thought of Karl Marx', supervised by Joseph König. The first sentences of an early draft of the introduction read: "Towards a new Social Philosophy" – this is what Karl Mannheim called one chapter of his book "Diagnosis of our Time". "Towards a new Social Philosophy" – this is also the impulse that has driven and guided me in the present work.<sup>19</sup> In his doctorate, Dahrendorf expanded on his critique of Hiller, arguing that Marx did not have a concept of 'justice'. He pointed out that Marx argued that all concepts of 'justice' were relative since they were determined by relations of production.<sup>20</sup> Marx only had an absolute concept of justice when it came to the communist society at the end of history.<sup>21</sup> Dahrendorf emphatically agreed with the former

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<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, 323.

<sup>17</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Der "Bruch" bei Karl Marx', *Geist und Tat: Monatsschrift für Recht, Freiheit und Kultur* 7 (1952).

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*: "ethischen Aktivisten".

<sup>19</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/497, Verworfenes, Skizze für eine Einleitung, Ralf Dahrendorf 6. XI. 50, Einleitung: "Towards a new Social Philosophy" – so hat Karl Mannheim ein Kapitel seines Buches "Diagnosis of our Time" überschrieben. "Einer neuen Sozialphilosophie entgegen" – das ist auch der Impuls, der mich bei der vorliegenden Arbeit getragen und geleitet hat."

<sup>20</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Marx in Perspektive: Die Idee des Gerechten im Denken von Karl Marx* (Hanover: Dietz, 1952), 54.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 73.

while disagreeing with the latter. At the end of the book, Dahrendorf argued that one of Marx's main merits was that by directing attention to socially determined interests, his method could inform the sociological analysis of ideas.<sup>22</sup>

The same year, Dahrendorf moved to London to pursue a second doctorate in Sociology at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Dahrendorf's decision to attend the LSE was motivated by the fact that his copies of Karl Mannheim's books described him as an LSE professor, apparently unaware that the sociologist had died in 1947.<sup>23</sup> At the LSE, intellectual engagement with Marx, Mannheim, and other materialists continued to dominate Dahrendorf's work. As he recalled in his memoirs, at first he started working on a doctoral thesis on intellectuals in British society, a plan that he buried after a few weeks. At the same time, Dahrendorf realized that his PhD supervisor T.H. Marshall had a very low opinion of Mannheim's work.<sup>24</sup> Dahrendorf wrote his thesis on 'Unskilled Labour in British Industry' instead, a topic that allowed him to engage with the problem that Marx's prediction about the growth of unskilled labour had turned out to be wrong.

At the LSE, Dahrendorf found himself in the midst of a cohort of students and young lecturers who would become famous sociologists and social scientists over the following decades, including David Lockwood, Tom Bottomore, A.H. Halsey, Edward Shils, Asher Tropp, Ernest Gellner, Emanuel de Kadt, and Ronald Dore. Lockwood, Dahrendorf's flatmate during this period, later recalled Dahrendorf's instrumental role in organizing the extracurricular student-run 'Thursday Evening Seminar', where sociological theories were discussed that were

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, 166.

<sup>23</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Über Grenzen: Lebenserinnerungen* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2002), 156-7.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, 157-8.

not taught by LSE lecturers. Dahrendorf, Lockwood remembered, ‘at that time, was very much into Marx ... coming from a strong Marxist/Hegelian sort of background’.<sup>25</sup> With this interest in mind, Dahrendorf helped to set up this seminar which revolved around the opposite poles of the sociological theories of Marx and Talcott Parsons.<sup>26</sup> According to Lockwood, the seminar had a very ‘subversive’ character because it was directed against what, at the time, they had perceived as an old-fashioned sociology curriculum taught at the LSE, where Marx was not really covered while theorists such as Hobhouse and Westermaark received disproportionate attention.<sup>27</sup> Lockwood also remembered that members of the LSE faculty viewed the seminar with extreme suspicion.<sup>28</sup> Notwithstanding faculty disapproval, the seminar turned out very successful. Parsons and Aron attended the seminar to speak to the budding LSE sociologists, while the members of the seminar also hired a bus to travel to Cambridge to hear Parsons deliver the Marshall Lectures on ‘The Integration of Economic and Sociological Theory’ in 1953.<sup>29</sup> In 1958, Lockwood published his first monograph, *The Blackcoated Worker: A Study in Class Consciousness*. When the book arrived in his post in Hamburg after publication, Dahrendorf wrote to Lockwood that he was ‘rather tickled by the subtitle which is exceedingly appropriate’, referring to the theme of class consciousness.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Albert Sloman Library Special Collections, University of Essex, David Lockwood Papers, Folder 1, [typescript of interview], Interviewee: Professor David Lockwood Interviewer: Professor Paul Thompson, 6 February 2002.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* For Parsons’ Marshall Lectures cf. Martin Bulmer, ‘The Development of Sociology and of Empirical Social Research in Britain’, in Martin Bulmer and Philip Abrams (eds.), *Essays on the History of British Sociological Research* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>30</sup> Albert Sloman Library Special Collections, University of Essex, David Lockwood Papers, Box 1, Ralf Dahrendorf to David Lockwood, 26 November 1958.

In parallel to the extracurricular seminar, materialist theorists and ideas also dominated Dahrendorf's regular coursework. In a presentation on Theodor Geiger's book *Klassengesellschaft im Schmelztiegel* given at Jean Floud's seminar on 'Property and Social Class' in April 1953, Dahrendorf apologized for his and Geiger's "Marxian bias", a bias 'of which one may think that it is only too absent here'.<sup>31</sup> By this bias, Dahrendorf meant focusing on the 'domain of German immigrants' like Marx, Engels, Schumpeter, Sternberg, Mannheim, and Drucker: 'the social system as a whole'.<sup>32</sup> 'Geiger's "bias"', Dahrendorf stated, 'will also be the "bias" of this paper – a "bias" to which, as a continental, I feel entitled.'<sup>33</sup> The presentation had two parts. In part one Dahrendorf provided an account of Geiger's argument, before criticizing Geiger's dismissal of Marx's concept of 'objective interest' and 'class society' in the second part.<sup>34</sup> In a manuscript of a presentation dating from October 1953, he stated quite straightforwardly that 'in every society there is one force defending the existing institutions – presumably because in some way or other it profits from them – and another one attacking these institutions – because it is deprived by them'.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, an article Dahrendorf wrote for a German audience on the co-operative movement in May 1953 showed his materialist convictions:

Programmes and ideals do not have a life removed from the realities of social life. They need to be in a certain agreement with given relations if they are to be more than empty words, utopian wishful imaginations

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<sup>31</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/496, Th. Geiger: *Klassengesellschaft im Schmelztiegel*. A critical appreciation, attached to Sociology Department Seminar: 'Property and Social Class'. Room E.82.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/496, *Dialektik als Methode und Dialektik als Metaphysik*. (Entwürfe) Oktober 1953.

and sterile phrases. The capitalist of the nineteenth century, so often denounced, as much as he may be obsessed with his ideal to provide his workers with a humane standard of living – if he forgot to care for his profit he was not far from bankruptcy. The optimistic socialists may on the other hand have dreamed sweetly about the society ‘based on the free development of everyone’ (Marx) – as long as industrial production exists, there will be relations of dominance and subordination, privileges, and deprivations.<sup>36</sup>

A handwritten note shows the topic that Dahrendorf was initially considering for his Habilitation, the second thesis required to qualify to teach at German universities: ‘On the Concept of Materialism (Matter?): (On the Problem of Ideology: Study of the dependence and interrelationship using a case – which one? –) [Habil.?]’.<sup>37</sup>

Aside from being fascinated by Marx and materialism, Dahrendorf read widely in expected directions. Notes compiled on books read in 1951 during his first doctorate included Martin Buber’s *Pfade in Utopia* (1950), Hegel, Left-Hegelians such as Ludwig Feuerbach, Bruno Bauer, and David Friedrich Strauss, and other interlocutors of Marx like Max Stirner and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Originally, Dahrendorf thought that his thesis would be much wider in scope than

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<sup>36</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/496, Ideal und Wirklichkeit, Genossenschaftliches Programm im sozialen Wandel. Mai 1953: ‘Programme und Ideale führen kein Leben abseits der Wirklichkeiten des sozialen Lebens. Sie müssen in einer gewissen Übereinstimmung stehen mit den ihnen zugrundeliegenden Verhältnissen, wenn sie nicht leere Worte, utopische Wunschvorstellungen oder wirkungslose Phrasen werden wollen. Der vielgeschmähte Kapitalist des 19. Jahrhunderts mag noch so sehr besessen gewesen sein von dem Ideal, seinen Arbeitern zu einem menschenwürdigen Lebensstandard zu verhelfen – vergaß er, um seinen Profit zu sorgen, dann war er dem Bankrott nicht fern. Die hoffnungsfrohen frühen Sozialisten andererseits mögen noch so lieblich von der Gesellschaft geträumt haben, “deren Grundprinzip die freie Entwicklung eines jeden” (Marx) ist – so lange industrielle Produktion existiert, gibt es Über- und Unterordnungsverhältnisse, Privilegien und Depravationen.’

<sup>37</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/496, Notizen 1953: ‘Zum Begriff des Materialismus. (Materie?) (Zum Problem der Ideologie. Untersuchung von Abhängigkeit und Wechselbeziehung an Hand eines Einzelbeispiels – welches?-) [Habil.?]’.

it ended up to be. As his notes suggest, he initially envisaged the first chapter of his thesis to be on the ‘concept of justice of the so-called Hegelian Left’.<sup>38</sup> Even though he sympathized with some aspects of their outlook, Dahrendorf was very critical of the Left Hegelian self-styled ‘critique’ of abstraction and universalism, which concentrated on religion as a source of human alienation. Feuerbach, he noted, considered ‘realism’ to be an alienating factor. For Dahrendorf, the consequence of this way of thinking was a ‘vague concept of human justice’, limited to the demand for the ‘right to freedom’.<sup>39</sup> Dahrendorf revisited the Left Hegelians during his brief stint as Max Horkheimer’s research assistant at the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt in July 1954. Frustrated with the Frankfurt School’s disregard of class in social analysis, their more Hegelian than Marxian orientation, and Horkheimer’s autocratic rule at the Institute, Dahrendorf left after only a month, and took up a position at the University of Saarland in November.<sup>40</sup> In December 1953, he had already met the Belgian Marxist sociologist Georges Goriely, who was a professor at the university, to talk about the possibility of taking up a position in Saarbrücken.<sup>41</sup> Dahrendorf’s notes from his time at the Institute in Frankfurt are split in two parts. The very short first half comprises notes relating to assignments including the ‘Function and Reality of Contemporary Universities’.<sup>42</sup> The much larger part of notes taken at the time are on books read at the time: Stirner’s *The Ego and its Own*, Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity* and his *Heidelberger Vorlesungen über das Wesen der Religion*, Strauss’ *Streitschriften*, Ernst

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<sup>38</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/850, Notiz 6. I: ‘Das Prinzip der Gerechtigkeit im Denken der sog. Hegelschen Linken’.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*: ‘vager Begriff menschlicher Gerechtigkeit’, ‘Recht auf Freiheit’.

<sup>40</sup> Dahrendorf, *Über Grenzen*, 173.

<sup>41</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/267, Ralf Dahrendorf an den Dekan der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität des Saarlandes, 15 January 1954.

<sup>42</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/634, Funktion und Wirklichkeit der Universität heute.

Barnikol's *Das entdeckte Christentum im Vormärz* (1927), and Bauer's *Disraelis romantischer und Bismarcks sozialistischer Imperialismus*.

### 3. Dahrendorf's Materialism after his Liberal Turn.

Dahrendorf did not hold on to his radical Marxist views forever. In January 1955, in a preface to a collection of his father's writings, Dahrendorf still lamented the fact that the year 1945 had seen a 'restoration' rather than a 'revolution', and that many of those who had previously had a revolutionary spirit had been 'bribed' by the new comforts and security of the 1950s.<sup>43</sup> At this point, he still thought it necessary to remind the reader that his father had fought for a radical transformation of Germany's economic structure and social values.<sup>44</sup> By the later 1950s, however, Dahrendorf had moved away from political Marxism. Crucial for his transformation was his fellowship at the Center of Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Palo Alto during the academic year of 1957/1958. This year, in his own words, effected a change of heart 'from traditional European [sic!] conservative socialism to radical liberalism'.<sup>45</sup> Dahrendorf's change of outlook during this period was most directly reflected in the very substantial revisions he made in the English edition of *Class and Class Conflict*, published in 1959, two years after the German edition. In the preface to the English translation, Dahrendorf acknowledged that it was almost a 'completely new book'.<sup>46</sup> Both editions dealt

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<sup>43</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Einleitung des Herausgebers', in Gustav Dahrendorf, *Der Mensch das Maß aller Dinge* (Hamburg: Verlagsgesellschaft deutscher Konsumgesellschaften, 1955), 22.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Center for the Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto, California, Administrative Records, Ralf Dahrendorf, 11.12.1958, Memorandum evaluating the 1957-1958 Fellowship Year. Further, cf. Chapter III.

<sup>46</sup> Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict*, xii.

with the question of how structural inequalities of power and authority within ‘associations’ create social conflict. Based on his materialist convictions, Dahrendorf sought to make sense of the nature of power in an increasingly bureaucratic society, thus continuing lines of enquiry followed by previous contributors to this debate that loomed large in German social thought. In terms of emphasis, however, the two editions differed quite significantly. The German edition argued that industry was by far the most important conflict-generating association in terms of scope, its predominant relevance within the lives of workers, and the ‘violent [einschneidende] character of sanctions available for the enforcement of obedience’.<sup>47</sup> Almost every second citizen in developed societies worked in industry, while industrial enterprises were growing into ‘mammoth enterprises’ with at times 100,000 or more employees. Moreover, these workers spent the lion share of their lives inside industrial plants.<sup>48</sup> In industrial society, a ‘double system of power distribution’ existed in which industrial power at times reached dimensions that could almost rival those of political power holders.<sup>49</sup> Two years later, Dahrendorf’s arguments had evolved, to the extent that he made claims diametrically opposed to those of the German edition. Now, Dahrendorf argued that ‘the proportion of the populations of post-capitalist societies occupied in industrial production has not only failed to increase in the last decades but has, on the contrary, decreased.’<sup>50</sup> Quoting Fritz Sternberg’s *Capitalism and Socialism on Trial* (1951), Dahrendorf maintained that Europe after the First World War and the

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<sup>47</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Soziale Klassen und Klassenkonflikt in der Industriellen Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1957), 146: ‘einschneidende Charakter der in ihr zur Erzwingung von Gehorsam verfügbaren Sanktionen’.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, 147: ‘Mammutbetrieben’.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, 77: ‘doppelten Systems der Machtverteilung’.

<sup>50</sup> Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict*, 270.

United States after the Great Depression had seen a ‘halt in capitalist expansion’.<sup>51</sup> In fact, work was increasingly losing its centrality to peoples’ lives.<sup>52</sup> This change of focus had significant implications for the future trajectory of Dahrendorf’s political thought. As Dahrendorf noted in the preface to the English edition, in the two years between the publication of the two editions his interests had redirected from industrial to political questions.<sup>53</sup>

Nevertheless, Dahrendorf’s materialist methodological outlook survived his revisions of Marx and the change of his political outlook. *Class and Class Conflict*, in his own words, was a contribution to ‘an investigation that is indebted to Marx even in its most radical criticisms of his work’.<sup>54</sup> Dahrendorf was adamant that most writers after Marx misinterpreted the meaning of ‘class’ as pertaining to social groups defined by income. This, Dahrendorf pointed out, was not the way in which Marx had used the term. Dahrendorf agreed with Marx that the term ‘class’ should denote groups united by interests determined by their source of income (in Marx’s case, rent, profit, and wage) rather than total amount of income. To make this point, Dahrendorf quoted Marx directly, who said that defining classes as a concept that described stratification was not the right approach: ‘from this point of view, say, doctors and civil servants would also constitute two classes, for they belong to two different social groups whose members’ incomes flow from the same source’.<sup>55</sup> In Dahrendorf’s opinion, the sociological profession was ‘faced with an alternative: either we renounce the discredited term “class” altogether and endeavor to find a less ambiguous set of terms, or we reject radically all definitions which

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<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, 273-4.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, 8.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 10-11.

depart from the original, i.e., Marxian heuristic purpose'.<sup>56</sup> In its depiction of bureaucrats as participants in the exercise of power in industry and its argument that '[b]ureaucratic roles are roles of political dominance', the book advocated retaining the concept of class.<sup>57</sup>

In other ways, too, Dahrendorf held on to central Marxian concepts. The German version dismissed structural functionalist sociology because it could not account for the fact that 'there are elements or forces in social structures that are at the same time their constituent elements [Bestandteile] and contribute to their supersession...'.<sup>58</sup> In the English edition, the book's topic was introduced as 'the puzzling fact that social structures as distinct from most other structures are capable of producing within themselves the elements of their supersession and change'.<sup>59</sup> Short of using the term 'dialectic', Dahrendorf sought to offer a dialectical explanation of social change.

*Class and Class Conflict* also retained Marx's conceptual differentiation between 'class in itself' and 'class for itself', though Dahrendorf adapted the terminology to speak of 'quasi-groups' and 'interest groups' instead.<sup>60</sup> He had already developed this conceptual distinction during his time at the LSE, and mentioned it at the University of Saarland in April 1954, thus at a point in time at which his commitment to socialist politics was still very strong.<sup>61</sup> Dahrendorf also retained Marx's concept of 'objective interests'. With reference to Marx's *The*

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<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, 75.

<sup>57</sup> For bureaucrats as participants of power in industry cf. *ibid.*, 256; for the direct quote, cf. *ibid.*, 297.

<sup>58</sup> Dahrendorf, *Soziale Klassen und Klassenkonflikt*, 127: 'Es ... in sozialen Strukturen Elemente oder Kräfte [gibt], die zugleich deren Bestandteile sind ... und auf ihre Überwindung, ihren Wandel hinwirken'.

<sup>59</sup> Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict*, viii.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, 182-3.

<sup>61</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/496, Gibt es noch Klassen? Die Bedeutung des Klassenbegriffs in der soziologischen Analyse der industriellen Gesellschaft. Vortrag Saarbrücken, 6.4.1954.

*Poverty of Philosophy*, Dahrendorf stated: ‘Marx equates a “common situation” with “common interests” and thereby shows that – as we do here – he bases his theory on a quasi-“objective”, nonpsychological concept of interest.’<sup>62</sup> To be sure, Dahrendorf rejected Marx’s claim that the working class had an objective interest in the realization of socialism.<sup>63</sup> However, separated from what he considered its philosophical parts, Dahrendorf insisted on the validity of the concept. Political conflicts such as structurally generated conflicts between elites and the population still had to be analyzed in these terms. It is from this perspective that Dahrendorf criticized Parsons’ fixation on values and norms as social factors that bind societies together. Interests rather than values and norms were the deciding factor in determining peoples’ political behaviour.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, the concept of objective interests continued to play a central role in Dahrendorf’s political theory. For him, Marx’s concept captured the interest-driven, conflictual nature of society and politics, and was vastly superior to explanations in terms of ideas or psychology.

During the 1960s, Dahrendorf continued to preoccupy himself with the implications of Marx’s work for sociology. Dahrendorf’s attempt to create a new sociology, coupled with a strong interest in political revolutions, was thematically heavily indebted to the nineteenth-century theorist.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, explicit references to Marx – notwithstanding notable exceptions such as his 1964 lecture on ‘Karl Marx and the Theory of Social Change’ at the University of Oxford – were not as predominant as they had been in his writings of the preceding decade.<sup>66</sup> Even

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<sup>62</sup> Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict*, 174.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, 176.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Out of Utopia: Toward a Reorientation of Sociological Analysis’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 64 (1958), as well as Dahrendorf’s thoughts as further discussed in Chapter III of this thesis.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Chapter III.

<sup>66</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Karl Marx und die Theorie des sozialen Wandels’, in Ralf Dahrendorf, *Pfade aus Utopia: Arbeiten zur Theorie und Methode der Soziologie* (Munich: R. Piper, 1967).

so, Dahrendorf's lectures made it evident that his conversion to liberalism did not entail the adoption of the high regard for ideas that was so prevalent among other twentieth-century liberals. In a lecture series on 'Democracy and Social Structure' given at the *Akademie für Gemeinwirtschaft* in Hamburg in the academic year of 1959/1960, Dahrendorf criticized the notion that forms of government were 'feasible', the idea that democracy would be possible in Egypt simply 'if Nasser wanted so'.<sup>67</sup> This was, Dahrendorf asserted, a naïve view that disregarded constraints that particular social structures imposed on politics. Unlike Aron, who recalled in his memoirs that his attraction to Weber was due to the fact that Weber's 'philosophical consciousness' left open the possibility of some degree of human choice, however much constrained by societal reality, Dahrendorf faulted Weber for his emphasis on ideas in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.<sup>68</sup> In a draft of his Habilitation lecture at the University of Saarland in 1957, Dahrendorf used Weber as an example of those sociologists who 'only "see what they want to see"'. In his enquiry into the genesis of industrial capitalism in Europe, Max Weber only sees the influence of Calvinism, but not that of technological innovation, for example'.<sup>69</sup>

Marx again attracted Dahrendorf's close attention in the early 1970s, his interest apparently reinforced during the last two years of his office as European Commissioner (first as Commissioner for Trade in 1970-1972 and as Commissioner for Research, Innovation, and Science in 1972-1974). Dahrendorf's

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<sup>67</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/636, Demokratie und Sozialstruktur: WS 59/60 Akademie für Gemeinwirtschaft: "machbar", 'wenn Nasser will'.

<sup>68</sup> Raymond Aron, *Mémoires* (Paris: Julliard, 1983), 70-1: 'conscience philosophique'.

<sup>69</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/635, Habilitations-Probevortrag vor der Fakultät; Saarbrücken, 19.6.57 [date crossed out]: 'nur "sehen, was sie sehen wollen". Max Weber sieht bei der Untersuchung der Genesis des industriellen Kapitalismus nur den Einfluss des Calvinismus, nicht aber den technischer Erfindungen zum Beispiel'.

preface (written in February 1973) for the new English edition of *Homo Sociologicus* reiterated the connection between his own theoretical work on role theory and Marx's ideas, emphasizing that his concerns were connected to 'complicated questions which have been impressively put by Marx in his "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts" of 1844'.<sup>70</sup> In the same year, he also reemphasized the centrality of the concept of objective interests to his work. As he told the British sociologist C.G. Bryant:

I do not believe that you have come to grips with the extremely important idea of 'objective interests', and indeed of lines of action prescribed for men by the conditions in which they live and act. I may not have been terribly clear about this subject, but the idea that such prescriptions of the binding character of natural forces exist in social life is central to the type of sociological analysis which I have tried to offer, in a variety of publications.<sup>71</sup>

Even though by this time, Dahrendorf was serving on the European Commission on a liberal ticket for the Free Democratic Party, he was still thinking in Marxian terms. When the German sociologist Dirk Kaesler asked him to write an essay on Marx for a compendium in February 1974, Dahrendorf replied that the request came at the right moment since he had in fact spent the past few weeks 'preoccupying myself quite intensively with Marx's works'.<sup>72</sup> In the article, Dahrendorf insisted that his theories were powerful instruments for sociological

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<sup>70</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Homo Sociologicus* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), vii.

<sup>71</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/921, Ralf Dahrendorf to C.G. Bryant, 17 September 1973.

<sup>72</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/53, Ralf Dahrendorf an Dirk Kaesler, 6 February 1974: 'mich durchaus intensiv mit dem Werk von Marx beschäftigt habe'.

analysis, and lamented that most interpretations of Marx were skewed towards his ‘idealist utopianism’ rather than his ‘economic-materialist analysis’.<sup>73</sup> A few weeks after Kaesler’s request, Dahrendorf described his current intellectual interests to another correspondent as follows:

Recently I have begun to take interest in the subject of class and class conflict again and perhaps you are interested to know that I have come to understand some of the underlying social forces of class conflict rather better now than I did 17 years ago when I wrote the class book. It would seem to me now the class analysis has to be placed in the perspective of social changes as they are effected by new potentials of human societies in the advancement of the life chances of man. *You might argue that here I am trying to translate the language of Marx and in particular the dialectic between forces and relations of production into a more applicable scheme for modern sociology* [my italics]. But this still is at an early stage although I hope to be able to pursue this once I have moved to the London School of Economics later this year.<sup>74</sup>

From 13 November 1974 on, shortly after the beginning of his Directorship at the LSE, Dahrendorf delivered the BBC Reith Lectures in London, his first substantial academic work after four years in the European Commission, which was subsequently published as *The New Liberty*. In the book’s preface, Dahrendorf drew attention to the parallel interests of Marx and himself in the future

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<sup>73</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf and Christoph Henning, ‘Karl Marx’, in Dirk Kaesler (ed.), *Klassiker der Soziologie Band I* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2012), 68: ‘idealistische Utopie’, ‘ökonomisch-materialistische Analyse’.

<sup>74</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/53, Ralf Dahrendorf to Jan S. Benson, 27 February 1974.

of society. This question had fascinated him ever since writing his first doctorate on Marx, having subsequently '[devoted] several books to the meaning and the realities of social conflict as a motive force of history'.<sup>75</sup> In his own words, Dahrendorf sought to make sense of the political implications of 'the force of things, things human to be sure but inexorable nevertheless'.<sup>76</sup> As discussed in further detail in Chapter V, *The New Liberty* provided a sketch of Dahrendorf's theory that the political upheavals since the student protests of the late 1960s constituted the latest instance of political conflict generated by productive potentials constrained by the present social structure of society. Present-day politics could no longer deal with these contradictions effectively.

Dahrendorf's interest in Marx may also have played a part in motivating him to suggest that Leszek Kolakowski should deliver the Hobhouse Memorial Lecture in 1976.<sup>77</sup> Kolakowski did indeed accept Dahrendorf's invitation, but ended up lecturing on 'The Concept of Counter-Reformation' since he wanted 'to get rid of all Marxist stuff when I am ready with the 3-volumes history of Marxism which I hope to finish soon...'.<sup>78</sup> Over the following years, Dahrendorf sought to make sense of the inherent contradictions of modern society that, he thought, gave rise to historical change. This would be the main topic of *The New Liberty, Life Chances* (1979), and a book project called 'Contradictions of Modernity' that Dahrendorf eventually gave up.<sup>79</sup> In the Christian Gauss lectures on 'Life Chances' that Dahrendorf gave at Princeton in late March and early April 1977, he again

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<sup>75</sup> Dahrendorf, *New Liberty*, viii.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, 6.

<sup>77</sup> London School of Economics and Political Science Archives, Central Filing Registry 225/2/C, Davis to Dr. Black, 16 March 1976: 'His name was suggested to the Committee by our Director, Professor Ralf Dahrendorf...'.  
<sup>78</sup> LSE Archives, Central Filing Registry 225/2/C, Leszek Kolakowski to Davis, 29 [November?] 1975.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Chapter V of this thesis for an in-depth discussion.

appraised the analytical value of Marx's concepts of objective as well as class interests.<sup>80</sup> Published two years later, *Life Chances* attempted to offer an interpretation of the causes of the 'legitimation crisis' of modern societies that Jürgen Habermas had highlighted. For Dahrendorf, this crisis was rooted in the fact that the post-war consensus had 'begun to produce its own contradictions, and it can no longer deal with them effectively'.<sup>81</sup>

In Dahrendorf's frequent exchanges with neoconservatives in this period, his continuing fascination with materialist ideas remained particularly evident. While the student movement prompted many to consider ideas and intellectuals to exert great influence on society, Dahrendorf continued to see things differently.<sup>82</sup> In a book published in 1975, Helmut Schelsky – an important intellectual figure in Dahrendorf's earlier years as we have seen in Chapter I – argued that contemporary society was dominated by intellectual rather than physical power. In a nod to Max Weber, Schelsky argued that society was subject to the 'class struggle and hierocracy of the intellectuals'.<sup>83</sup> Dahrendorf reacted with a vitriolic review in *DIE ZEIT* that attacked Schelsky for misrepresenting Weber as someone who thought that social domination could be based on intellectual force: 'Weber knew that the Church owned land, but Schelsky forgot about this'.<sup>84</sup> Intellectuals were 'not to blame for the energy crisis, they do not solve the conflict in the Middle East, they do not ensure job security at Volkswagen, they do not decide on the location of

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<sup>80</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/248, *Life Chances: Essay in the Theory of Social Processes*, Christian Gauss Seminar on 28 March, 31 March and 7 April 1977, Princeton University U.S.A. For further discussion of *Life Chances* cf. Chapter V.

<sup>81</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Life Chances: Approaches to Social and Political Theory* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1979), 109.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Chapter V.

<sup>83</sup> Helmut Schelsky, *Die Arbeit tun die anderen: Klassenkampf und Priesterherrschaft der Intellektuellen* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1975).

<sup>84</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Die Denunziation der Aufklärung', *DIE ZEIT*, 28 March 1975: 'daß die Kirche Land besaß, wußte Weber, aber Schelsky hat es vergessen'.

nuclear plants or their nuclear waste deposits, they do not decide on custom rules for imports from developing countries'.<sup>85</sup> Intellectuals, in other words, were not the main power holders. While Schelsky worried about intellectuals, Dahrendorf's review sought to redirect attention to social structure and expressed worries about the power of office-holders instead: members of the 'service class' who derived their power from positions within large organizations in government and in business. Intellectuals, he was at pains to say, could not exercise power merely through the power of their ideas. Schelsky would be well advised to 'maybe read Marx instead of just misquoting him ... even Weber would already help'.<sup>86</sup> It was not that Dahrendorf discounted the role of ideas altogether. Three years after his vicious critique of Schelsky, he discussed the role of ideas in further detail in a volume dedicated to the sociologist Robert Merton. Following Antonio Gramsci, he argued that ideas could acquire hegemonic status in societies and thus have a real impact on events. Gramsci's writing on hegemonic ideas would constitute an important building block for Dahrendorf's *Life Chances* project, which is further discussed in Chapter V. While taking inspiration from Gramsci, he continued to insist that Marx was right that ideas were effective 'only under certain conditions. They may be a necessary condition of effectiveness, but the sufficient condition is the state of social affairs...'.<sup>87</sup> Dahrendorf's particular view on the power of ideas and interests in politics was fundamentally at odds with the views of other liberals

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<sup>85</sup> *ibid*: 'waren an der Energiekrise schuld; sie lösen nicht den Konflikt im Nahen Osten, sie sorgen nicht für die Erhaltung der Arbeitsplätze des Volkswagenwerks; sie entscheiden nicht über den Standort von Kernkraftwerken oder die Lagerung ihrer Abfälle, sie bestimmen nicht die Zollregeln für Importe aus Entwicklungsländern'.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid*: 'Schelsky sollte vielleicht einmal Marx lesen, statt ihn nur falsch zu zitieren ... Auch Max Weber würde schon helfen'.

<sup>87</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'On Representative Activities', 16. The manuscript was submitted on 24 August 1978, cf. BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/251, 'On Representative Activities', Volume dedicated to Robert K. Merton.

with whom scholars have associated him.<sup>88</sup> In January 1981, Dahrendorf wrote disapprovingly of the newly founded Committee for a Free World, of which Aron was Honorary President. Dahrendorf took issue with the Committee's foundational manifesto, which argued that the world was confronted with a reinvigorated intellectual threat from the left. Dahrendorf was adamant that there could not be such a thing:

The reason why one can establish this with some certainty is to be found in Marx's writings: No minority, no matter how intelligent, can turn the current of time around, the dominant social forces. But today, these are precisely not the forces of radical change, of the traditional left, but rather of conservation.<sup>89</sup>

The signatories of the manifesto, Dahrendorf highlighted, represented precisely these dominant social forces.<sup>90</sup>

#### **4. The Substance of Dahrendorf's Materialism.**

Even in his early years in which he was committed to political socialism, Dahrendorf thought that changes in social structure that had happened over the course of the twentieth century falsified significant aspects of Marx's theories. In spite of Marx's predictions, the middle class had not disappeared, and unskilled

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. Introduction of this thesis.

<sup>89</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Freie Welt in Gefahr?', *DIE ZEIT*, 9 January 1981: 'Der Grund, warum man dies mit einiger Sicherheit feststellen kann, ist bei Marx zu finden: Keine noch so intelligente Minderheit kann den Strom der Zeit, die vorherrschenden sozialen Kräfte umkehren. Diese aber sind heute gerade nicht Kräfte der radikalen Veränderung, der traditionellen Linken, sondern vielmehr der Bewahrung'.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*

labour was not growing at the expense of skilled labour.<sup>91</sup> Still, Dahrendorf maintained that Marx's predictions had been correct until about 1900 or 1910, and that even in the twentieth century he was still highly relevant as a methodological innovator. He differentiated between a 'sociological Marx' who had attempted to empirically capture the industrial reality of his own time, and a 'philosophical Marx' who, influenced by Hegel, had dreamed up a metaphysical systematic theory of history based on 'knowledge from beyond the realm within which sound human knowledge was possible'.<sup>92</sup> The sociological Marx, however, had been the first to focus his research on social conflict, whereas 'most sociologists after Marx, from Spencer to the American functionalists of the present, thought of social conflict as an "unnatural" or "pathological" deviation from the normal state of society'.<sup>93</sup> This interest in social conflict, shared with and inspired by Marx in the 1950s, was to remain one of Dahrendorf's main intellectual concerns throughout his life, finding its last major outlet in *The Modern Social Conflict* (1988).<sup>94</sup>

In later years, Dahrendorf continued to add revisions of Marx's doctrines. In publications, seminars, and lectures, he criticized Marx's assumption that social change must of necessity come about through revolutions that result in changes of the ruling class. As he told his students at the *Akademie für Gemeinwirtschaft* in Hamburg, Marx was right that the causes of historical change were located in social structure, and that social conflict was the cause of historical change. In contrast to

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<sup>91</sup> For the latter, cf. BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/496, Industrial Skill and Social Structure in Contemporary British Society November 1953.

<sup>92</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/635, Philosophie und Soziologie bei Karl Marx: Marx-Kritik und ihre Bedeutung heute: 'Erkenntnisse ... die doch offenbar jenseits der Grenzen ihren Ursprung haben, innerhalb derer gesichertes menschliches Wissen möglich ist'. For the same argument cf. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Marx in Perspektive*.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid*: 'Die meisten Soziologen nach Marx, von Spencer bis zu den amerikanischen Funktionalisten der Gegenwart, sahen im sozialen Konflikt eine entweder "unnatürliche" oder "pathologische" Abweichung vom Normalzustand der Gesellschaft.'

<sup>94</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *The Modern Social Conflict: The Politics of Liberty* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1988).

Marx, however, Dahrendorf insisted that social structural change was often gradual, explicitly rejecting the former's stadial philosophy of history.<sup>95</sup> It was also not the case, he observed in a lecture on Marx, that private property was the cause of all conflicts. The argument that property and power were necessarily linked also fell under his list of Marx's theoretical errors, as did 'method: determination', although Dahrendorf's cursory notes do not say what exactly he thought the issue was here.<sup>96</sup> Crucially, Dahrendorf also questioned the validity of what he thought was an analytical amalgamation of the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution in Marx's theories. Marx's analysis of the Industrial Revolution was sound, Dahrendorf maintained. During the Industrial Revolution, the 'expansion of productive potential' was 'at first constrained by the existing social structure' based on the dominance of land, estates, and guilds.<sup>97</sup> Nonetheless, Marx had dramatized the Industrial Revolution. After all, industrialization had been a long and gradual process.<sup>98</sup> Here, Dahrendorf again questioned Marx's insistence on the revolutionary character of social change. Dahrendorf had more qualms with Marx's readings of the French Revolution. Political behaviour during this event could not be explained in terms of contradictory interests determined by relations of production. The revolution was not about economics but about political domination and the removal of a 'ruling class'.<sup>99</sup> Marx had conflated these two separate spheres of economy and politics. Ironically, Dahrendorf explained, the case of the Russian Revolution was the one historical instance where Marx's theory was applicable,

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<sup>95</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/761, document, no title [on Akademie für Gemeinwirtschaft paper, in folder 'Seminarunterlagen']: 'Methode: Determination'.

<sup>96</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/761, Soziale Prozesse, WS 1959/1960 VIII. Marx.

<sup>97</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/648, Soziologische Theorie der Revolution, SS 1961 (auch Univ. Hamburg, WS 1959/60), IV. Marx' Theorie der Revolution: 'Ausdehn. produkt. Möglichk.', 'zunächst gehemmt durch best. Sozialstruktur'.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*: 'herrsch. Klasse'.

even though it was generally assumed that this revolution was an event that it could not account for. In the Russian case, the processes of the French and the Industrial Revolution had come together, although there was no historically necessary reason that this should be so.<sup>100</sup> Later in his career, Dahrendorf also distanced himself from Marx's assumption that workers had a key role to play in world history. As he told a reader of *The New Liberty*, Dahrendorf thought that Marx had been wrong to think that workers '[represented] the productive forces of a new society'.<sup>101</sup> The productive forces and potentials of new societies were encapsulated in parts of the 'ruling groups of the day', and this had always been the case in history.<sup>102</sup> Nonetheless, throughout his career, these critiques of Marx were made from a materialist perspective in which social structural processes were privileged in analysis, and in which objective interests were accepted as a given part of political reality. Rival analyses that disregarded these facts he consistently dismissed as utopian.

Marx was not the only materialist social theorist who attracted Dahrendorf's attention. Mannheim had not only motivated him to come to the LSE – Dahrendorf also continued to employ ideas developed by the Hungarian sociologist, although explicit references became less frequent than in the early 1950s, when Mannheim seemed to be one his central reference points. However, his work remained focused on issues that were also central to Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*: the relationship between theory and practice in politics, the problematic nature of utopian thought, the impact of interests on conservative legitimacy ideologies, and the inherent problems of Weber's advocacy of value

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<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/715, Ralf Dahrendorf to Mrs. Edwards, 21 January 1975.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*

freedom. By arguing that impartial politics in the common interest was impossible since ‘all political interest and knowledge are necessarily partisan and particular’, Mannheim also anticipated Dahrendorf’s agonistic liberalism.<sup>103</sup> Karl Renner, a prominent exponent of Austro-Marxism and Austria’s first Chancellor after the First World War and first President after the Second World War, was of comparable importance for the development of his ideas about the nature of industrial society. Attempting to provide a Marxist interpretation of the implications of the rise of bureaucratic administration in modern society, Renner developed the concept of the ‘service class’, which Dahrendorf adopted and employed prominently in his own sociological theory.<sup>104</sup> Commenting on the Austrian revisionist Marxist, Dahrendorf observed that Renner’s ‘sociological work – if it is known at all – is often underestimated’.<sup>105</sup> Other important figures for his intellectual development were Theodor Geiger and, somewhat later, C. Wright Mills.<sup>106</sup>

What united Dahrendorf with Renner, Geiger, and Mills was his acute sense of the political consequences of the rise of bureaucracy and the new social group connected to it. As Chapter I has shown, many contemporary social theorists assumed that administrative decisions were becoming increasingly central to politics and all institutions of social life. Among theorists of the left, the political role of the growing numbers of white-collar workers attracted particular attention because of its relevance to Marx’s predictions about the future prospects of capitalist societies. Dahrendorf and other post-war scholars such as Fritz Croner, Michel Crozier, and Lockwood continued where inter-war sociologists such as

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<sup>103</sup> Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966 [1929]), 162.

<sup>104</sup> Karl Renner, *Wandlungen der modernen Gesellschaft: Zwei Abhandlungen über die Probleme der Nachkriegszeit* (Vienna: Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1953).

<sup>105</sup> Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict*, 93.

<sup>106</sup> For Mills, cf. Chapter III; for Geiger, cf. Chapter IV.

Lederer and Marschak or Geiger had left off. In contrast James Burnham, Dahrendorf did not believe that experts and administrators constituted a new ruling class. Rather, the political dominance of the new class was due to its hegemonic conquest of the value systems of contemporary societies. While previous societies had been dominated by the middle class and workers were expected to dominate future ones, the service class dominated the present. This begged various questions of social analysis, as the service class was neither the elite nor in the majority: in *Society and Democracy in Germany*, Dahrendorf surmised that it accounted for about twelve per cent of the West German population.<sup>107</sup>

In June 1963, Dahrendorf travelled to the United States to give a paper on ‘Recent Changes in the Class Structure of European Societies’ at a conference hosted by the American Academy of Science, an opportunity which he used to develop his thoughts on the service class. The values held by members of the service class, which he thought were spreading rapidly, transformed the politics of developed societies. Administrators tended to have a hierarchical understanding of society, which led them to be attracted to political conservatism. At the same time, their hierarchical conception of society implied that social mobility was an individual exercise that did not depend on rising as part of a group. The degree to which members of society considered themselves to be part of a particular class or group thus declined. As a consequence, political parties tried to reinvent themselves as “‘people’s parties”, that is, non-ideological election machines appealing to all sectors of the electorate alike’.<sup>108</sup> And yet, the absence of group ideologies was deceptive. What was in fact happening was that the inability of individuals to

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<sup>107</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Demokratie in Deutschland* (Munich: DTV, 1977 [1965]), 97.

<sup>108</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Recent Changes in the Class Structure of European Societies’, *Daedalus* 93 (1964), 264.

coalesce as interest groups led to a situation that was ‘often not unlike that described so brilliantly by Marx in his Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte: there are large numbers of individuals who cannot form solid political groups and represent themselves. They have to be represented, and they love the man who pretends to do so...’.<sup>109</sup> This concern about societies dominated by the ideology of bureaucratic officeholders only grew during the later 1960s and early 1970s, when West German politics became increasingly partisan as the situation on and around university campuses escalated. For Dahrendorf, the student movement was a symptom of the service class society: it was a rebellion against bureaucratization.<sup>110</sup> In *DIE ZEIT*, Dahrendorf confronted his readers with what he saw as the reality of modernity. There were only two options, ‘reform liberalism – or the cage of serfdom [Gehäuse der Hörigkeit] of the system of the service class society’.<sup>111</sup>

Not only did Dahrendorf’s analysis of the service class and contemporary sociology borrow Renner’s concept. He also employed the terminology and approach of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge when discussing the concept of the service class. Borrowing Mannheim’s language, Dahrendorf argued that contemporary European societies broadly consisted of four social groups: power groups, the service class, subordinated groups, and ‘free-floating intellectuals’.<sup>112</sup> Implying a materialist connection between social position and ideology, Dahrendorf worried about the ‘enormous expansion of the service class at the expense of all others and ... the infusion of the values characteristic of this class

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<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*, 265.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Chapter V for an in-depth discussion of Dahrendorf’s interpretation of the student movement as a symptom of bureaucratization.

<sup>111</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Sozialismus oder Liberalismus?’, *DIE ZEIT*, 21 November 1969: ‘Reformliberalismus – oder das Gehäuse der Hörigkeit des Systems einer Dienstklassengesellschaft’.

<sup>112</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘Recent Changes in the Class Structure’, 225.

into the behavior of all others, including even the ruling groups.’<sup>113</sup> In 1972, when he published the paper in German, Dahrendorf added that the decision in favour of republication after several years was due to his conviction that the main argument of the paper about the rise of the service class in social structure was still valid.<sup>114</sup>

The issue of ‘ideology’ thus occupied a prominent place in Dahrendorf’s lectures and seminars. Weber was faulted for not paying attention to the issue of ‘ideology’ in his writings on value freedom.<sup>115</sup> As far as the service class is concerned, one can get a better picture of why he viewed it as a threat to democracy by looking at a course on the ‘Ideology’ of ruling classes, given at Constance in April 1969. The minutes of the seminar proposed to subdivide ideology into ‘a) ideology as situational determination [Seinsgebundenheit] (subconscious i[deology]) b) ideology as an instrument of domination (conscious i[deology])’, thus on the first point following Mannheim’s terminology.<sup>116</sup> Further, the members of the seminar discussed the idea whether ideology should be subdivided into two categories of ‘a) action-relevant ideology and b) action-irrelevant ideology’, given that in some political systems professed ideologies did not in fact influence politics very directly, such as the Soviet Union.<sup>117</sup> As an example of technocratic ideology, the class discussed the political power of the ‘Four Wise Men’ – a body of economists who advised the government on macroeconomic policy – over the elected government because of their superior technical knowledge.<sup>118</sup> For

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<sup>113</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Konflikt und Freiheit: Auf dem Weg zur Dienstklassengesellschaft* (Munich: Piper, 1972), 321.

<sup>115</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/761, *Angewandte Soziologie*, SS 1960.

<sup>116</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/630, *Aufbaukolloquium Prof. Dahrendorf, Protokoll der Sitzung vom 21.4.1969: ‘a) Ideologie als Seinsgebundenheit (unbewusste I.) b) Ideologie als Herrschaftsinstrument (bewusste I.)’.*

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*: ‘a) handlungsrelevanten und b) nicht-handlungsrelevanten Ideologien’.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*: ‘der “Vier Weisen”.

Dahrendorf, their power over government was considerable.<sup>119</sup> Technocracy was a phenomenon that he felt critics of ideology should particularly focus on, bearing two questions in mind: firstly, how do technocrats manipulate office holders, and secondly, how can technocratic arguments be studied from the angle of ideology critique?<sup>120</sup>

Over the course of the later 1950s and 1960s, Dahrendorf had already extended his critique of the service class to prominent strands of post-war sociology in both West Germany and the United States, dismissing Parsons' structural-functionalism and Schelsky's thesis that West German society had lost all class divisions.<sup>121</sup> Dahrendorf's critique of Schelsky stated that he stood in the tradition of the 'German ideology', from the preamble of the Anti-Socialist Laws that stipulated 'class harmony' to Hitler's 'people's community'.<sup>122</sup> All these conceptions were united in negating the reality of social conflict.<sup>123</sup> Dahrendorf was determined to point out that depictions of societies as harmonious and characterized by value consensus served as legitimizing ideologies for the technocratic service class:

And yet the bureaucrats, managers, and all experts form an upper class, a ruling class, which must find the ideology of the harmonious industrial society useful in order to strengthen its limited basis of legitimacy. In at least one sense the modern meritocracy of diplomas and certificates has been true to its predecessors: it needs an ideology

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<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Chapter III for Dahrendorf's critique of Parsons.

<sup>122</sup> Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Demokratie in Deutschland*, 142: 'deutschen Ideologie', 'Harmonie der Klassen', 'Volksgemeinschaft'.

<sup>123</sup> *ibid.*, 137-42.

in order to justify inequality. This myth is supplied by sociology with its myth of the industrial society.<sup>124</sup>

In this vein, Dahrendorf continued a critique of ideology of functionalist sociology which, when he made it in his *Habilitationsprobevorlesung* in 1957 at the University of Saarland, still credited Mannheim and Max Scheler's sociology of knowledge for introducing this theme.<sup>125</sup>

### 5. Dahrendorf's Materialism in its Liberal Context.

Those liberals with whom Dahrendorf has been associated with in the historiography evaluated Marx in a radically different way. This divergence resulted in very different versions of liberalism – depicting Dahrendorf as a close disciple of Popper as well as Hayek and Berlin obscures the essence of his agonistic liberalism, which was based on the assumption that politics was an interest-driven conflict between groups with opposing objective interests. In *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Popper attacked Marx's 'prophecies' as unfalsifiable consequences of Marx's poor method:

Marxists, when they find their theories attacked, often withdraw to the position that Marxism is primarily not so much a doctrine as a method.

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<sup>124</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Zur Kritik der Soziologie in ihrer Geschichte', in Dahrendorf, *Pfade aus Utopia*, 72-3: 'Dennoch bilden die Bürokraten, die Manager und die Experten eine Oberschicht eine herrschende Klasse, der eine Ideologie der harmonischen industriellen Gesellschaft dienlich sein muß, um ihre schmale Legitimitätsbasis zu stärken. In einem zumindest ist die modern Meritokratie der Diplome und Berechtigungsscheine der Tradition ihrer Vorgänger treu geblieben: Auch sie braucht eine Ideologie, die die Ungleichheit rechtfertigt. Diese Ideologie liefert die Soziologie mit dem Mythos der industriellen Gesellschaft.'

<sup>125</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/635, Habilitationsprobevortrag vor der Fakultät, Saarbrücken, 19.6.57 [date crossed out].

They say that even if some particular part of the doctrines of Marx, or of some of his followers, were superseded, his method would still remain unassailable. I believe that it is quite correct to insist that Marxism is, fundamentally, a method ... By describing Marxism as purest historicism, I have indicated that I hold the Marxist method to be very poor indeed.<sup>126</sup>

By contrast, Dahrendorf thought that Marx was still useful precisely for the methodological reasons which Popper rejected. While Dahrendorf relegated Marx's mistakes to his 'philosophical' side, Popper argued that Marx's misguided prophecy about a future communist society was 'the main result of his method'.<sup>127</sup> Indeed, Popper thought that Marx 'was not much concerned with purely philosophical issues – less than Engels or Lenin, for instance – and that it was mainly the sociological and methodological side of the problem in which he was interested'.<sup>128</sup> Thus, in different ways, both Dahrendorf and Popper were able to associate Marx with methodological and philosophical positions that they opposed, respectively.

As with Marx's 'Hegelian philosophical' element, Dahrendorf generally disliked the idealist methodology that he thought dominated the German *Geisteswissenschaften*. Dahrendorf was adamantly opposed to the notion that the natural sciences and the humanities were essentially different, a misconception for which he blamed Wilhelm Dilthey.<sup>129</sup> In the introductory lecture to his series on the 'Sociological Theory of Revolution', Dahrendorf criticized historians for

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<sup>126</sup> Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, 84.

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*, 134.

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*, 102.

<sup>129</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/648, Soziale Rollen und Soziale Normen: Soziologie: qu'est-ce que c'est?.



it. In Dahrendorf's words, it was necessary to get from the 'thin air of attitudes, opinions, and also intellectual history into the thicker (in all respects) social stratification, power relations, and contradictions ... Who would want to prove the claim "in Weimar Germany there was no belief in the human being"? Here [there is a] need for more precise claims'.<sup>133</sup>

Opposition to Hegelianism united many liberal political theorists in the latter half of the twentieth century.<sup>134</sup> Dahrendorf's anti-Hegelianism took the form of methodological opposition to philosophical speculation, be it 'Marx the philosopher' or the *Geisteswissenschaften* with their emphasis on ideas rather than material forces. However, his reception of Hegel was profoundly at odds with that of Popper, Berlin, and Hayek. In Berlin's view, Hegel's mistake was his belief in supra-individual metaphysical entities, the 'great social forces' that Hegel thought determined human history.<sup>135</sup> Against this view, Berlin argued that history could not be written without a focus on 'character, purposes and motives of individuals.'<sup>136</sup> Hayek similarly made the case for methodological individualism in his critique of Comte:

Like Hegel he treats as 'concrete universals' those social structures which in fact we come to know only by composing them, or building them up, from the familiar elements; and he even surpasses Hegel in claiming that only society as a whole is real and that the individual is only an abstraction.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*: 'aus der dünnen Luft der Einst., Meinungen und auch Geistesgesch. heraus in die dickere (in jeder Hins.) soz. Schichtungen, Machtverh. und Gegensätze ... Wer will Aussage prüfen "in Weimar-Deutschland kein Glaube an den Menschen?" Hier präzisere Aussagen beabsichtigt'.

<sup>134</sup> Domenico Losurdo, *Hegel and the Freedom of Moderns* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

<sup>135</sup> Berlin, 'Historical Inevitability', 112.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*, 97.

<sup>137</sup> Hayek, *The Counter-Revolution of Science*, 198.

As shown in the Introduction, Hayek considered sociology of knowledge to be the most conceited subdiscipline of sociology. Popper criticized Hegel along similar lines, and dismissed the sociology of knowledge of Scheler and Mannheim as a ‘Hegelian version of Kant’s theory of knowledge’.<sup>138</sup> For Popper, the sociology of knowledge amounted to a closed ideological system that ‘[destroyed] the intellectual basis of any discussion’ by dismissing the opinions of adversaries as ideology determined by their social position.<sup>139</sup> Tellingly, Dahrendorf found it possible to praise Popper’s *The Open Society and its Enemies* by saying that ‘there is little to add to his incisive analyses’, and to add in the footnote pertaining to the same sentence that Mannheim’s *Ideology and Utopia* offered another important contribution to the same topic.<sup>140</sup>

Dahrendorf’s critique of Hegel neither included support for methodological individualism, nor did he consider sociology of knowledge to be the disastrous and fundamentally misconceived ‘aftermath’ of Hegel. As pointed out above, the influence of social context on the development of ideas was one of his main intellectual concerns throughout his entire career. Indeed, Dahrendorf was skeptical of methodological individualism, criticizing social psychology for attempting to explain social phenomena by reference to individuals.<sup>141</sup> His preference for the analysis of society did not imply the existence of supra-individual metaphysical structures that worried Berlin and Popper. Dahrendorf pointed out that society was a fact, but not a thing.<sup>142</sup> It consisted of individuals,

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<sup>138</sup> Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, 213.

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.*, 216.

<sup>140</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘Out of Utopia’, 117.

<sup>141</sup> See for instance Dahrendorf’s critique of the approach of social psychology to the sociology of industry in BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/496, ‘Mensch und Arbeit’ [no date].

<sup>142</sup> In other words, society was not an entity in the ontological sense for Dahrendorf.

and was in this sense not a thing. But at the same time it was more than the sum of its individuals, acting on individuals and constraining their autonomous freedom, and thus was a fact that needed to be examined.<sup>143</sup> Dahrendorf still made this point in a letter to Amartya Sen in December 1975 in a way that highlighted his intellectual distance from economics: ‘sociology ... is about the way in which social choices cannot be derived from an assumption of individual choosers, because even the (apparently) most individual choices are socially structured’.<sup>144</sup>

The considerable distance between Popper and Dahrendorf was also evident in their diverging uses of the term ‘ideology’. For Popper, ‘ideology’ signified intellectual positions that sheltered themselves from the possibility of being falsified.<sup>145</sup> Dahrendorf, by contrast, used the term to describe intellectual justifications of interested positions of groups within social conflict.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, Popper (as did Berlin and Hayek) shared Hegel’s conviction that history was primarily about ideas rather than socio-economic factors. Dahrendorf in turn criticized this emphasis on ideas when he dismissed the views of ‘hegelianizing historians’.<sup>147</sup> Dahrendorf’s references to *The Open Society and its Enemies* obscure this crucial difference. In criticizing Hegel, Dahrendorf was doing something very different. Both the anti-Hegelianism of Dahrendorf and that of Popper, Berlin, and Hayek amounted to an implicit critique of each other as well as Hegel, even if this may have been unintentional.

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<sup>143</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Homo Sociologicus: Ein Versuch zur Geschichte, Bedeutung und Kritik der Kategorie der sozialen Rolle’, *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 10 (1958), 198-9.

<sup>144</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/331, Ralf Dahrendorf to Amartya Sen, 27 December 1975.

<sup>145</sup> Karl Popper, *Ausgangspunkte: Meine intellektuelle Entwicklung* (Munich: Piper, 2012), 42.

<sup>146</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/630, Aufbaukolloquium Prof. Dahrendorf, Protokoll der Sitzung vom 21.4.1969.

<sup>147</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Demokratie und Sozialstruktur in Deutschland’, *European Journal of Sociology* 1 (1960), 89: ‘hegelisierender Historiker’.

It is important to note that at least until the late 1970s, Dahrendorf's critique of Hegel was purely methodological.<sup>148</sup> In his early years, through the medium of Marx, Dahrendorf's definition of 'freedom' was indebted to Hegel. In an untitled manuscript dating from 1957, Dahrendorf highlighted that Marx saw freedom as located in the 'realm of freedom', which was different from the 'realm of necessity', arguing that the realization of the former stood at the heart of Marx's vision of communist society.<sup>149</sup> The manuscript endorsed Marx's definition of freedom as human action based on autonomous volition rather than external necessity, arguing that it was 'incomparably deeper and wider-reaching than the whole catalogue of the liberal freedoms that are so often praised – and are to be praised'.<sup>150</sup> The latter were merely formal; their existence did not mean that they would actually be used. Marx's concept of freedom as autonomous human action, by contrast, was active rather than formal. It followed that it was problematic if people made no use of their autonomy, a phenomenon that he thought characterized the modern world in particular. While workers of older generations used their leisure time for their own development as autonomous beings, for instance by cultivating their garden, acting, or craft work, more and more workers were using their time off work for passive pastimes such as attending football games or going to the cinema. This, he argued, was a consequence of the increasing alienation of the worker by their labour.<sup>151</sup> Freedom thus had an explicitly normative element for Dahrendorf. In a seminar on Weber at the University of Constance, one of his

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<sup>148</sup> For later readjustments, cf. Dahrendorf, *Life Chances*, re-iterated in Ralf Dahrendorf, *Law and Order* (London: Stevens and Sons, 1985). Further, cf. Chapter V of this thesis.

<sup>149</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/635, Ralf Dahrendorf, untitled manuscript (52 pages): 'Reich der Freiheit', 'Reich der Notwendigkeit'.

<sup>150</sup> *ibid.*: 'unvergleichlich tiefer ist und weiter geht als der ganze Katalog der vielgepriesenen – und viel zu preisenden – liberalen Freiheiten'.

<sup>151</sup> *ibid.*

students criticized Weber for leaving the individual the ‘freedom to be stupid’, provoking Dahrendorf’s reaction that this was not Weber’s position: ‘Now you are turning him into a Schelsky’.<sup>152</sup> The point where Dahrendorf disagreed with Marx was the separation of the realms of freedom and necessity over time, that is, that freedom was only possible in a future communist society. Dahrendorf criticized that this was tantamount to sacrificing the autonomous development of people in the present for the sake of the tenuous possibility of freedom for others in the future.<sup>153</sup>

This definition of freedom, borrowed from Marx and Hegel, characterized much of Dahrendorf’s early writings, in particular his works on role theory, mass society, and the sociology of the firm. In the essay ‘Homo Sociologicus’, first published in the *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* in 1958, Dahrendorf attempted to convince his colleagues that social constraints, imposed on the individual through the medium of role expectations, should be at the centre of their research: ‘homo sociologicus, man as the bearer of socially predetermined roles’, was the subject of sociology.<sup>154</sup> Dahrendorf defined these roles as:

a constraining force on the individual, whether he experiences them as an obstacle to his private wishes or a support that gives him security.

The constraining force of role expectations is due to the availability of *sanctions*, measures by which society can enforce conformity with its prescriptions. The man who does not play his role is punished; the man

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<sup>152</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/630, Kolloquium Prof. Dr. Ralf Dahrendorf, Ph.D.: Herrschaft und Gesellschaft. Protokoll der 2. Sitzung vom 12. Mai 1966: ‘Freiheit, dumm zu sein’, “‘Jetzt machen Sie ihn zu einem Schelsky’”.

<sup>153</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/635, Ralf Dahrendorf, untitled manuscript (52 pages).

<sup>154</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘Homo Sociologicus’, 183: ‘Homo Sociologicus, der Mensch als Träger sozial vorgeformter Rollen’. Translation taken from the English version in Ralf Dahrendorf, *Essays in the Theory of Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), 24-5.

who plays his role is rewarded, or at least not punished. Social pressure to conform to prescribed role expectations is by no means peculiar to certain modern societies, but a universal feature of social forms.<sup>155</sup>

Dahrendorf argued that genuinely free acts were possible within society, even if the ‘range of freedom’ was small.<sup>156</sup> The sociologist ought to attempt to contribute to a society in which this range was bigger; he should ‘[select] his research projects with an eye to what may help liberate the individual from the vexations of society’.<sup>157</sup> Dahrendorf’s Marxian definition of freedom as autonomy jeopardized by the alienation of the worker by his labour also prompted him to concern himself with the sociology of industry.<sup>158</sup> Dahrendorf himself noted in a book review that this field of inquiry was inspired by the arguments about alienation by Left-Hegelians and the early Marx.<sup>159</sup> It was precisely this emphasis on a Marxian understanding of freedom and the concern about alienation that came with it that Dahrendorf’s critics found objectionable. In fact, the publication of *Homo Sociologicus* precipitated one of the most heated controversies among West German sociologists in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>160</sup> For Friedrich Tenbruck, the case was clear that Dahrendorf was operating with an illusionary ideal of freedom and

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<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*, 194: ‘ein Zwang, der auf den Einzelnen ausgeübt wird – mag dieser als eine Fessel seiner privaten Wünsche oder als ein Halt, der ihm Sicherheit gibt, erlebt werden. Dieser Charakter von Rollenerwartungen beruht darauf, daß die Gesellschaft Sanktionen zur Verfügung hat, mit deren Hilfe sie die Vorschriften zu erzwingen mag. Wer seine Rolle nicht spielt, wird bestraft; wer sie spielt, wird belohnt, zumindest aber nicht bestraft.’ Translation taken from Dahrendorf, *Essays in the Theory of Society*, 38.

<sup>156</sup> *ibid.*, 197: ‘Bereich, in dem der Einzelne frei ist’. Translation taken from Dahrendorf, *Essays in the Theory of Society*, 43.

<sup>157</sup> *ibid.*, 373: ‘die Probleme seiner Forschung unter dem Aspekt ihres Gewichtes für die Befreiung des Einzelnen vom Ärgernis der Gesellschaft’. Translation taken from Dahrendorf, *Essays in the Theory of Society*, 87.

<sup>158</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Industrie- und Betriebssoziologie* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1965 [1956]).

<sup>159</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/496, ‘Mensch und Arbeit’ [no date].

<sup>160</sup> Joachim Fischer, ‘Die Rollendebatte: Der Streit um den “Homo Sociologicus”’, in Georg Kneer, Stephan Moebius (eds.), *Soziologische Kontroversen: Beiträge zu einer anderen Geschichte der Wissenschaft vom Sozialen* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010). Also cf. Chapter III of this thesis.

individuality that had been long disproved by Gehlen, cultural anthropology, and historicism.<sup>161</sup> Dahrendorf's attention was one-sided, with cultural factors such as shared 'ideas, values, and techniques' falling by the wayside.<sup>162</sup>

Dahrendorf's notion of freedom also prompted him to take a keen interest in Alexis de Tocqueville's writings on modern democratic society and the post-war sociological debate on the 'mass society'. Dahrendorf shared David Riesman's anxiety about the 'other-directed Man' expressed in *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), while pointing out that Riesman was less original than he would like to be, since much of the argument had already been made by Tocqueville.<sup>163</sup> In his essay on Riesman's book, Dahrendorf pointed out that there really was a point at which equality threatened freedom.

The threat that equality posed to freedom was a trope that was also employed by two other liberals with high regard for Tocqueville: Hayek and Jacob Talmon. How similar were their ideas? In *Society and Democracy in Germany* Dahrendorf stated that:

When I use the word 'liberal' in this study I am not referring to the rather unfortunate history and present state of German liberalism, but to what F.A. von Hayek has called the *Constitution of Liberty* and what has been wished for so long and so vainly by 'the democrats not established by party membership' in Germany...<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Friedrich Tenbruck, 'Zur deutschen Rezeption der Rollentheorie', *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 13 (1961), 31.

<sup>162</sup> *ibid.*, 8: 'Ideen, Werte und Techniken'.

<sup>163</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Demokratie ohne Freiheit: Versuch über die Politik des außergeleiteten Menschen', in Ralf Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Freiheit: Zur soziologischen Analyse der Gegenwart* (Munich: Piper, 1962 [1961]).

<sup>164</sup> Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Demokratie in Deutschland*, 22. Translation taken from Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1968), 13.

Seven years later, in 1972, Dahrendorf praised Hayek again, counting him among the ‘great liberals among the social scientists of our time’ alongside Friedman and Popper.<sup>165</sup> Talmon’s *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, in turn, was the third item on the recommended reading list appended to his essay on Riesman and Tocqueville.<sup>166</sup> In *Society and Democracy in Germany*, Dahrendorf also praised Talmon’s analysis that democracy could lead to totalitarianism.<sup>167</sup>

Dahrendorf’s references to Hayek and Talmon should not obscure the fact that his interpretation of Tocqueville’s subject – modern democratic mass societies – was profoundly different. As with Berlin and Popper, Dahrendorf found it expedient to reference the works of liberals whose views in fact diverged from his own ones. Not only did Talmon think that ideas, rather than socio-economic forces, had been the central motive force in history since the French Revolution.<sup>168</sup> Talmon also worried about ‘totalitarian democrats’ who wanted to enforce economic equality by means of the state.<sup>169</sup> Similarly, Hayek’s *The Constitution of Liberty* made it clear that liberty should only be understood as the absence of coercion of individuals. Majoritarian democracy, like any other form of government, was a threat to individual liberty, and should be constrained by strict constitutional limits.<sup>170</sup> Furthermore, Hayek was primarily interested in Tocqueville as a scholar of democratic *institutions*, whereas Dahrendorf’s fascination lay in Tocqueville as a scholar of democratic *society*. This reflected a more general difference in outlook. Hayek and Talmon were deeply troubled by the potential coercion of individuals

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<sup>165</sup> Dahrendorf, *Konflikt und Freiheit*, 9: ‘die großen Liberalen unter den Sozialwissenschaftlern unserer Zeit’.

<sup>166</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘Demokratie ohne Freiheit’, 441.

<sup>167</sup> Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Demokratie in Deutschland*, 21.

<sup>168</sup> Jacob Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1955), 69-70.

<sup>169</sup> *ibid.*, 50-65.

<sup>170</sup> Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 159.

by democratic *states*. Dahrendorf's point was that it was democratic *society* that liberals should worry about. Democratic society forced the individual into conformity, demanding 'equality of character'.<sup>171</sup> It created individuals who were averse to individuality and conflict, seeking conformity and shying away from formulating their own interests. This destroyed the necessary precondition of pluralistic democracy.<sup>172</sup> This was the paradox of democracy as Dahrendorf saw it: democracy as a form of government depended on autonomous individuals, while democracy as a type of society tended to destroy the autonomy of individuals.<sup>173</sup>

Indeed, Dahrendorf's version of liberalism was diametrically at odds with Hayek's liberalism. Hayek's intention behind his advocacy of constitutional constraints was to limit the scope for coercive power in the economic realm, which would for instance include strict limits on trade union privileges.<sup>174</sup> From Dahrendorf's perspective, this was a foolish attempt to interfere with social conflict and to establish harmony, a false harmony since it was enforced by the state. In 1957, Dahrendorf told the conflict seminar of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences:

My assertion is that no effective regulation of conflict can be expected unless the actions of those involved are inspired by the recognition of conflict as ubiquitous. Such recognition is as plausible in theory as it is uncomfortable in practice, where several consequences follow from it which are by no means generally accepted: (a) However unpleasant particular conflicts may be, their suppression must never even be considered. Legislation restricting strikes or the operation of political

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<sup>171</sup> Dahrendorf, 'Demokratie ohne Freiheit', 326.

<sup>172</sup> *ibid.*, 333.

<sup>173</sup> *ibid.*, 326-7.

<sup>174</sup> Friedrich Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (London: Routledge, 2009 [1960]), 233-47.

organizations is never an effective means of regulating conflict. (b) It is equally ill-advised to approach conflict situations with a legalistic view according to which there is an ultimate 'right' or 'wrong' which provides a measure to judge the merits of conflicting issues. (c) Rather than discouraging it, conflict should actually be encouraged...<sup>175</sup>

This was to remain Dahrendorf's position for the rest of his life. As Chapter VI shows, it formed an integral part of his critique of those economic theories that became popular in the later 1970s and 1980s. Dahrendorf's liberalism avowedly diverged from that of both Popper and Hayek. As he put it in 'The New Liberty: Comments on Italian Critics':

The notion of liberty underlying my analysis is in fact not merely Hayek's or Popper's. That is to say, it is not merely a notion of absence of constraint, important as this notion is in any concept of liberty. But I would add – and this is where the activist element comes in – that liberty demands of us to do everything in our power to extend the frontiers of the human potential ... The active liberal can never be satisfied with the conditions with the conditions which he finds; he will be eager to help in pushing the boundary of freedom further out. There may or may not be a limit to this process – it is probably better to assume that there is not –, but in any case we can and must proceed seeking more liberty for more people.<sup>176</sup>

For Dahrendorf, history was a process of human improvement in which an increasing number of individuals and groups gradually obtained and made use

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<sup>175</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/635, Ralf Dahrendorf to Members of Conflict Seminar, 'Supplementary Outline on the Regulation of Social Conflict', November 8, 1957.

<sup>176</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/487, 'The New Liberty: Comments on Italian Critics'.

of life chances. The suppression of such interests could not work in the long run – any sustainable liberal order had to keep avenues open for individuals to pursue their objective interests. The assumption of the centrality of social forces to politics rendered Dahrendorf incapable to agree with Hayek and Popper. This was still the case in 1988, when Dahrendorf used the opportunity of an article Popper published in *The Economist* to make a point that had long been left implicit in his political commentary.<sup>177</sup> In reaction to Popper’s advocacy of first-past-the-post voting systems, Dahrendorf argued that such a system had worked well in the age of a democratic class struggle between two large voting blocks, but that modern social forces rendered it dysfunctional. In modern societies, Popper’s ideal of democracy incapacitated interests to successfully manifest themselves in parliamentary politics. His ideas about democracy therefore had to be rejected: ‘when it comes to detail, the great man is too remote, for we have to take into account the real conditions of our world’.<sup>178</sup>

## 6. Conclusion.

This chapter has sought to flesh out the impact that Dahrendorf’s early engagement with Marx and other materialist sociologists had on the long-term trajectory of his liberalism. It has established that assumptions about the so-called ‘binding character of natural forces’ were a central element of the theoretical underpinning of his agonistic liberalism. He was convinced that it was unrealistic to hope that individuals and groups could be persuaded to abandon the pursuit of

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<sup>177</sup> ‘Popper on Democracy’, *The Economist*, 23 April 1988.

<sup>178</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/490, Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Democracy is not Simple’.

their interests for the greater good of society. In order to ensure that social conflicts did not escalate into violent revolutions, it was necessary to construct a constitutional system that could act as a parliamentary arena within which objective interests could be pursued in non-violent ways.

This was the central materialist conviction that he retained for the rest of his academic and political life. Assumptions based on this commitment played a key part in his attempt to reform sociology (Chapter III), his rejection of idealism and involvement in university reforms (Chapter IV), as well as his critique of neoconservatism (Chapter V) and neoliberalism (Chapter VI). In the early 1990s, long after social structural issues had stopped attracting the interest of social scientists in the same way as they had in the immediate post-war period, Dahrendorf was still fascinated by the theorists whose works he had devoured in his youth. In November 1991, he told the Bielefeld literary historian and critic Karl Heinz Bohrer that it could be worthwhile to re-open the Mannheim debate of the late 1920s.<sup>179</sup> This came a few months after Daniel Bell had sent him his most recent publication on ‘The Misreading of Ideology: The Social Determination of Ideas in Marx’s Work’, with the following words of introduction:

Dear Ralf: I suspect that you no longer have a taste for this alte quatsch. But one cannot wholly escape one’s past or the need to exorcize old demons. Hence the enclosed. Engels once remarked that he was weary of the old Hegelianism, when he went back and found the neglected ‘theses on Feuerbach.’ I have been weary, too, but the only justification I have, intellectually, is that I have rescued [sic!] that queer character Max Stirner from the ton of scheiss that Marx heaped upon him ... The

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<sup>179</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/925, Ralf Dahrendorf to Karl Heinz Bohrer, 6 November 1991.

issue is the relation of ideology to the sociology of knowledge, a problem introduced by Karl Mannheim (in English) in 1936, but marred by a weak epistemology and a muddled set of thoughts on the relation of the social location of groups to particular idea systems.<sup>180</sup>

Dahrendorf told Bell that he had thoroughly enjoyed the piece, and that it had prompted him to look at Stirner again. Moreover, he added:

I love some of the German misprints in your piece, most of all Ludwig Feuerbauch on p.35. There really should be such a person, Firebelly, not a bad name. But seriously, Dan, you just know too much. And the wonderful thing is that you do not feel a (Habermasian) need to put it all in its place in a great philosophy of history, let alone a (Parsonian) need to place it in a great big bourgeois mansion. You are wonderful. I have just read a brilliant critique of Hayek (a thesis for the Hochschule St. Gallen in Switzerland) by a man called, Roland Kley. He shows that Hayek's 'scientific liberalism' cannot be that at all. (Hayek, as you know, claims that there is no disagreement on ends, but only on means, and that therefore the merits of socialism and liberalism can be decided 'scientifically'. Socialism is not morally or politically wrong, but an error, a mistake, a 'fatal conceit'.) Ideology: pretending that something is true which is merely useful for certain purposes.<sup>181</sup>

Coming more than thirty years after his attempt to overcome Parsons' dominance in sociology, Dahrendorf had lost nothing of his frustration with a strand of sociology that he thought had become influential because of its ideological

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<sup>180</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/925, Daniel Bell to Ralf Dahrendorf, 15 April 1991. For the paper, cf. Daniel Bell, 'The Misreading of Ideology: The Social Determination of Ideas in Marx's Work', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 35 (1990).

<sup>181</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/925, Ralf Dahrendorf to Daniel Bell, 20 April 1991.

usefulness. What was new was that Hayek and others had given him a second set of arguments that made him despair of the influence of ideology in the social sciences.

## Chapter III: A New Sociology

‘Of course I have a completely different opinion than Dahrendorf. He just happens to have a father complex towards Talcott Parsons and holds a grudge against him because he isn’t Karl

Marx.’<sup>1</sup> (René König to Alfred von Martin, 5 December 1961.)

### 1. Introduction.

In February 1962 Dahrendorf delivered a paper at the Theological Department of the University of Heidelberg. 32-years old at the time, the young sociologist used the opportunity to comment on the arguments about the social function of religion of Talcott Parsons and those expressed by his student Kingsley Davis in *Human Society* (1949). For Davis, religion played a key role in stabilizing society. It ensured that a sufficient degree of consensus and shared goals was present in society, something that rationality alone could not create. In fact, without a “system of supernatural faith”, values remained open to being questioned.<sup>2</sup> Dahrendorf, by contrast, wanted to suggest the opposite. ‘Might it not be the case’, he asked, that the ‘legitimacy of norms’ depended on domination rather than shared acceptance?<sup>3</sup> In any case, he said, the integration of societies was incredibly difficult to measure scientifically. In some scenarios, such as civil wars, it might be easy to say that a society was insufficiently integrated, but less extreme cases posed

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<sup>1</sup> René König to Alfred von Martin, 5 December 1961, in René König, ‘Briefwechsel’, 1003: ‘Selbstverständlich bin ich völlig umgekehrter Meinung wie Dahrendorf. Er hat nun einmal einen eigentlichen Vaterkomplex gegenüber Talcott Parsons und nimmt es ihm übel, dass er nicht Marx ist.’

<sup>2</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/933, Ralf Dahrendorf, Säkularisierung und Gesellschaft: Ein soziologischer Kommentar (Vortrag, gehalten auf dem Dozenttag der Theologischen Fakultät der Universität Heidelberg am 10.2.1962).

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*: ‘Könnte es nicht sein’, ‘Geltung von Werten’.

taxing problems. In many societies, ‘seemingly strict and monolithic structures’ such as organized churches will conceal actually existing ‘internal disintegration’.<sup>4</sup>

Seven months later, from 2 to 8 September 1962, the International Sociological Association gathered in Washington, D.C. for the Fifth World Congress of Sociology. Among large numbers of panels at a conference that by any comparable standard was gigantic, one group of sociologists, namely Ernest Gellner, Kingsley Davis, Robert Merton, Shmuel Eisenstadt, Paul-Henry Chambart de Lauwe, Filippo Barbano, E. Vogel, Joseph Ben-David, and Dahrendorf, congregated to listen to and discuss Neil Smelser’s paper on ‘Notes on Functionalism and Scientific Analysis’.<sup>5</sup> As his private notes suggest, Dahrendorf used this opportunity to describe functionalism as a language more than a theory in an attempt to challenge four ways in which its proponents justified it: ‘a) “can be applied” – of course: almost every language [ill. word] descr. reality why this and no other? ... b) generates problems – what a gigantic effort to do so. c) “helpful”, “useful” – weak claim d) all sociology is functional: of course, translation possible’.<sup>6</sup> There was no scientific way of evaluating functionalism’s merits, he alleged: ‘internal coherence irrelevant, application arbitrary ... For that reason justified to apply extraneous criteria: moral, political (Utopia).’<sup>7</sup> Dahrendorf also took notes on Merton’s intervention in the discussion, jotting down Merton’s comparison of structural-functional sociology and its alternatives. On the list of these alternatives, in Dahrendorf’s own rendition that mixed German and English,

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid*: ‘scheinbar straffe und monolithische Strukturen’, ‘innere Desintegration’.

<sup>5</sup> For the list of attendants, cf. Joseph Ben-David, ‘Report on the Discussion’, in *Transactions of the Fifth World Congress of Sociology* (Louvain: International Sociological Association, 1964), 71.

<sup>6</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/521, Memo, Fifth World Congress of Sociology, Hotel Shoreham, Washington, D.C, September 2-8 1962.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*.

the last item was ‘factor theorems (“determinismus”)<sup>8</sup>. Why was Dahrendorf so exercised by sociological theories developed in the United States, and why did he pick up immediately on one of America’s leading sociologists’ contrasting of structural-functionalism with determinism?

This chapter focuses on Dahrendorf’s critique of Parsonian structural functionalism and other variants of sociology current in the post-war period, as well as his attempt to devise a new sociology that could replace it. It shows that his exchanges with Parsons, other structural functionalists, and critics of his own social theory in the late 1950s and early 1960s revolved around the question of modern sociology’s thematic focus and methodological preconceptions. Whereas Parsons and his followers emphasized the importance of values and morality as an integrative force in society, scholars like C. Wright Mills and Hans Gerth emphasized the centrality of material and socio-economic conflict to sociological enquiry. Dahrendorf sided with the latter group, and sought to establish an intellectual alliance with this tradition of American sociology during this period. Drawing attention to Dahrendorf’s transatlantic activities and attempts to establish himself as a scholar in the United States, this chapter highlights the centrality of American social scientific debates to his intellectual interests. In the German debate sparked by the publication of the two ‘Homo Sociologicus’ essays in the *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* in 1958, the issue of material versus cultural factors emerged as well. For Dahrendorf, this question was closely connected to the role of causality in sociological explanation, and in this way his interventions in this debate corresponded closely with his involvement in the

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* This element is missing in Ben-David’s summary of the debate, cf. Ben-David, ‘Report on the Discussion’.

Positivism Dispute. By uncovering the nature of Dahrendorf's sociology during this period, the present chapter seeks to explain his attempt to reconcile his commitment to a conception of sociology that understood itself as the study of material social conflict and non-random social facts with a critique of value-freedom and technocracy, a combination of positions that effectively put him in between the two main camps within the German Sociological Association. It argues that Dahrendorf's position is best described as that of a 'liberal in despair', in analogy to Wolfgang Mommsen's description of Weber. The role of the social sciences in industrial society was not something he solely celebrated – sociology was a double-edged sword for him. It was both a necessary tool for the liberalization of modern society *and* a discipline that potentially facilitated bureaucratic and state domination over citizens.<sup>9</sup> It was precisely his optimistic conviction that the social sciences had a vast potential to create accurate and scientific knowledge about the nature of modern societies and human action that caused his liberal despair about the potential abuses of social scientific knowledge by incumbents of power.

## **2. The State and Potential of Sociology.**

During the decades following the Second World War, the sociological discipline experienced a period of expansion in both Europe and the United States. In West Germany, this took place after a hiatus during Nazi rule, when sociology was treated unfavourably by university administrations and the state.<sup>10</sup> The

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<sup>9</sup> Wolfgang Mommsen, *The Age of Bureaucracy: Perspectives on the Political Sociology of Max Weber* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974), 95.

<sup>10</sup> On sociology in Nazi Germany, cf. Otthein Rammstedt, *Deutsche Soziologie 1933-1945: Die Normalität einer Anpassung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986).

negative effect this had on the development of the discipline was exacerbated by the emigration of many prominent sociologists. From the second half of the 1940s onwards, German sociologists generally felt that they stood at the beginning of the foundation of a discipline whose true potential still lay in the future. On the theoretical level, many practitioners were convinced that their generation was creating the groundwork that could be used by later generations of researchers to better explain the inner workings of society. Dahrendorf shared this view and considered German sociology to still be in its infancy. The theoretical groundwork that was necessary to establish it as a scientific discipline still had to be laid.<sup>11</sup> Central categories such as role or status that, he said, should be used in the same way by all members of the profession were still left undefined.<sup>12</sup> These impressions were not restricted to Germany.<sup>13</sup> Parsons' structural-functionalist theory, produced during the post-war period and widely discussed on both sides of the Atlantic, attempted to systematize sociology and create a commonly accepted theoretical framework for the discipline.<sup>14</sup> Part of this effort was finding a 'common language for the area of social science'.<sup>15</sup> Parsons further observed that 'the development of sociology stands at present in an early stage'.<sup>16</sup> In West Germany, Dahrendorf echoed Parsons, speaking of a need for a common language and commonly-agreed terms, citing structure, manifest and latent function, role, or

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<sup>11</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Betrachtungen zu einigen Aspekten der deutschen Soziologie', *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 11 (1959), 152.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, 142.

<sup>13</sup> Dorothy Ross, 'Changing Contours of the Social Science Disciplines', in Theodore Porter and Dorothy Ross (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Science: Volume 7: The Modern Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 229.

<sup>14</sup> On Parsons' conviction in the need for common frameworks for not just sociology but the social sciences as a whole, cf. Isaac, *Working Knowledge*, 164-7.

<sup>15</sup> Talcott Parsons, 'Toward a Common Language for the Area of Social Science' in Talcott Parsons, *Essays in Sociological Theory: Pure and Applied* (Chicago: Free Press, 1949).

<sup>16</sup> Talcott Parsons, 'Some Problems Confronting Sociology as a Profession', *American Sociological Review* 24 (1959), 548.

position as examples.<sup>17</sup> Further work was needed, he said, to systematize sociology and formulate theories that could be applied to whole societies. For him, societies were holistic entities, which meant that social phenomena in one realm could be explained by recourse to the social structure of total societies.<sup>18</sup>

Despite his theoretical opposition to Parsons, Dahrendorf shared many of the methodological and theoretical assumptions that were at the root of the American sociologist's works. He certainly preferred the "social system" of "structural-functional theory" to much of contemporary German sociology, which in many ways struck him as backward and isolated.<sup>19</sup> It was clear to him that sociology was much more advanced in the United States than anywhere else, and that it was imperative to further the European reception of American theory.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Dahrendorf shared the conviction of Parsons and his collaborator Edward Shils that the prognosis of social processes was one of the main tasks of sociologists.<sup>21</sup> Dahrendorf also had no qualms to adopt Crane Brinton's theory of revolution, which Brinton developed in close association with Parsons and the 'Pareto and Methods of Scientific Investigation' seminar at Harvard.<sup>22</sup> Similar to Brinton, he was interested in discovering regularities and patterns of revolutions in order to develop a general theory. Last but not least, Dahrendorf agreed with the Parsonian impulse to distil 'social universals' that were present in all human societies.<sup>23</sup> Against anthropologists who argued that power was *not* a phenomenon

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<sup>17</sup> Dahrendorf, 'Betrachtungen zu einigen Aspekten', 142.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, 143.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*: "'Sozialsystems" der "strukturell-funktionalistischen Theorie".

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 142.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Struktur und Funktion: Talcott Parsons und die Entwicklung der soziologischen Theorie', in Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Freiheit*, 56.

<sup>22</sup> Isaac, *Working Knowledge*, 63.

<sup>23</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Amba und Amerikaner: Bemerkungen zur These der Universalität von Herrschaft', *European Journal of Sociology* 5 (1964), 83: 'soziale Universalien', "'funktionale Vorbedingungen von Gesellschaft'".

present in all societies, and drawing on the work of Parsons' students Davis, David Aberle, Albert Cohen, Marion Levy Jr., and Francis Sutton on the "functional prerequisites of societies" as well as Parsons' *The Social System*, he attempted to flesh out one social universal that he thought was present in any society. What set him apart from Parsons and his students was the point that this universal was the presence of unequal distribution of power and domination.<sup>24</sup>

In line with this optimistic atmosphere and concurrent hopes about the prospects of sociology, practitioners were gaining an increasingly important foothold in administration and politics. In the United States, the Kennedy Administration included many prominent social scientists.<sup>25</sup> The expectation to be living in an increasingly rationalized and bureaucratic society led sociologists to believe that their research would become increasingly influential in policy-making. This created an atmosphere in which laying the theoretical foundation for future research was regarded as an exercise of paramount importance. For Dahrendorf as for many other sociologists at the time, reforming sociological theory and society were therefore inseparable projects. The assumption to be living through a foundational period for sociology gave impetus to Dahrendorf's attempt to supplant structural-functionalism with a more realistic conflict-oriented sociology. The attempt to replace Parsonian sociology was central to his intellectual work from his Ph.D student days at the LSE, when he invited Parsons to speak at his seminar, until the publication of *Die angewandte Aufklärung* in 1963. It was central too to 'Elements of Sociology', an unpublished general treatise on sociological theory on which he was working between 1962 and 1964.

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*.

### 3. Engaging with America: Structural-Functionalism as Ideology.

Dahrendorf's intellectual and political success in Britain entailed numerous appointments to public offices, from the Directorship of the London School of Economics and Political Science in 1974 to being raised to the peerage in 1993 as Baron Dahrendorf of Clare Market in the City of Westminster. Much has been made of the central role of Britain in the development of Dahrendorf's thought and life.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, in his later writings, Dahrendorf frequently expressed his admiration for British politics and society.<sup>27</sup> However, his move to London in 1974 was never preordained. In fact, apart from pursuing a PhD at the LSE from 1952 to 1954, Dahrendorf's frequent stints at American campuses and engagement in American intellectual life had a much larger impact on him, particularly during the 1960s.

In 1957, Dahrendorf crossed the Atlantic for his first appointment at an American academic institution. At the Center for the Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS) in Palo Alto near Stanford University, he worked alongside Milton Friedman, David Landes, Robert Solow, Louis Gottschalk, Joseph Ben-David, Philip Rieff, John Bowlby, Frank Newman, Fritz Stern, and indeed Parsons and Brinton. As we have seen in Chapter II, his time at the Center had a profound political impact on the young German sociologist. In Palo Alto, a close life-long friendship developed between Stern and Dahrendorf. Stern helped Dahrendorf secure a visiting fellowship at Columbia University for the spring term of 1960. Five years later, using his contact with Felix Gilbert, Stern helped

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<sup>26</sup> Hübinger, *Engagierte Beobachter der Moderne*, 19.

<sup>27</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *On Britain* (London: BBC Publications, 1982).

Dahrendorf secure an appointment at the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton. In the end, Dahrendorf was unable to take up the appointment at the IAS, as it clashed with inescapable duties at the University of Constance. Dahrendorf's decision in favour of Constance put an end to a period during which he had toyed with the idea of coming to the United States on a permanent basis.<sup>28</sup> The University of Connecticut in Storrs offered him a permanent professorship in late 1963, and he sounded out Seymour Martin Lipset whether he should take up the offer. Lipset advised that it was not a leading institution and suggested that he could see what other universities might be interested in offering him a position.<sup>29</sup> Nine months later, Dahrendorf received a letter from Page Smith saying that 'Professor Martin Lipset spoke so highly of you that I was stimulated to read some of your articles', and asking whether he would consider an appointment at the University of California at Santa Cruz.<sup>30</sup> In November 1964, he also received an offer from the University of Michigan.<sup>31</sup>

In the end, Dahrendorf did not take up any of these offers. However, the coming years frequently brought him to American campuses. In April and May 1966, he returned to Columbia for a visiting appointment at the European Institute and the Department of History, again organized by Stern.<sup>32</sup> In February 1968 he gave four seminars at Harvard on education in post-war Germany as part of a series on 'Changes in Education in Post-War Western Europe' organized by Henry

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<sup>28</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/142, Robert Dubin to Ralf Dahrendorf, 01 December 1964.

<sup>29</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/142, Seymour Martin Lipset to Ralf Dahrendorf, 09 January 1964.

<sup>30</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/142, Page Smith to Ralf Dahrendorf, 15 October 1964.

<sup>31</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/142, Guy Swanson to Ralf Dahrendorf, 24 November 1964.

<sup>32</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/142, Philip Mosely to Ralf Dahrendorf, 22 February 1966.

Kissinger, Stanley Hoffmann, and Laurence Wylie.<sup>33</sup> Kissinger and Dahrendorf had first met at a conference run by the Rockefeller Foundation in Bellagio, Italy in 1963. In the aftermath, Kissinger sought to get Dahrendorf to come to Harvard for six weeks from March 1964 on (an opportunity not taken up).<sup>34</sup> Dahrendorf in turn tried to get Kissinger to come to the University of Tübingen, first as a permanent appointment as Professor of Political Science, then as a visiting professor.<sup>35</sup> Even though the election campaign for the state parliament in Baden-Württemberg – in which Dahrendorf was running for office for the Free Democratic Party – was already well under way, when he visited Harvard in February 1968, he took the opportunity of his trip to Cambridge, Massachusetts to also visit New York and meet Stern. William Goode and Dankwart Rustow, two other Columbia friends, also heard from him that he would be in town.<sup>36</sup> In this way, the United States and American debates occupied a central part of his intellectual universe in the 1960s. Dahrendorf in turn was considered one of the world's foremost sociologists by American colleagues. Even though he had snubbed the Sociology Department in favour of the History Department in 1966, Merton approached Dahrendorf again in January 1968 to ask whether he would be interested in another Visiting Professorship at the Sociology Department.<sup>37</sup> With the exception of

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<sup>33</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/633, Education and Society in Contemporary Germany: The Long Road to Modernity, Ralf Dahrendorf. For the Harvard seminars, see the following document in the same file: Professors Hoffmann, Kissinger and Wylie, Government 289b, Spring Term, 1967-68, Changes in Education in Post-War Western Europe.

<sup>34</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/142, Henry Kissinger to Ralf Dahrendorf, 27 August 1963.

<sup>35</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/142, Ralf Dahrendorf to Henry Kissinger, 02 April 1964; Ralf Dahrendorf to Henry Kissinger, 26 May 1964.

<sup>36</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/142, Ralf Dahrendorf to William Goode, 02 January 1968; Ralf Dahrendorf to Dankwart Rustow, 14 November 1967.

<sup>37</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/142, Robert Merton to Ralf Dahrendorf, 23 January 1968.

Germany itself, America and its research output thus attracted Dahrendorf's interest more than any other country.

In 1951, Parsons published *The Social System*, a book that would draw a lot of attention from other sociologists for the next decade. Together with Marx, Parsons' structural-functional sociology formed the focal point of Dahrendorf's own work during these years. Dahrendorf and Parsons met at least twice after Parsons attended the Thursday Evening Seminar at the LSE. In the summer of 1956, both attended a seminar in Salzburg where Dahrendorf impressed the American sociologist enough to get him to write a reference for him for his successful application to CASBS in Palo Alto.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, Merton attempted to get the Center to defer Dahrendorf's offer by a year so that his fellowship would not coincide with Parsons' own fellowship. At this point, Merton assumed that Dahrendorf's obsession with Parsonian sociology was a sign of his intellectual affinity with the Harvard scholar:

He soaked up a great deal of Talcott's theory by reading and during this past summer at Salzburg, glazed this over with a good many weeks of close contact with Talcott. If he should now have a full year at the Center together with Talcott, this might be too much of a good thing.<sup>39</sup>

In the end, Merton's concern proved unfounded. Dahrendorf and Parsons did spend the same academic year in Palo Alto, and yet the former's writings took on a decidedly anti-Parsonian pitch. Indeed, Merton himself would only a few years

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<sup>38</sup> CASBS Administrative Records, [application form, undated].

<sup>39</sup> CASBS Administrative Records, Robert Merton to Ralph Tyler, 17 October 1956.

later find himself included in Dahrendorf's indictment of American sociology, cited as a prime example of its alleged conservative character.<sup>40</sup>

In Palo Alto, Dahrendorf prepared the English edition of *Class and Class Conflict* and wrote the manuscripts of 'Homo Sociologicus' and 'Out of Utopia'. The latter amounted to a thorough critique of the assumptions that Parsons' work rested on, expanding on a critique of Parsons published in the *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* in 1955. 'Out of Utopia' argued that Parsons' conviction that social integration was based on shared values and his interest in social stability and equilibrium epitomized the utopian character of the conservative character of contemporary sociology.<sup>41</sup> Dahrendorf first presented this paper at Berkeley during his CASBS fellowship before publishing it in the *American Sociological Review* in 1958.<sup>42</sup> In addition to these publications, Dahrendorf also worked on a collection of essays on structural-functionalist theory, which he intended to translate into German but that ultimately remained unpublished. Its table of content nonetheless gives an idea of Dahrendorf's interests at the time: in addition to Parsons and Merton it included works by Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, Alexander Lesser, Bronislaw Malinowski, Kingsley Davis, Wilbert E. Moore, Melvin Tumin, Dorothy Gregg, D.F. Aberle, A.K. Cohen, M.J. Levy Jr., and F.X. Sutton.<sup>43</sup>

With his critique of structural-functionalism, Dahrendorf contributed to a slowly but steadily increasing chorus of critics in the mid- to later 1950s. Growing

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<sup>40</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'European Sociology and the American Self-Image', *European Journal of Sociology* 2 (1961), 363.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Chapter I, II of this thesis.

<sup>42</sup> Meifort, *Ralf Dahrendorf*, 85.

<sup>43</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/315, *Struktur und Funktion: Eine Sammlung englischer und amerikanischer Beiträge zur soziologischen Theorie und Gesellschaft*. Übersetzt, eingeleitet und herausgegeben von Ralf Dahrendorf Dr. phil, Ph.D.

out of the meetings of the Thursday Evening Seminar, Lockwood published a critique of Parsons in the *British Journal of Sociology*.<sup>44</sup> Pointing to the role of power, interests, and interest conflicts in societies characterized by limited resources, Lockwood criticized Parsons for an allegedly thematically restricted version of sociology that focused on values and norms as the sources of social structures.<sup>45</sup> Apart from thanking Dahrendorf for ‘many discussions on this and other aspects of sociology’, Lockwood’s interaction with his German colleague was evident in his drawing on Renner and Geiger to make his case against Parsons.<sup>46</sup> Lewis Coser in turn sought to integrate the concept of social conflict into the structural-functionalist model.<sup>47</sup> In works published in 1958, 1959, and 1960, respectively, Barrington Moore, Dennis Wrong, and Daniel Bell all levelled the charge of a conservative bias against American sociology.<sup>48</sup>

The most prominent critic of Parsons, however, was C. Wright Mills. In 1959, Mills published *The Sociological Imagination*, a critique of American sociology in which Parsons featured as one of his main targets of criticism. Building on *The Power Elite* (1956), the Columbia sociologist tried to chip away at the arguments of sociologists who depicted America as a well-integrated society with a generally accepted value system. Mills’ critique of Parsons paralleled Dahrendorf’s in striking ways – Parsons’ systems theory, Mills stated, failed to take

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<sup>44</sup> David Lockwood, ‘Some Remarks on the “Social System”’, *British Journal of Sociology* 7 (1956).

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, 136-7.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, 143-4.

<sup>47</sup> Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956).

<sup>48</sup> Barrington Moore, *Political Power and Social Theory: Seven Studies* (New York: Harper, 1965 [1958]); Dennis Wrong, ‘The Failure of American Sociology’, *Commentary* 28 (1959); Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1960). For Dahrendorf’s comments on these works, cf. Dahrendorf, ‘European Sociology and the American Self-Image’, 343. The charge of conservatism remained a commonplace against Parsons and structural functionalism, cf. Alvin Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis in Western Sociology* (London: Heinemann, 1970).

social change and history into account, and it disregarded the role of power in society.<sup>49</sup> Mills also took issue with Parsons' heavy emphasis on norms and values as the main force of social integration – legitimating symbols and norms were more often imposed by 'institutional rulers' than voluntarily shared and accepted. In contrast to Dahrendorf, Mills was franker about the intellectual origins of his critique. Thus, in presenting his views on Parsons he added: 'I have, of course, just paraphrased Marx and Engels speaking of Hegel', quoting *The German Ideology*.<sup>50</sup> Last but not least, Mills also paralleled Dahrendorf in arguing that Parsons' sociology was rooted in ideology.<sup>51</sup> Mills was unpopular among many other American sociologists, but in *Die Angewandte Aufklärung* (1963), a critique of American sociology only published in German, Dahrendorf praised him as a rare example of, in his words, 'critical sociology' in an otherwise conservative discipline.<sup>52</sup> Dahrendorf depicted Mills as part of a radical minority position in American sociology. This critical tradition also included Thorstein Veblen, Robert Lynd, and the sociological tradition of the University of Wisconsin, competing with a conservative tradition running from William Graham Sumner to Parsons.<sup>53</sup> Dahrendorf never explicitly defined what he meant by 'conservative sociology', but his consistent use suggests that what it referred to the tendency of certain American and European scholars to put the role of values shared across society and social integration at the heart of their enquiries.

When Dahrendorf started lecturing on social structure at the University of Saarland in the academic year of 1955/1956, he drew extensively on *Character and*

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<sup>49</sup> C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 25-49.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, 37-40.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, 48-9.

<sup>52</sup> Dahrendorf, *Die Angewandte Aufklärung*, 160: 'kritischen Soziologie'.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, 14-9. For the University of Wisconsin, cf. *ibid.*, 117.

*Social Structure* (1953), which Mills had co-written with his teacher Hans Gerth, a German émigré sociologist at the University of Wisconsin.<sup>54</sup> When Mills died prematurely in 1962, he wrote an obituary for the leading German sociology journal *Kölner Zeitschrift*.<sup>55</sup> For Dahrendorf, Mills was one of the few American social scientists who recognized the existence of power imbalances and social conflicts within society, and criticized the rest of the discipline's unwillingness to engage with Mills' arguments as a mark of its ideological status. Arguing that *The Sociological Imagination* was probably Mills' most important but not his best work, Dahrendorf again drew attention to Gerth and Mills' *Character and Social Structure*, which he saw as being caught between the poles of the 'conservative historian Weber and the radical analyst and polemicist Marx'.<sup>56</sup> Mills' *The Power Elite*, he maintained, had to be taken with a pinch of salt as a book that mixed analysis and 'poorly substantiated polemics'.<sup>57</sup> Dahrendorf nevertheless criticized that, for American commentators, the title 'The Power Elite' had constituted sufficient ground to caricature Mills as a radical. The outcome, he claimed, would have been the same in West Germany if anybody had written a book with its title there.<sup>58</sup>

Dahrendorf habitually sided with Mills in the debates the Texan had with other members of the American sociological profession. As far as the central phenomenon of 'power' was concerned, Dahrendorf found Mills' conception to be superior to that of Parsons. Parsons' opinion that power was best defined as 'the

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<sup>54</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/471, Einführung in die Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie: Soziale Struktur, I - WS 1955-56, II - SS 1956.

<sup>55</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'C. Wright Mills', *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 14 (1962).

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, 604: 'konservativen Historiker Weber und dem radikalen Analytiker und Polemiker Marx'.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*: 'schwach begründeten Polemik'.

<sup>58</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Deutsche Richter: Ein Beitrag zur Soziologie der Oberschicht', in Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Freiheit*, 177.

capacity to mobilize the resources of the society for the attainment of goals for which a general “public” commitment has been made, or may be made’, expressed in a book review of Mills’ *The Power Elite*, struck Dahrendorf as exemplary of Parsons’ assumption of widespread social consensus.<sup>59</sup> Parsons further objected to Mills’ definition of ‘power’ as power exercised over others rather than as ‘a facility for the performance of function in and on behalf of the society as a system’.<sup>60</sup> In *Die Angewandte Aufklärung*, Dahrendorf reported that it caused him ‘almost physical torture’ to read a long footnote heavily critical of Mills in Lipset and Neil Smelser’s ‘Change and Controversy in Recent American Sociology’, published in the *British Journal of Sociology* in 1961.<sup>61</sup> In the footnote, Lipset and Smelser depicted Mills’ popularity outside academia as curious given his work’s lacking relevance to contemporary sociology. Dahrendorf felt the need to quote the whole footnote running over an entire page.<sup>62</sup> In spite of this critique, Dahrendorf sent Lipset a copy of the book after publication. He received a polite reply, part of which tried to give Dahrendorf ‘the background of that famous footnote on Mills’:

The footnote on Mills was actually inserted on the galleys. The reason why I did so, and it was completely my own responsibility, not that of Smelser, was that a few days before I received the galleys from the *British Journal of Sociology*, I read an article by Mills which appeared in the *New Left Review*. In this article, which was, as I recall, largely his impressions based on a tour of Europe, particularly eastern Europe, Mills suddenly lashed out at Dan Bell. He had a paragraph in the article which, out of nowhere, suddenly accused Bell of being a gossip, a

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<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Dahrendorf, *Die angewandte Aufklärung*, 175. For the original quote, cf. Talcott Parsons, ‘The Distribution of Power in American Society’, *World Politics* 10 (1957), 140.

<sup>60</sup> Parsons, ‘Distribution of Power’, 139.

<sup>61</sup> Dahrendorf, *Die angewandte Aufklärung*, 170.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, 169-170.

malevolent individual who was not really interested in ideas, but just in chattering about people, and much worse. He also attacked Bell for his politics in the same personal fashion. As you may imagine, I was somewhat angry at Mills for this and the footnote was my retaliating at him. It had no deeper significance than this. I thought also, as I recall my feelings at the time, that I ought to mention, if I was going to put this footnote in, some facts concerning Mills' relationship with American sociology since he had been going around Europe pretending that he was a victim of McCarthyism and of persecution by Lazarsfeld and Merton. There was simply no truth in this as he well knew ... This may all sound very bitter but he was not a nice man.<sup>63</sup>

Reflecting on these acrimonious debates among American sociologists, Dahrendorf observed that by European standards the radicalism of American critical sociologists was in fact quite moderate. According to him, it was no coincidence that in the United States both progressive and conservative sociologists concurred in their reverence of Weber.<sup>64</sup> At this point in time, Weber still symbolized social scientific 'conservatism' to him; the American reception of Weber seemed to have interested him for years already. A reply by René König to Dahrendorf from October 1958 shows that Dahrendorf had suggested approaching Reinhard Bendix about writing an article about 'Max Weber in America' for the *Kölner Zeitschrift*.<sup>65</sup> In his attempt to undermine the dominant 'conservative' strand of American sociology, Dahrendorf also made common cause with associates of Mills who he assumed shared his intentions. As editor of the *European Journal of Sociology*, he approached Gerth, who had co-translated a selection of Weber's

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<sup>63</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/41, S. M. Lipset to Ralf Dahrendorf, 2 January 1964.

<sup>64</sup> Dahrendorf, *Die angewandte Aufklärung*, 118.

<sup>65</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/41, René König to Ralf Dahrendorf, 8 October 1958.

essays with Mills, about writing an article about ‘Max Weber in America’. Dahrendorf advised Gerth that the editors were looking for a ‘well-informed article’, but added that ‘informed does of course not mean that the article must not be polemical; to the contrary, we are looking for a particularly critical article – otherwise we would not be asking you...’.<sup>66</sup> This request came less than a year after Dahrendorf had met Gerth at the University of Wisconsin at a point between February and early April 1960 when he gave a guest lecture on ‘Democracy and Social Structure in Post-Nazi Germany’, invited by Howard Becker.<sup>67</sup>

Gerth and Mills broadly shared Dahrendorf’s methodological orientation. In the introduction to *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, the two depicted Weber as someone who ‘does not squarely oppose historical materialism as altogether wrong; he merely takes exception to its claim of establishing a single and universal causal sequence.’<sup>68</sup> Weber’s writings partly had to be understood ‘as an attempt to “round out” Marx’s economic materialism by a political and military materialism.’<sup>69</sup> This interpretation of Weber put the two scholars at odds with Parsons, who insisted that Weber, like Durkheim, generally ‘looked to the “ideal” as contrasted with “material” factors for the key concepts – such as values and institutionalized norms – of their analyses’.<sup>70</sup> Both Gerth and Mills were also interested in Mannheim and the sociology of knowledge. Before emigrating, Gerth

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<sup>66</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/40, Ralf Dahrendorf to Hans Gerth, 2 February 1961: ‘wirklich informierten Artikel’, ‘Informiert heißt natürlich nicht, daß der Artikel nicht polemisch sein sollte; im Gegenteil, wir erhoffen uns einen besonders kritischen Artikel – sonst würden wir Sie nicht fragen’.

<sup>67</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/37, Ralf Dahrendorf to Howard Becker, 24 November 1959. Gerth thanked Dahrendorf for his visit in a letter, cf. BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/40, Hans Gerth to Ralf Dahrendorf, 7 April 1960.

<sup>68</sup> H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970 [1948]), 47.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.* Further cf. Oliver Neun, ‘Der andere “amerikanische” Max Weber: Hans Gerths und C. Wright Mills’ “From Max Weber” und dessen deutsche Rezeption’, *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* 25 (2015).

<sup>70</sup> Parsons, ‘Some Problems Concerning Sociology’, 549.

had attended Mannheim's seminar at the University of Heidelberg. Both at Heidelberg and from 1930 at the University of Frankfurt, he had worked as Mannheim's assistant.<sup>71</sup> Mills on the other hand published on the sociology of knowledge in the late 1930s.<sup>72</sup>

Other sociologists close to Mills also came to value Dahrendorf as a champion of a movement trying to establish a new sociology. William Goode, a sociologist at Columbia University, invited Dahrendorf to sit on a panel on 'An Evaluation of the Decade in Sociology, 1950-1960' at a meeting of the Eastern Sociological Society in April 1960. As Parsons was going to be on the panel, Goode wrote that Dahrendorf would be better placed to confront him than others: 'My good friend Mills scorns the Establishment, but hasn't bothered to understand it.'<sup>73</sup> The Austrian-American sociologist Peter Berger wrote to Dahrendorf in May 1964, urging him to publish an American translation of *Die angewandte Aufklärung*, as he thought the time was ripe given that the 'ideological "establishment"' of American sociology had started to 'shake a little bit'.<sup>74</sup> Berger was not the last one to express this wish: Mills' student Irving Louis Horowitz, himself a strong critic of what he took to be the mainstream of American sociology, also pressed for a translation in early 1966.<sup>75</sup> In the same letter Horowitz also expressed his amazement at Dahrendorf's return to Columbia University as a visiting scholar at the Department of History rather than the Department of Sociology in 1966:

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<sup>71</sup> Guy Oakes and Arthur Vidich, 'Gerth, Mills, and Shils: The Origins of "From Max Weber"', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 12 (1999), 401.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, 400.

<sup>73</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/40, William Goode to Ralf Dahrendorf, 17 January 1960.

<sup>74</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/37, Peter Berger to Ralf Dahrendorf, 6 May 1964.

<sup>75</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/142, Irving Louis Horowitz to Ralf Dahrendorf, 2 February 1966. For Horowitz's critique of American sociology, cf. Irving Louis Horowitz (ed.), *The New Sociology: Essays in Social Science and Social Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

What irony. What unbelievable nonsense that you should be invited in the History Department and not to the Sociology Department. Perhaps you now realize why Columbia University no longer ranks as a foremost center of sociology in the United States. What a bunch of revanchists. Apparently to criticize them is to be cast into darkness. But you can have the joy of snubbing Lazarsfeld, Merton, et al, on a daily basis as you chat with your fellow 'historians'.<sup>76</sup>

Dahrendorf's affinity with the 'critical' tradition in American sociology then provides some perspective on why he felt drawn to Veblen's *Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution*. Dahrendorf took copious notes on the book while working on *Society and Democracy in Germany* (1965) and used it extensively in lectures.<sup>77</sup> Many of Veblen's ideas that Dahrendorf noted down on paper foreshadowed Dahrendorf's own account of German social structure and history. Among other things, Dahrendorf took note of Veblen's emphasis on Germany's aristocratic elite, its relatively late industrialization, the subsequent dominance of the state in economic activity that resulted from this delay, and the submissiveness of the German labour movement.<sup>78</sup>

How did Dahrendorf's vision for sociology differ from that of Parsons more specifically? Already in his own student days, Parsons had insisted 'that the economic and social order was a matter of human arrangements, not one of inevitable natural law, and hence that it was subject to human control'.<sup>79</sup> In *The*

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<sup>76</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/142 Irving Louis Horowitz to Ralf Dahrendorf, 2 February 1966.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Chapter IV.

<sup>78</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/657, Thorstein Veblen, *Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution*. New York: The Viking Press, 1939.

<sup>79</sup> Quoted in Howard Brick, 'Talcott Parsons's "Shift Away from Economics", 1937-1946', *Journal of American History* 87 (2000), 493.

*Structure of Social Action* (1937), Parsons sketched an outline of a voluntarist tradition of sociological thought exemplified by Alfred Marshall, Vilfredo Pareto, Durkheim, and Weber, which he claimed had successfully consigned the ‘untenable positions’ of ‘positivistic social thought’ to history.<sup>80</sup> By positivism, Parsons referred to intellectual traditions such as utilitarianism, behaviourism, and Social Darwinism.<sup>81</sup> All of these currents of thought, he claimed, ‘ultimately flow into the same sea, that of mechanistic determinism’.<sup>82</sup> In contrast, Parsons was searching for alternatives that concentrated on the subjective and voluntary realm of action, and sought to move away from the ‘minimization of the role of noneconomic factors’.<sup>83</sup> In this way, Parsons’ sociological project was diametrically opposed to the one that Dahrendorf developed twenty years later.<sup>84</sup> This was also true for Parsons’ interpretation of the roots of National Socialism, a topic that preoccupied him during the Second World War. According to his analysis, the origins of National Socialism and totalitarianism lay in social anomie, that is, Germany’s insufficient social integration.<sup>85</sup> This analysis chimed with the later observations of *The Social System* (1951), where Parsons further developed his structural-functionalist theory. In many ways, Parsons was here concerned with the question of how societies integrate and stabilize, including aspects such as the inculcation of values in children, how social roles are acquired, and how societies deal with deviant behaviour.

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<sup>80</sup> Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1968 [1937]), 125.

<sup>81</sup> For Parsons’ opposition to Darwinism, cf. Uta Gerhardt, *Talcott Parsons: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Incidentally, Gerhardt was Dahrendorf’s assistant at the University of Constance in the late 1960s.

<sup>82</sup> Parsons, *Structure of Social Action*, 121.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, 174.

<sup>84</sup> On Parsons’ voluntarist critique of determinism, cf. Brick, *Transcending Capitalism*, 126-8.

<sup>85</sup> For Parsons’ interpretation of National Socialism, cf. Uta Gerhardt, ‘Talcott Parsons and the Transformation of German Society at the End of World War II’, *European Sociological Review* 12 (1996).

Parsons' *The Structure of Social Systems* famously begun with the observation that 'Spencer is dead. But who killed him and how? This is the problem'.<sup>86</sup> Parsons' critical assessment of Spencer, whose theories were based on the assumption of omnipresent conflict, and his appraisal of Spencer's assassins dovetailed with his preference for consensus-oriented theories. Dahrendorf objected to Parsons' death pronouncement, arguing that Spencer was still half-alive given that his biological conception of society lived on in the works of Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, and indeed Parsons himself. Many sociologists still worked with the assumption that every part of society had a particular function within a harmonized system that worked like a biological organism.<sup>87</sup> According to Dahrendorf, Parsons' interest in social integration was characteristic of American sociology more generally. From Sumner and Franklin Henry Giddings to the Chicago School of Albion Small, W.I. Thomas, Robert E. Park, and Louis Wirth, Parsons' predecessors had been interested in community, attachment, and the 'secure order of social affairs'.<sup>88</sup> America's actual problems, 'equality and its perils, social stratification, and class structure', were only studied by those standing on the periphery of the discipline.<sup>89</sup> On the other hand, Parsons also epitomized the reluctance of American sociologists to take economic and political factors into account. The European tradition of sociology was often ignored in the United States, and when this was not so it was caricatured and reduced to palatable facets. Thus, Vilfredo Pareto had been "'biologized" (Henderson) and "psychologized" (Parsons)'.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Parsons, *Structure of Social Action*, 3.

<sup>87</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Die Funktionen sozialer Konflikte', in Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Freiheit*, 112-3.

<sup>88</sup> Dahrendorf, *Die angewandte Aufklärung*, 114-7: 'sicheren Ordnung der sozialen Dinge'.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*, 115: 'Gleichheit und ihre Gefährdung, soziale Schichtung und Klassenstruktur'.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, 128: "'biologisiert" (Henderson) und "psychologisiert" (Parsons)'.

Dahrendorf was adamant that American sociologists read European authors selectively, and that only such theories that chimed with pre-existing American values found their audiences. Commenting on the reception of European sociology in the United States, he argued that thinking about this matter in terms of ‘influence’ was ‘a very misleading figure of speech. It would be quite unhistorical to think that any social norm, i.e. any value embodied in the institutions of a society, could simply be the result of an outside influence of whatever kind...’.<sup>91</sup> Americans would still have had an individualist ethos in Spencer’s absence, and would have been ascetic Puritans had Weber never written about Puritan economic ethics. Thus, Dahrendorf also found it telling that Bendix’s biography of Weber reduced the German scholar to a sociologist of religion and theorist of rationality, while his political interests fell by the wayside.<sup>92</sup>

Bendix’s interpretation of Weber was part of a broader attempt to move beyond overly economic interpretations of politics. In a programmatic article co-authored with Lipset in 1957, Bendix argued that Fascism was a case in point that should prompt sociologists to take seriously psychological and ideal factors, rather than treating them as derivatives.<sup>93</sup> Dahrendorf in contrast regretted that Marx was completely absent from American sociology.<sup>94</sup> In fact, he was puzzled that ‘many Americans regard Weber as a progressive’.<sup>95</sup> Even more so, Dahrendorf said, themes such as class, violence, or revolution did not interest the majority of American social scientists. George Sorel’s *Reflections on Violence* were ignored, and he recounted in 1961 that ‘when I recommended the book to some American

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<sup>91</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘European Sociology and the American Self-Image’, 329.

<sup>92</sup> Dahrendorf, *Die angewandte Aufklärung*, 128.

<sup>93</sup> Job Dittberner, *The End of Ideology and American Social Thought, 1930-1960* (UMI Research Press, 1979), 246-7.

<sup>94</sup> Dahrendorf, *Die angewandte Aufklärung*, 128.

<sup>95</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘European Sociology and the American Self-Image’, 341.

graduates in sociology, I found them deeply shocked after reading it'.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, Dahrendorf's positive thoughts on Sorel further demonstrate his intellectual distance from the liberal tradition of Popper and Berlin, laid out in Chapter II. For Berlin, Sorel epitomized anti-liberal attitudes.<sup>97</sup>

It is thus not surprising that Dahrendorf followed Lockwood in criticizing Parsons for his reception of anthropological conceptions of culture, and for prioritizing culture over economics and politics. Nonetheless, Parsons' focus on norms and values was much more important to him.<sup>98</sup> In 'Out of Utopia', he plainly stated: 'That societies are held together by some kind of value consensus seems to me either a definition of societies or a statement clearly contradicted by empirical evidence...'.<sup>99</sup> Dahrendorf worried that Parsons' assumptions about social equilibrium and universally accepted values within societies led sociologists to focus on a biased set of research questions connected to 'reproduction, socialization, and role allocation' such as the family, educational institutions, and the division of labour.<sup>100</sup> By virtue of its alleged ideological refusal to engage with social conflict, structural-functionalism was inherently biased in favour of the status quo.<sup>101</sup> Just three years earlier, Adorno had published a critique of Parsons that had made similarly critical points about the role of norms and values in structural-functionalism.<sup>102</sup>

In its essence, Dahrendorf's critique amounted to questioning the counterfactual assumptions underlying Parsons' system – Parsons' assumption that

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<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*, 353.

<sup>97</sup> Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* (London: Pimlico, 1997).

<sup>98</sup> Dahrendorf, *Die angewandte Aufklärung*, 147-8.

<sup>99</sup> Dahrendorf, 'Out of Utopia', 120.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, 121.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, 124.

<sup>102</sup> Uta Gerhardt, 'Worlds Come Apart: Systems Theory versus Critical Theory: Drama in the History of Sociology in the Twentieth Century', *The American Sociologist* 33 (2002), 16.

stability was the regular state of social affairs would lead sociologists to focus on the wrong problems. Assuming that stability was normal would prompt researchers to ask why certain societies were unstable. For Dahrendorf, this amounted to asking the wrong questions. Conflict and instability were the natural state of affairs and did not have to be accounted for – it was their absence that had to be explained. It was a fact that social conflict, whether democratic or violent-revolutionary, had to be accepted as an inevitable aspect of all human societies. This made a conflict-oriented alternative theory essential to allow sociologists to raise questions about matters that in Parsons' framework appeared to be normal. Vice versa, Dahrendorf's model stipulated that conflict was natural, rendering enquiries into pathological causes of conflict meaningless.<sup>103</sup>

From this perspective Dahrendorf took issue with Elton Mayo's *The Human Problems of an Industrialized Civilization*, which sought to account for labour disputes and unrest by way of analysing alleged pathological features of union leaders, including personal histories of social inclusion, traumatic childhood experiences, and inability to find enjoyment. For Dahrendorf, this was a telling example of a sociological trend that regarded material social conflict as a social irregularity.<sup>104</sup> For similar reasons he rejected Mayo's work on the Hawthorne Experiment, which emphasized the positive effect that worker groups had on productivity by helping to reduce social anomie.<sup>105</sup> While Mayo's study emphasized belonging and happiness, he stated that it ignored wages, working conditions, and relations of domination.<sup>106</sup> This applied to others, too. *Yankee City*,

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<sup>103</sup> Dahrendorf, 'Die Funktionen sozialer Konflikte', 116-8.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, 116.

<sup>105</sup> Dahrendorf, *Die angewandte Aufklärung*, 133. Further cf. Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Sozialwissenschaft und Werturteil', in Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Freiheit*, 41. Dahrendorf gave an earlier version of this essay as his *Habilitationsprobevorlesung* lecture in 1957.

<sup>106</sup> Dahrendorf, 'Sozialwissenschaft und Werturteil', 41.

a sociological study of Newburyport, Massachusetts by Mayo's student W. Lloyd Warner, had initially been intended as a study of the community of Cicero, the suburb of Chicago in which the industrial plant of the Hawthorne Experiment was located. Dahrendorf was intrigued that Warner had eventually decided against Cicero on the basis that it was highly dysfunctional and disintegrated.<sup>107</sup> Instead, he chose Newburyport because its society had been stable over a long period and was dominated by a particular group 'with a coherent tradition'.<sup>108</sup>

#### **4. Reforming Sociology from 'Homo Sociologicus' to the 'Elements of Sociology'.**

Given Dahrendorf's disagreement with Parsons on the role of conflict in society, it is not surprising that his attempt to re-define Parsons' concept of 'role' in his 'Homo Sociologicus' articles involved trying to move away from voluntarist conceptions of social action, emphasizing instead constraints imposed on individuals by others in society. The articles made it clear that he conceived of sociology as the study of social phenomena that could not plausibly be explained as coincidental. Individual human behaviour could not be explained in this way, as was the case for the allocation of social positions.<sup>109</sup> The articles advocated sociological research into the constraints imposed on individuals by society through socially prescribed 'roles'. Such constraints, which he said were often tremendous, played a considerable role in influencing individual behaviour. Any attempt to understand social action therefore had to involve a close examination of

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<sup>107</sup> Dahrendorf, *Angewandte Aufklärung*, 134.

<sup>108</sup> Quoted in *ibid*: 'mit einer kohärenten Tradition'.

<sup>109</sup> Dahrendorf, 'Homo Sociologicus', 181.

the roles that individuals played in society. At the same time, he made it clear that he did not think that roles predetermined individual behaviour completely – behaviour was ‘bounded rather than determined’, meaning that individual freedom was possible within prescribed corridors of socially acceptable behaviour.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, he also stated that questions about the extent of freedom of behaviour within certain roles could not yet be answered satisfactorily given the current state of sociological research.<sup>111</sup>

Most German sociologists did not receive Dahrendorf’s re-interpretation of the concept of ‘role’ positively. For Friedrich Tenbruck, Dahrendorf’s ideal-typical conception of human nature in society amounted to little more than ideology. Insisting that the phenomenon of alienation was limited to a particular kind of society and not nearly as ubiquitous as Dahrendorf alleged, Tenbruck insisted that the young sociologist greatly overestimated the constraints that society imposed upon the individual.<sup>112</sup> He claimed that the tradition of *Historismus* contained everything that was to be said on the issue of individual agency within society, whereas sociology had not been able to add anything of substance to the debate.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, Tenbruck emphasized the fact that Dahrendorf’s framework failed to take account of culture, being unable to explain social change that was ‘rooted in cultural rather than in structural causes’.<sup>114</sup> Correspondingly, Tenbruck hoped that exchanges with cultural anthropology could keep sociologists from committing the mistake of taking the ‘peculiarities of modern society as

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<sup>110</sup> *ibid.*, 349: ‘weniger determiniert als eingegrenzt’.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*, 198.

<sup>112</sup> Tenbruck, ‘Zur deutschen Rezeption der Rollentheorie’, 37.

<sup>113</sup> Tenbruck, ‘Zur deutschen Rezeption’, 34-5.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*, 28: ‘in kulturellen und nicht in strukturellen Ursachen wurzelt, nicht erfaßt werden’.

characteristics of society as such'.<sup>115</sup> Helmuth Plessner's comment on 'Homo Sociologicus' in turn took issue with Dahrendorf's avowed critique of society's constraining character on the individual. According to Plessner, this was liable to lead to an attitude of withdrawal from society, which would be detrimental to democracy.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, Plessner feared that since role analysis focused on external behaviour, shunning academic enquiry into the inner reality of human agents (*Verstehen*), it could only offer a very limited account of social action.<sup>117</sup> Directly linked to their interventions in the debate that led to the Positivism Dispute, Gehlen and Schelsky criticized 'Homo Sociologicus' for its moralistic bent. In a review for the *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft*, Gehlen argued that social scientists should accept the society they lived in and refrain from value-laden agitation.<sup>118</sup> Schelsky's comments went into a similar direction, criticizing Dahrendorf for introducing moralism into his sociological theory.<sup>119</sup>

Approval for Dahrendorf's theoretical construct came from Hans Paul Bahrtdt, who observed that Dahrendorf's causality-oriented approach in 'Homo Sociologicus' was helpful, and indeed 'unavoidable if social mass phenomena need to be explained'.<sup>120</sup> Even though some sociologists tried to avoid the question of causality, Bahrtdt insisted that this was impossible, making fun of scholars who 'insist on the freedom of Man who could do everything differently than he in fact

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<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*, 36: 'Eigentümlichkeiten der modernen Gesellschaft für Characteristica der Gesellschaft überhaupt zu halten'.

<sup>116</sup> Helmuth Plessner, 'Soziale Rolle und menschliche Natur', in Josef Derbolav and Friedhelm Nicolin (eds.), *Erkenntnis und Verantwortung: Festschrift für Theodor Litt* (Dusseldorf: Pädagogischer Verlag, 1960), 114.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, 106, 113-4.

<sup>118</sup> Arnold Gehlen, 'Ralf Dahrendorf: Homo Sociologicus.', *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft* 117 (1961), 370.

<sup>119</sup> Schelsky, *Ortsbestimmung der Soziologie*, 108.

<sup>120</sup> Hans Paul Bahrtdt, 'Zur Frage des Menschenbildes in der Soziologie', *European Journal of Sociology* 2 (1961), 7-8: 'gar nicht vermeidbar ist, wenn gesellschaftliche Massenerscheinungen erklärt werden sollen'.

does – fortunately for the sake of science – with high statistical probability’.<sup>121</sup> This was not a plea for determinism, as Bahrtdt made clear.<sup>122</sup> Rather, Bahrtdt felt that his conclusions followed logically from the observable regularities of social affairs.

After the debate on ‘Homo Sociologicus’ had run its course in the early 1960s, the concept of ‘role’ still remained central to Dahrendorf’s theoretical concerns. While working on the manuscript of the unpublished ‘Elements of Sociology’, he ran research seminars at the University of Tübingen on the genesis of roles and related issues from November 1963 to July 1964. Dahrendorf wrote a first draft of ‘Elements of Sociology’ in 1962 and produced a revised edition in 1964.<sup>123</sup> The only part of these two versions that was ever published was the introduction to the second version, which came to form the introduction to *Pfade aus Utopia* (1967). In addition to that, minutes from the research seminars give an idea of the content and intention of his work. As the minutes suggest, ‘Elements of Sociology’ was conceived as nothing less than a first exposition of a predictive framework for the explanation of social action. In terms of scientific aspiration, it equalled Parsons’ systems theory. Dahrendorf attempted to specify the use of concepts (the four key concepts of ‘Elements of Sociology’ were ‘position’, ‘role’, ‘role expectations’, and ‘sanctions’), used equations to express theoretical propositions about sociological phenomena (a practice inspired by S.F. Nadel and Theodor Geiger), and insisted that coincidental aspects of individual instances should be ignored.<sup>124</sup> The central question that Dahrendorf sought to answer with

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<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*, 8: ‘betuern die Freiheit des Menschen, der auch alles anders tun könnte, als er es – gottseidank für die Forschung – mit hoher statistischer Wahrscheinlichkeit tut’.

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*, 7.

<sup>123</sup> For this information about when these works were produced, cf. Dahrendorf, *Pfade aus Utopia*, 380.

<sup>124</sup> For the four key concepts, cf. BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/625, Protokoll des Forschungskolloquiums vom 17. Dezember 1963.

‘Elements of Sociology’ was how norms were generated and sustained, and what mechanisms were at play in compelling individuals to abide by them. In this way, the project was set to undermine the central assumption of Parsons’ sociological theory, namely that norms and values were shared and accepted rather than imposed by one group on another. Dahrendorf was particularly interested in extra-legal norms: what institutions and mechanisms set norms that obliged individuals to act in certain ways?<sup>125</sup> On this point, he thought to be departing from Weber. On a handwritten note, he observed that Weber was only interested in legal norms.<sup>126</sup>

During the seminars, Dahrendorf made it clear that he thought that within this framework, human social action became to a very large degree predictable. In the first seminar, his assistant Wolfgang Zapf (who was appointed Professor of Sociology at the University of Frankfurt in 1968) raised the critical question whether seeing roles as exclusively constraining and forces shaping individuals exhausted the subject. Using the example of Heinrich Himmler as ‘Reichsführer SS’, Zapf argued that in some cases individuals managed to create and shape roles for themselves, and that these roles are so intrinsically linked to a particular person that their ‘field collapses with their own person’.<sup>127</sup> Dahrendorf replied that in the vast majority of cases individuals did not have the power to shape their roles in this way.<sup>128</sup> At the beginning of the next seminar in early December 1963, Dahrendorf advocated “‘hygienic” sociological thinking’ to avoid the pitfall of paying too much attention to individual coincidental factors.<sup>129</sup> Zapf raised the issue again at

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<sup>125</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/625, Protokoll des Forschungskolloquiums vom 17. Dezember 1963.

<sup>126</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/627, handwritten note, no title.

<sup>127</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/627, Protokoll des Forschungskolloquiums vom 19. November 1963: ‘deren Feld mit ihrer eigenen Person wieder zusammenbreche’.

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/627, Protokoll des Forschungskolloquiums vom 3.12.1963: “‘hygienisches” Denken der Soziologie’.

the end of the seminar, this time drawing on the example of Uwe Seeler, the star player of Hamburger SV, the football club that Dahrendorf supported. Asking whether Seeler had shaped the role of ‘center-forward in the German national team’, Zapf was told that ‘in this case one may speak of “charisma”, which positionally stabilizes particular aspects of an individual and in this sense bequeaths’ it to future incumbents of the role.<sup>130</sup>

In the introduction to the second edition of ‘Elements of Sociology’, Dahrendorf further engaged with this question and with some of the critiques levelled at *Homo Sociologicus*. Prominently, he restated his conviction that sociology studied social action with the explicit intent of uncovering causality. In his own words, science was the pursuit of knowledge of ‘conceived necessity’, meaning that it dealt with causal regularities that common sense showed could nonetheless be broken in individual instances.<sup>131</sup> Still, the notion that social action could not be studied in terms of causation or regularity struck him as nonsensical. He suggested to consider for a moment what random social action would amount to: ‘if we shake somebody’s hand for the purpose of salutation the chance is equally great that the person spits us in the face, does not see us or kisses us on the forehead, threatens us with a pistol, or that he also shakes our hand’.<sup>132</sup> These concerns also figured in Dahrendorf’s research seminars on role genesis. When Zapf spoke about the relevance of Weber’s thought to the genesis of roles in July 1964 (Zapf here argued that Weber did not think in terms of ‘roles or social structures in the modern

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<sup>130</sup> *ibid.*: ‘Mittelstürmers der deutschen Nationalmannschaft’, ‘man könne hier von einem “Charisma” sprechen, welches einzelne Züge eines Einzelnen positionell verfestigt und so gewissermaßen vererbe’.

<sup>131</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Einleitung in die Sozialwissenschaft’, in Dahrendorf, *Pfade aus Utopia*, 22: ‘gedachte Notwendigkeit’.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*, 49: ‘Wenn wir jemandem die Hand zum Gruß geben, ist die Chance gleich groß, daß er uns ins Gesicht spuckt oder uns übersieht oder auf die Stirn küßt oder mit einer Pistole bedroht oder uns auch die Hand reicht’.

sense', and that he did not in fact have a concept of society because for him all action was individual), Dahrendorf commented that Weber conceived of social change as accidental.<sup>133</sup> In contrast to Weber (or rather, in contrast to the Weber that he thought he knew), he sought a theory of social change that was precisely not based on coincidence.<sup>134</sup> As far as Zapf was concerned, their methodological differences continued over the coming years. As he put it to William Goode in January 1968:

Some like my own disciple, Wolfgang Zapf ... consider macro-sociology as an area of comparative history in which the traditions of political economy, historical analysis, strategic and international theory, and sociology converge. Others like myself still hope for the possibility of propositions which are meaningful and applicable to societies under very different conditions.<sup>135</sup>

By this time, however, he had already abandoned the 'Elements of Sociology' project and conceded to Goode that 'it is precisely in this area that is to say in the area of theories of mobility, of stratification, of conflict, and change that I perceive least progress and am therefore most unhappy.'<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/627, Protokoll des Forschungskolloquiums vom 21.7.1964 (4. und letzte Sitzung im Sommersem. 1964): 'weder Rollen noch Sozialstruktur im modernen Sinn'.

<sup>134</sup> The notion that social change and reality is not random was central to Weber's probabilistic conception of causality, cf. Max Weber, 'Objektive Möglichkeit und adäquate Verursachung in der historischen Kausalbetrachtung', in Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988).

<sup>135</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/142, Ralf Dahrendorf to William Goode, 2 January 1968.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*

## 5. The Problem of Value Freedom in Post-War Sociology.

Dahrendorf's uneasiness about structural-functionalism was inherently connected to his critique of value freedom. Following Weber, Parsons was an adamant advocate of stringently separating between normative judgments and scientific research.<sup>137</sup> At the Weber Centenary in Heidelberg in April 1964, Parsons delivered a paper on 'Value-Freedom and Objectivity'.<sup>138</sup> Dahrendorf for his part alleged that separating values and research ineluctably pushed sociology in a conservative direction.<sup>139</sup> This was particularly so in the case of American sociology. In 1958, reflecting on his time at CASBS in Palo Alto, he wrote:

in Germany (as in all Europe) the "value-free" sociologist position is still a polemical position not accepted by many. In the US it is the other way; and for the first time I realized the challenge of social science to moral thought, the intrinsic dangers of "value-free social science" – this of course, from my impressions of American society as well as American sociology.<sup>140</sup>

What did this critique of value freedom amount to?

During the two-and-a-half decades following the Second World War, the issue of value freedom was the source of some of the most heated debates in the social sciences in West Germany. As Chapter I shows, this figured prominently in

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<sup>137</sup> Cf. Parsons, 'Distribution of Power', 127.

<sup>138</sup> Talcott Parsons, 'Wertgebundenheit und Objektivität in den Sozialwissenschaften: Eine Interpretation der Beiträge Max Webers', in Otto Stammer (ed.), *Max Weber und die Soziologie heute: Verhandlungen des 15. Deutschen Soziologentages* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1965). I draw on the English translation of the volume for the rendition of Parsons' paper as 'Value-Freedom and Objectivity'.

<sup>139</sup> Dahrendorf, 'Sozialwissenschaft und Werturteil', 41.

<sup>140</sup> CASBS Administrative Records, Ralf Dahrendorf, 11.12.1958, Memorandum evaluating the 1957-1958 Fellowship Year.

the Positivism Dispute. Dahrendorf himself treated the methodological debates of the day as an extension of the early twentieth-century debate on value freedom and objectivity that had motivated Weber and others to establish the German Sociological Association in January 1909. As far as Dahrendorf was concerned, hardly anything new had been added to the arguments exchanged in the early twentieth century.<sup>141</sup> During the methodological debates of the mid-1950s to early 1960s, he advocated an empirical understanding of sociology that sought to investigate social processes that were not subject to change by immediate human agency. However, as Chapter II shows, he also had a distinct concept of ideology, and argued that our understanding of the world is often swayed by interests and value preferences. At the same time, he feared that value-free social science would have a performative effect on society. In relation to American structural-functional sociology, Dahrendorf stated that ‘it may be suspected that looking at society in terms of order, stability and integration also responds to a demand of American society in the middle of the twentieth century *and at the same time reinforces the prevailing mood of the times*’ [my italics].<sup>142</sup> The growing role of social science in public life gave rise to the spectre of an ‘oligarchic society’ of expert rule that Geiger had described.<sup>143</sup> If sociologists wrote about roles, individuals would become even more likely to abide by them. Polling techniques allowed politics to be conducted on the basis of empirical research. Sociological studies revealed that crime was caused by social circumstances, thereby undermining the connection that punishment had to “unscientific” values’.<sup>144</sup> As

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<sup>141</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘Betrachtungen zu einigen Aspekten’, 141.

<sup>142</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘European Sociology and the American Self-Image’, 343.

<sup>143</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/933, *Gesellschaft als Wissenschaft* (1960) [manuscript]: ‘oligarchische Gesellschaft’.

<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*, ‘unwissenschaftlichen Werten’.

we have seen, this performative element of social science was at the centre of both Adorno and Habermas' critique of positivism. Dahrendorf also lamented that American sociology had never been organizationally separated from social policy, thus giving the discipline a character distinct from the one that prevailed in Europe. It was oriented towards 'improvement of enterprises and prisons, cities and schools, hospitals and slums, etc. ...', but in a way that was always in line with the values that were already prevalent in their society.<sup>145</sup> The mainstream of American sociology was dominated by "dynamic conservatives" whose research played its part in the perpetuation of the status quo.<sup>146</sup> To be sure, he maintained, this inherent conservatism was unintentional and in many instances ran counter to the values of most American sociologists.<sup>147</sup>

At first, these two positions seem difficult to entertain at the same time, if not irreconcilable. Indeed, Dahrendorf drew a connection between these two issues. Ideological interpretations of the world were widespread in many sub-fields of human understanding:

[T]he theologians of the high middle ages, and still of the reformation and counter-reformation, the philosophers of English empiricism, French enlightenment, and German idealism, and sociologists of many countries in new and most recent times were or are all ideologists of their societies: men who reproduce the world of political and social facts in their systems or theories in such a way that that what is real in their case appears if not as reasonable, at least as necessary.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Dahrendorf, 'European Sociology and the American Self-Image', 361.

<sup>146</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> Dahrendorf, 'Sozialwissenschaft und Werturteil', 47.

<sup>148</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Soziologie und industrielle Gesellschaft', *Politische Studien 11* (1960), 817: 'Die Theologen des Hochmittelalters, aber auch noch der Reformation und Gegenreformation, die Philosophen des englischen Empirismus, der französischen Aufklärung und des deutschen Idealismus, und die Soziologen vieler Länder in neuerer und neuester Zeit waren oder sind

Viewed in isolation, this statement seems to contradict much of what Dahrendorf said in other methodological writings produced during the same period. For Adorno, Habermas, and Marcuse, the warning about the influence of ideology on research practices turned into a general scepticism towards empirical research that reified contingent realities by presenting them as necessary. Dahrendorf on the other hand managed to advocate the attempt to discover universal laws and develop universal models while two pages later arguing that '[w]here normative references of a critique of the present are banished from sociological research, the present inadvertently takes on an overwhelming weight'.<sup>149</sup> In 1957, Dahrendorf argued that 'today it seems at any rate more important to me to warn against the radical separation of science and value judgements, rather than against their mixing'.<sup>150</sup> In fact, in the 'Homo Sociologicus' essays, Dahrendorf went as far as saying that the ethical questions confronting social scientists might 'some day in the not so distant future' become as pressing and complicated as those facing nuclear scientists.<sup>151</sup> In the future, once sociological theory was sufficiently refined, totalitarian governments may become able to sustain themselves even more effectively through 'sociological insights'.<sup>152</sup> Technical knowledge about industrial relations might become so refined to the point that it could be used for the 'prevention of strikes and wage demands'.<sup>153</sup>

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sämtlich auch Ideologen ihrer Gesellschaften: Männer, die die Welt der politischen und sozialen Tatsachen in ihren Systemen oder Theorien so reproduzieren, daß das jeweils Wirkliche wenn nicht als vernünftig, so doch zumindest als notwendig erscheint.'

<sup>149</sup> Dahrendorf, 'Betrachtungen zu einigen Aspekten', 145: 'Wo normative Bezüge der Gegenwartskritik aus der soziologischen Forschung verbannt werden, gewinnt die Gegenwart ungewollt überwältigendes Gewicht'.

<sup>150</sup> Dahrendorf, 'Sozialwissenschaft und Werturteil', 48: 'Doch scheint es mir heute wichtiger, vor der radikalen Trennung als vor der Vermischung von Wissenschaft und Werturteil zu warnen.'

<sup>151</sup> Dahrendorf, 'Homo Sociologicus', 357: 'eines nicht so fernen Tages'.

<sup>152</sup> *ibid.*, 375: 'soziologischer Einsichten'.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*: 'Verhinderung von Streiks und Lohnforderungen'.

Dahrendorf further argued that value-free sociology opened up the danger of uncritically conducting research on behalf of whoever paid for certain scientific investigations. This was particularly acute in American sociology, where a lack of ‘moral impulses’ was discernible.<sup>154</sup> Dahrendorf found it even more surprising that American sociologists did not seem to reflect much on the issue of objectivity and value freedom: despite their familiarity with Weber, neither Parsons nor Bendix, he said, devoted any time to this issue.<sup>155</sup> In connection to his contribution to *Culture and Social Character*, a collection of critical assessments of David Riesman’s *Lonely Crowd*, Dahrendorf had to defend his critique of Riesman’s alleged value-freedom against Lipset, who co-edited the volume.<sup>156</sup> Nonetheless, Dahrendorf’s uneasiness about value-free research never prompted him to stop advocating empirical research and sociological theory that in turn aimed at generating research questions for empirical work. Caught between the battle lines, he found it impossible to fully agree with even more critical assessments of American sociology, such as those assembled in Horowitz’s *The New Sociology*. Writing to Horowitz in January 1967, he stated that in practice it proved very difficult to create a “new” rather than “old” sociology’:

I made this point in a rather critical review of the book you edited on The New Sociology (less about your own article than about the contributions you assembled). I entirely agree with every single tenet of your own moral conception of the sociologist. This even includes the methodologically somewhat problematic notion of an orientation

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<sup>154</sup> Dahrendorf, *Die angewandte Aufklärung*, 161: ‘moralischen Impulsen’.

<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*, 162. It should be noted that Dahrendorf made this statement a year before Parsons spoke on value freedom at the Weber Centenary in Heidelberg in 1964.

<sup>156</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/41, Ralf Dahrendorf to Seymour Martin Lipset, 16 December 1959.

of theory towards practice or science towards action. But I do feel that most of those who agree with this position are only too prone to abandon certain elementary standards of methodological and technical precision. What I have been trying to do for some time and continue to try is to develop rigorous theories which are nevertheless inspired by – if you want to call it that – Millsian notions of sociology.<sup>157</sup>

Dahrendorf's review spelled out his apprehensions about the critiques of quantitative and empirical sociology expounded in the volume. For him, the book ultimately left the promise of a new sociology unfulfilled.<sup>158</sup> Any truly new sociology would have to build on the 'best possibilities of a formalizing social science'.<sup>159</sup> He wrote this review as the University of Constance started operating. His attempt to create an institution firmly committed to empirical sociology in the form of this new university, described in Chapter IV, displayed his commitment to conceptions of social science shared with advocates of value freedom.

Dahrendorf did not hold the view that non-empirical versions of sociology ought to be banished entirely from the discipline. During the methodological debates around the turn of the decade, he insisted that it was important not to define sociology in such a way that would leave critical theory outside the discipline. As long as sociology was still in the infant state that he thought it was in, the existence of different ways of approaching the study of society had to be accepted. While it was important to further systematize sociology, the question of why social mobility had increased over the past decades was more pressing than the question of how

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<sup>157</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/142, Ralf Dahrendorf to Irving Louis Horowitz, 21 January 1967.

<sup>158</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Irving Louis Horowitz, The New Sociology: Essays in Social Theory and Social Values in Honor of C. Wright Mills', *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 18 (1966), 557.

<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*, 558: 'besten Möglichkeiten einer formalisierenden Sozialwissenschaft'.

sociology ought to be defined.<sup>160</sup> It was therefore clear that empirical observations of what *is* the case were logically separate from what scientists thought *ought* to be the case. There was no way in which ‘practical value judgements’ about the latter could be derived from the former.<sup>161</sup> Social scientists therefore had a moral obligation to comment on the desirability of the social outcomes and unintended consequences generated by their research.

Dahrendorf held on to his perspective on value freedom over the next years and decades. In December 1975, in response to the review of Schelsky’s *Die Arbeit tun die Anderen* mentioned in Chapter II, Dahrendorf told Schelsky that social scientists had an obligation to control the impact of their research on society. This, he said, was the reason why he had written a strongly worded critique of the education reforms implemented in the federal state of Hesse (in which the Frankfurt School sociologist Ludwig von Friedeburg played a key role as the state’s education secretary).<sup>162</sup> The proponents of the radical reforms of the instruction of social studies and politics in schools had cited Dahrendorf’s sociological theory as a theoretical justification, creating a situation in which he thought he had to react against an instance of abuse of his research. In 1980, he criticized Popper for failing to acknowledge the existence of an ‘Oppenheimer dilemma’ in the social sciences: ‘[i]gnore society, and your value-free science may lend itself to terrible abuse; embrace society, and your value-laden science will become plainly bad’.<sup>163</sup> Four years later, in September 1984, Dahrendorf again returned to this theme in his keynote address to the ‘Max Weber and his Contemporaries’ conference that

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<sup>160</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘Betrachtungen zu einigen Aspekten’, 151.

<sup>161</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘Sozialwissenschaft und Werturteil’, 33.

<sup>162</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/79, Ralf Dahrendorf to Helmut Schelsky, 20.12.1975.

<sup>163</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘On Representative Activities’, *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences* 39 (1980), 24.

Wolfgang Mommsen organized at the German Historical Institute in London. In the present day, he stated, there was a need for research institutions that Weber would have disapproved of. There was now a need for institutions that would function as go-betweens between long-term oriented social research and short-term oriented policy-making. In Dahrendorf's opinion, there was a need for scientific-political endeavours exemplified by the Brookings Institution or the American Enterprise Institute that transcended the boundary between two spheres that, he said, Weber had wanted to separate:

This is policy research, the attempt to apply the accumulated knowledge of socio-economic processes to the issues and the time-scales which decision-makers encounter: what are the conditions of sustained growth here and now after two oil shocks and the interest rate explosion? How can we reduce the budget deficit quickly without unintended transfer effects for already disadvantaged groups?<sup>164</sup>

Such requirements put social scientists in positions in which they *did* have to make value judgements.

## **6. Conclusion.**

This chapter has covered Dahrendorf's critique of American structural-functional sociology and his attempt to reform his discipline during the later 1950s and 1960s. In doing so it has highlighted his alignment with American scholars

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<sup>164</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Max Weber and Modern Social Science', in Wolfgang Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel (eds.), *Max Weber and his Contemporaries* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 575.

such as C. Wright Mills or Hans Gerth, who agreed that material interests, power, and class conflicts were central to both historical and contemporary societies. He criticized the emphasis that Talcott Parsons and other sociologists put on the role of values and norms in society and invested a great deal of energy and time into criticizing Parsons' voluntarist understanding of society. Against this backdrop, Dahrendorf argued that sociologists could, and should, study social action in terms of causality. Indeed, it was his optimistic view of the predictability of social action and sociology's potential to uncover social laws that made him despair about potential abuses of sociological research. He was convinced that the new sociology that he hoped for was both an opportunity and a potential threat to liberty. It was both necessary for the study and reformation of society and at the same time constituted a source of new social and political problems. Equipped with increasingly accurate knowledge about the inner workings of society, bureaucratic or even totalitarian incumbents of power in future societies would be able to exercise power over others in ways not imaginable in the present.

By explaining an increasing amount of social action in terms of sociological laws, the relevance of individual action was reduced so much so that questions of morality lost their salience. At the end of 'Homo Sociologicus', Dahrendorf pressed that 'the old commonplace "tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner"' captured this dilemma.<sup>165</sup> In this way, his intellectual distance to Isaiah Berlin emerged once more: Berlin quoted the same phrase of 'tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner' in 'Historical Inevability' in order to emphasize his scorn for the claim that anything that could be understood cannot be condemned.<sup>166</sup> For Berlin,

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<sup>165</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Homo Sociologicus', 369: 'der alte Gemeinplatz des *tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*'.

<sup>166</sup> Berlin, 'Historical Inevitability', 76.

the issue that made Dahrendorf despair simply did not exist. In diametrically opposed ways, their versions of liberalism were thus based on assumptions of social universes governed by causality and contingency, respectively.

These were questions that went to the heart of those issues that agitated most West German sociologists during the post-war period. While scholars such as Schelsky or Gehlen fretted about the influence of value judgements on politics and research, others, prominently members of the Frankfurt School, argued that value-free social science reproduced the status quo. Dahrendorf shared the first group's preference for empirical research while agreeing with the latter about its inherent dangers. It was precisely because Dahrendorf thought that society was subject to long-term processes that were not easily changed that he worried about them being reinforced through research. If it was already difficult to improve the fortunes of disadvantaged groups in society, social science should be conducted in such a way as to help to rectify such circumstances. To do so, both social research into 'given' social facts and laws *and* research projects that were designed to break the mould of entrenched social structures were needed. A prominent example of his own research that fell in the latter category was his research project on access to education by structurally disadvantaged groups, conducted at the University of Tübingen in the early to mid-1960s. In this work, Dahrendorf highlighted the disadvantages of children from rural areas, working class families, Catholic families, as well as girls and sought to devise policy-measures that would alleviate them. Heavily informed by liberal value judgments, the potential consequences of his research were at the forefront of Dahrendorf's research design, devised to address the potentially conservative character that he thought value-neutral empirical sociology inevitably entailed. In fact, the conviction that the dominant

values present in a particular society were intricately linked to social structure and institutions played a role in prompting him to accept the offer to participate in the foundation of the University of Constance, a project that he hoped would play a part in ending the dominance of 'idealism' at German universities, an ideology that he held to be inextricably linked to the traditional social structure that had made German society susceptible to National Socialism. In this way, his involvement in university reform was an attempt to impose new social values on German society, as we shall see in the following chapter.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Cf. Chapter IV.

## Chapter IV: Dahrendorf's Anti-Idealism: From Palo Alto and Columbia to the 'Non-Hegelian' University of Constance

‘The destruction of the nonsensical idea [Ungedanken] of the humanities would probably be its starting-off point.’ (Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Frühe Bedenken gegen Konstanz’, 29 March 1964.<sup>1</sup>)

### 1. Introduction.

Sociology was not the only aspect of the American scholarly world that Dahrendorf was drawn towards during the late 1950s and 1960s. During this period, he was equally preoccupied with the question that most German intellectuals were grappling with in one way or another: how and why had Germany succumbed to National Socialism in the early 1930s?<sup>2</sup> In the United States, German-American scholars who had fled from National Socialism formed an intellectual environment that was dominated by this question. When, in 1958, he started work on the project that culminated in the publication of *Society and Democracy in Germany* in 1965, Dahrendorf engaged very closely with émigré scholarship and adopted a narrative of modern German history that resembled it in both political outlook and diagnosis.

This chapter discusses Dahrendorf's engagement with *Sonderweg* narratives of German history advanced by émigré historians in the United States, tracing Dahrendorf's reception of the condemnation of idealism that was central to these arguments. Secondly, it discusses his involvement in higher education reform

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<sup>1</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/752, Frühe Bedenken gegen Konstanz (niedergeschrieben am 29.3.1964): ‘Die Vernichtung des Ungedankens der Geisteswissenschaften wäre wohl sein Ausgangspunkt’.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Konrad Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

in West Germany in the 1960s. In particular, it attempts to show how Dahrendorf's role in the foundation of the University of Constance and his attempt to create an institution for empirical social science reflected his methodological and political ideas, and how his actions in this area sought to contain and break the perceived monopoly of idealism at German universities. Thirdly, it seeks to highlight the connection between Dahrendorf's anti-idealist stance and his analysis of West German social structure during the 1960s, drawing attention to the connections between his concern about the dominance of lawyers in politics and society, his sociological theory, and his attempts to reform research and teaching in law at the University of Constance.

## **2. Idealism and German Social Structure.**

Talcott Parsons was not the only Fellow working at the CASBS in Palo Alto in 1957/1958 with whose work Dahrendorf would be closely preoccupied over the coming years. When investigating the links between German social structure and German history became one of his primary objectives during the next seven years, Fritz Stern (and David Landes to a lesser extent), played an important role in introducing Dahrendorf to the works of German-American historians such as Hajo Holborn or Leonard Krieger. Their scholarship identified German idealism and the social structure that sustained it as a major factor that had made German society susceptible to both authoritarianism and totalitarianism. For a sociologist whose work was predicated on a materialist interpretation of Marx, these

interpretations of German history proved congenial.<sup>3</sup> While working on the ambitious project that ended with the publication of *Society and Democracy in Germany* in 1965, Dahrendorf came to play a prominent part in the reform of both secondary and higher education in West Germany, most importantly as a major figure in the foundation of the University of Constance. In this role, Dahrendorf sought to eradicate the pernicious dominance of idealist political ideas and methods that, he thought, held sway over German educational institutions.

Hajo Holborn's essay 'German Idealism in Social Historical Perspective', published in 1952 in the *Historische Zeitschrift*, was a seminal contribution to this interpretation of modern German history.<sup>4</sup> For Holborn, the rise of German idealism and Germany's divergence from the West during the period of 1770 to 1840 was a consequence of Germany's social structure. He highlighted the dominance of the nobility in Germany, and argued that the German *Bürgertum* was dominated by civil servants and other office holders rather than merchants, due to the sluggish development of the German economy after the sixteenth century. This social structure, Holborn sought to point out, gave rise to a particular kind of understanding of political freedom that emphasized the rule of law, culture, and freedom of opinion but, crucially, not political participation. Soon after the French Revolution, Germans returned to their 'culture of withdrawal' from public political life, happy to concentrate on cultural matters and an intellectual sphere under the protection of an authoritarian state.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> On the transatlantic dialogue on National Socialism by German and German-American historians, cf. Philipp Stelzel, *History after Hitler: A Transatlantic Enterprise* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Hajo Holborn, 'Der deutsche Idealismus in sozialgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung', *Historische Zeitschrift* 174 (1952).

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 366: 'Kultur der Innerlichkeit'.

Leonard Krieger's *The German Idea of Freedom*, proofread by Holborn and Felix Gilbert among others, expanded on this theme. Krieger offered a sweeping interpretation of German history that centred on an analysis of the tragic development of German liberalism in the nineteenth century. In Krieger's view, heavily influenced by idealism, German liberals had concentrated on inner personal freedom rather than freedom as political participation. German liberals were obsessed with culture and the development of the highest ideals within the individual moral person. In turn, engagement in everyday politics was seen as unimportant; the pursuit of everyday politics was better left to sovereigns. Not least, Krieger located the negative consequences of this tradition in the realm of education. Krieger's rendering of Humboldt depicted an intellectual whose 'concern was not to liberalize the political life of men but to accept the existing political system as the highest embodiment of the state and then to exclude it from all possible spheres of human activity, on the grounds that politics was pernicious to the development of the human spirit'.<sup>6</sup>

When Dahrendorf arrived in Palo Alto in 1957, Stern came to CASBS to do further work on a project that he published as *The Politics of Cultural Despair* in 1961. Four years before coming to Palo Alto, Stern had joined the History Faculty at Columbia University, where Holborn and Krieger were working.<sup>7</sup> In December 1957, Stern delivered a paper on 'The Political Consequences of the Unpolitical German' to the Pacific Branch meeting of the American Historical Association. In this paper he laid out the negative political ramifications of the dominance of idealism in Germany. Echoing Holborn and Krieger, Stern argued

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<sup>6</sup> Leonard Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom: History of a Political Tradition from the Reformation to 1871* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 168.

<sup>7</sup> Fritz Stern, *Five Germanys I Have Known* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2007), 206.

that German idealism had fostered an intellectual sphere in which culture was revered, materialism despised, and public engagement frowned upon. Focused on self-realization, the German education system was designed in such a way that ‘the schools sought to prepare the universal man, but not the public-minded citizen’.<sup>8</sup> Stern used Ernst Troeltsch’s wartime diaries to illustrate what he saw as characteristic of German idealism, namely the idea that politics should be separated from interests.<sup>9</sup> Contrasting German with British and French culture, Troeltsch stated that a monarch was necessary as a ‘disinterested arbiter among the competing material interests’.<sup>10</sup> *The Politics of Cultural Despair* expanded on these themes by focusing on Paul de Lagarde, Julius Langbehn, and Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, three German idealist and utopian intellectuals who, for Stern, epitomized the ‘unpolitical German’, obsessed with culture and happy with an authoritarian state in which one did not have to participate in public affairs.<sup>11</sup>

Other historians from Holborn and Krieger’s circle produced more works in this vein. Many of these interpretations of German history had a socio-economic bent, and assumed that social settings influenced ideas to a great extent. Notably, Fritz Ringer’s *Decline of the German Mandarins* was explicitly conceived as a sociology of knowledge, in which Karl Mannheim featured in the first footnote. Likewise, Holborn’s work explained idealism in social historical terms. Krieger’s narrative of German history explained the lack of a vigorous and self-confident liberal tradition by reference to Germany’s comparatively sluggish economic development after the sixteenth century, which to his mind had prevented the

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<sup>8</sup> Fritz Stern, ‘The Political Consequences of the Unpolitical German’, in Fritz Stern, *The Failure of Illiberalism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1972), 8.

<sup>9</sup> This reading of Troeltsch seems questionable, as Chapter I of this thesis has shown.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 21.

<sup>11</sup> Stern, *Politics of Cultural Despair*.

development of a prosperous middle class. When industrialization finally set in during the 1850s and gave rise to the possibility of a ‘broad social basis, gathered around a progressive middle class, interested in a free society for vital material reasons’, liberals were distracted by the impression of the primacy of foreign policy and the need for unfettered power necessary to achieve German unification that the failure of the Revolution of 1848 had given them.<sup>12</sup> These assumptions about the primacy of socio-economic phenomena not only influenced the methodological outlook of their works, but was further connected to their rejection of idealism, which they frequently chided for its rejection of politics as impure, materialistic, and inimical to self-realization. This connection between the methodological outlook with which German history was studied and their critique of German idealism would also characterize Dahrendorf’s scholarship.

As pointed out in Chapter III, the United States, and Columbia University in particular, remained a frequent destination for Dahrendorf until the late 1960s. At Columbia in 1960, Dahrendorf gave a lecture series on ‘Social Change and Social Conflict’ in the Sociology Department and on ‘Democracy and Social Structure in Germany’ in the Government Department.<sup>13</sup> The latter lectures offered some first insights gathered for *Society and Democracy in Germany*. When Stern managed to persuade Felix Gilbert to give Dahrendorf a fellowship at the IAS at Princeton, he reported to Dahrendorf that he had told Richard Hofstadter, Holborn, and Krieger of the prospect of Dahrendorf coming to the United States, all of whom

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<sup>12</sup> Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom*, 341.

<sup>13</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/632, Government 158 Spring term 1960 Lecture: Tuesday 9-10:50, 311 Fayerweather Office hours: Tuesday 11-12, Friday 12-1, 515 Fayerweather Germany: Political Institutions and Processes (Democracy and Social Structure in Germany) Professor Dahrendorf; Sociology 224 Spring term 1960 Lecture: Friday 10-11:50, 310 Fayerweather Social Change and Social Conflict Professor Dahrendorf.

he reported to have been delighted to hear the news.<sup>14</sup> On 6 April 1966, during his second stay at Columbia, he lectured on ‘Education and Society in Contemporary Germany’, and co-taught several seminars on ‘Approaches to Modern German History’ with Stern. The reading set for the course included books such as Alexander Gerschenkron’s *Bread and Democracy in Germany*, Holborn’s *A History of Germany, 1648-1840*, or *The Birth of the German Republic* by the Marxist historian Arthur Rosenberg. In one letter, Stern also suggested to have one meeting of the series on Eckart Kehr and Friedrich Meinecke. The course syllabus among Dahrendorf’s papers suggests that a seminar on the two historians did indeed take place.<sup>15</sup>

As Chapter II and III have shown, Dahrendorf’s political and intellectual concerns in the 1960s circled around the question of how a liberal political order could be made possible in a political world governed by ‘objective interests’ (in the Marxist sense) and non-random social processes. Starting off from the conviction that interest-conditioned social conflict was an irremediable aspect of society, Dahrendorf utilized arguments that he had developed during his engagement with Parsonian sociology when his attention shifted to the historical role of idealism in German society. Not surprisingly, Dahrendorf found the anti-idealism of the German-American historians that he had been introduced to in the United States very congenial to his political arguments, given that their methodological predilections were very similar.

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<sup>14</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/44 Fritz Stern to Ralf Dahrendorf, 15 February [no year given but context within file suggests 1964].

<sup>15</sup> For the letter, cf. BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/142, Fritz Stern to Ralf Dahrendorf, 18 February 1966. For the course see ‘History 6199y, Approaches to Modern German History, Spring 1966’ in the same folder.

In 1960, Dahrendorf published the first essay that came out of his research project on twentieth-century German social structure and politics. Published in the *European Journal of Sociology*, which he edited with Raymond Aron and Tom Bottomore, his article took aim at the perceived tendency of German political theorists, from ‘Hegel to Carl Schmitt’, to view the state as an institution that stood for ‘a “general will” disconnected from parties that stood above all conflicts’.<sup>16</sup> From the regulation of industrial relations to the German legal system, Dahrendorf felt that many German institutions operated under the assumption that the state could establish justice. The German abhorrence of conflict and the assumption that the state could govern independent of sectional interests for the greater common good, he stated, was a metaphysical and romantic construct that was linked to the outlook of the ‘unpolitical German’ that Stern had described.<sup>17</sup> Increasingly, Dahrendorf noted four years later, all German parties were ‘trying to become “people’s parties”, that is, non-ideological election machines appealing to all sectors of the electorate alike’.<sup>18</sup> In the early 1960s, the self-description *Volkspartei* was not only popular among Christian Democrats. After the SPD’s famous conference in Bad Godesberg in 1959, where the party had renounced Marxism, Social Democrats increasingly made the same claim. Dahrendorf had no patience for the claim not to represent any sectional interests. As a guest speaker at an SPD party congress in October 1960, he told the assembled members how misleading their talk about ‘throwing Marx over board’ was: ‘in the strict sense Marx never was on board’.<sup>19</sup> The party’s tradition, from Lassalle and Bebel to Ebert and

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<sup>16</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘Demokratie und Sozialstruktur in Deutschland’, 101: ‘von Hegel bis Carl Schmitt’, ‘von den Parteien losgelöster “allgemeiner Wille” über allen Konflikten’.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, 106: “unpolitischen Deutschen”.

<sup>18</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘Recent Changes in the Class Structure’, 264.

<sup>19</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/933, Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Junge Generation und Macht’, SPD-Kongress 7.10.1960: “Marx üb. Bord werfen”, ‘genau gen. war Marx nie an Bord’.

Schumacher, had never had much to do with Marx. The SPD, he claimed, was a typical political product of Imperial Germany.<sup>20</sup>

In *Society and Democracy in Germany*, Dahrendorf expanded on these arguments. In the preliminary methodological section, Dahrendorf intervened in the German historiographical debates of the 1960s, of which the controversy surrounding Fritz Fischer's study of the origins of the First World War, *Griff nach der Weltmacht*, was by far the most prominent one. To Dahrendorf's mind, the debate about Fischer's book touched the core of the matter: the established historical narrative of German history depicted the outbreak of the war as a 'coincidence', where 'Mephisto's hand appeared in history'.<sup>21</sup> For him, such explanations were facile.<sup>22</sup> Dahrendorf's book attempted to provide further arguments for causal factors at the root of the German catastrophe of the twentieth century. Not all historians of Germany, Dahrendorf noted, made their lives as easy as those portraying the First World War as a coincidence. Notably, he counted Hajo Holborn, the 'great teacher', and other members of Holborn's circle of students like Krieger and Stern as positive exceptions.<sup>23</sup> As in earlier articles, Dahrendorf argued along similar lines as the American Germanists around Holborn. He chided the 'unpolitical German' for facilitating authoritarianism, and he lamented the lack of public virtues and excessive reverence of private virtues in German society.<sup>24</sup> Germans, in this analysis, tended to accept more authoritarian forms of government as long as they were left in peace in their own private sphere. Dahrendorf took this argument a step further than Holborn, Stern, and Krieger, making an explicit link

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Demokratie in Deutschland*, 27: 'Zufall', 'Hier erscheint Mephistos Hand in der Geschichte'.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, 27.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, 28: 'große Lehrer'.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, 346: 'unpolitische Deutsche'; *ibid.*, 313-327.

between the political attitudes he minded and the scholarly practices he sought to overcome in his efforts in higher education reform. Discussing German conceptions of ‘truth’, Dahrendorf concentrated on the methodological ideas of Humboldt and Wilhelm Dilthey in order to highlight the inherent problems of the German academic tradition. Humboldt was prone to metaphysical speculation, whereas Dilthey privileged introspective understanding over what he perceived as the inherently limited and compromised method of the natural sciences, based on a ‘mere shadow thrown by a reality hidden from us’.<sup>25</sup> How on earth, Dahrendorf asked, could one arrive at the idea that introspection was a more reliable form of knowing than the natural sciences? Not only did it strike him as a problematic argument. More importantly, there was an affinity between the humanities as advocated by Humboldt and Dilthey and authoritarian politics. An ideal of scholarly practice that was content with contemplation and introspective speculation could very well be practised in private inner exile in an authoritarian state. For Dahrendorf, there was ground to believe that proponents of the *Geisteswissenschaften* were often quite happy with this. An empirical ideal of the social sciences, by contrast, necessitated an open public sphere of discussion.<sup>26</sup>

Dahrendorf’s objection to ideas of justice and politics that assumed the existence of a general interest, which he saw ingrained in German political thought, meant that the role of law and lawyers in German society occupied a central position in the project that he worked on in the first half of the 1960s. The German legal profession, Dahrendorf noted, ‘sees itself as explicitly normative (cf. discussion on Wolf/Lueke/Hax). That is, it sees its task as turning values into

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<sup>25</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 171: ‘bloßen Schatten, den eine uns vervorgene Wirklichkeit wirft’.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, 173-4.

norms'.<sup>27</sup> On this issue of law and normativity, Dahrendorf's thinking was heavily indebted to Theodor Geiger's sociology of law. To his mind, Geiger's *Vorstudien zu einer Soziologie des Rechts* was 'the most important theoretical publication in the German language since Max Weber and one of the most important essays in sociological theory in general'.<sup>28</sup> Geiger's treatise was a staunch rebuke to normative philosophy of law. Rejecting 'metaphysics', Geiger criticized the idea that 'normative conclusions' can be derived from 'a supposed "nature of law"'.<sup>29</sup> Natural law of any sort was anathema to him. Likewise, Geiger rejected the 'myth of free will', the roots of which he attributed to psychological causes, 'which Man has been fed by moralizing education for centuries'.<sup>30</sup> Geiger professed that his interest in law originated from his 'interest in ideology critique', given that law was the most ideological of all social sciences.<sup>31</sup> He was therefore interested in developing a 'juridical realism' that did not commit the metaphysical fallacies of established philosophies of law.<sup>32</sup> As a counter-example to normative philosophies of law, Geiger advocated a form of so-called 'theoretical value nihilism'. This position was predicated on the assumption that morality emerged as individuals turned the coercions imposed on them by society into conceptions of the 'good', thus easing their conscience.<sup>33</sup> Anticipating Dahrendorf's desire to use sociology

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<sup>27</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/657, Notiz, den 11.8.61: 'verstehet sich selbst als ausgesprochen normative (vergleiche Diskussion um Wolf/Lueke/Hax). D.h., sie sieht ihre Aufgabe darin, Werte in Normen zu überführen'. For the work cited by Dahrendorf, cf. Ernst Wolf, Gerhard Lueke, and Herbert Hax, *Scheidung und Scheidungsrecht: Grundfragen der Ehescheidung in Deutschland* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1959).

<sup>28</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/39, Ralf Dahrendorf, Rezension zu: Theodor Geiger: *Arbeiten zur Soziologie: Methode-Moderne Großgesellschaft-Rechtssoziologie-Ideologiekritik*. Ausgewählt und eingeleitet von Paul Trappe: 'die wichtigste theoretische Veröffentlichung in deutscher Sprache seit Max Weber und einer der wichtigsten Versuche zur soziologischen Theorie überhaupt'.

<sup>29</sup> Theodor Geiger, *Vorstudien zu einer Soziologie des Rechts* (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1964 [1947]), 44: 'normative Folgerungen', 'vermeintlichen "Wesen des Rechts"'.  
<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, 56: 'mit dem moralisierende Erziehung den Menschen Jahrhunderte gefüttert hat'.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, 39: 'ideologiekritische Interessen'.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*: 'juridischen Realismus'.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*: 'juridischen Realismus'.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, 297-9.

as a way of increasing individuals' freedom from the constraints of social norms, expressed in 'Homo Sociologicus', Geiger sought to free humans from the morality of their societies.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Geiger's conclusion that his sociology of law legitimized antagonistic group moralities within society prefigured aspects of Dahrendorf's agonistic liberalism.<sup>35</sup>

Like Geiger, Dahrendorf was interested in strata- and class-specific mentalities and ideologies. Dahrendorf also shared Geiger's interest in how values and norms emerged, a process in which both sociologists saw interests playing a prominent role. This topic was prominently discussed in 'Homo Sociologicus', and in 1964 Dahrendorf still analysed Geiger's work on the emergence of norms and values in great detail with his research students. Here, he felt it necessary to emphasize the relevance of Geiger's concepts of 'stabilized patterns of behaviour' and 'sanction behaviour', as both highlighted the role of power in the genesis of norms and values.<sup>36</sup> Dahrendorf also followed Geiger in being deeply suspicious of lawyers' claims to be neutral and objective. The situation of West Germany's legal system, he argued in *Society and Democracy in Germany*, was such that the question of 'class justice' was still pertinent.<sup>37</sup> For him, the question remained in what way court rulings were influenced by the outlook and prejudices that lawyers held because of their peculiar 'social profile', and in what way this benefited the 'ruling elements'.<sup>38</sup> Geiger, in turn, regretted to be unable to include a chapter on 'class justice' in his book.<sup>39</sup> In 1960, five years prior to *Society and Democracy in*

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<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, 326.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, 308.

<sup>36</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/627, Protokoll des Forschungskolloquiums vom 21.7.1964: "festen Gebarensweisen", "Sanktionsverhalten".

<sup>37</sup> Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Demokratie in Deutschland*, 261.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*: 'Sozialprofil', 'herrschenden Instanzen'.

<sup>39</sup> Geiger, *Vorstudien zu einer Soziologie des Rechts*, 40: 'Klassenjustiz'.

*Germany's* publication, Dahrendorf had sought to establish this empirically by looking at the social origin of judges at West German *Oberlandesgerichte*. There were reasons to think that rulings by judges at these law courts were often swayed by prejudices against defendants from lower-class backgrounds, he argued.<sup>40</sup> In terms of social recruitment, most of West Germany's lawyers hailed from privileged backgrounds. Disproportionately, law students came from the upper middle class, often with parents working as lawyers or civil servants, whereas those from workers' families were greatly underrepresented. In comparison with other elite groups, social mobility among lawyers was low.<sup>41</sup>

For Dahrendorf, the misconceptions that he saw at play in the sociology of law overlapped with those of American structural functionalism. In 'In Praise of Thrasymachos', Dahrendorf contrasted a so-called 'equilibrium approach' of sociologists like Parsons or Karl Deutsch with the conflict-oriented 'constraint approach' of C. Wright Mills, Irving Horowitz, Raymond Aron, and himself (albeit in Aron's case 'only after considerable qualification').<sup>42</sup> For Parsons and Deutsch,

[s]ocieties are moral entities, i.e., definable by normative structures; to this extent the two approaches agree. But according to the constraint approach norms are established and maintained only by power, and their substance may well be explained in terms of the interests of the powerful ... The ramifications of these different approaches to the Hobbesian problem of order are numerous and fascinating. In the sociology of law, for example, the equilibrium approach is likely to be associated with the old – and demonstrably unsatisfactory, if not wrong

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<sup>40</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Deutsche Richter: Ein Beitrag zur Soziologie der Oberschicht', in Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Freiheit*, 194-5.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, 186-8.

<sup>42</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'In Praise of Thrasymachos', in Dahrendorf, *Essays in the Theory of Society*, 138.

– theory that laws grow “organically” out of people’s values and habits, whereas the constraint approach would lead to a more adequate, if apparently more Machiavellian, view of the genesis of laws.<sup>43</sup>

*Society and Democracy in Germany* offered a synthesis of Dahrendorf’s reservations about lawyers. Borrowing a term introduced by Mills, Dahrendorf argued that lawyers accounted for about half of West Germany’s ‘power elite’.<sup>44</sup> One of two Chancellors, both Foreign Ministers, and all Ministers of Finance, Economic Affairs, and Justice in the history of the Federal Republic had been lawyers.<sup>45</sup> Lawyers dominated the *Bundestag*, the bureaucracy, and were even overrepresented among business leaders.<sup>46</sup> As an institution of elite formation, he stated, German law faculties were the functional equivalent of British public schools and French Grande Écoles.<sup>47</sup> According to Dahrendorf, lawyers also did not qualify as intellectuals, as their outlook on society largely depended on their social background. In political terms, the powerful position of lawyers in German society thus had adverse consequences. Not only were lawyers recruited from particular social positions; their work entailed further characteristics that reinforced these effects. For members of the elite, lawyers were unusually geographically immobile. As servants of the state who enforced prevailing opinions, their work reinforced the conservative positions that they grew up with in predominantly civil servant families. Here, Dahrendorf saw an ‘ethos of service, duty, discipline, order, and submission’ at work.<sup>48</sup> Dahrendorf sought to emphasize that by virtue of their

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<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, 140.

<sup>44</sup> Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Demokratie in Deutschland*, 248: ‘Machtelite’.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, 250.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, 251.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, 252.

<sup>48</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘Deutsche Richter’, 192: ‘Ethos des Dienstes, der Pflicht, der Disziplin, der Ordnung und Unterordnung’.

recruitment and the nature of their work, lawyers were especially likely to adopt the normative and common interest-oriented political outlook that he thought lay at the root of Germany's *Sonderweg*. A Germany ruled by lawyers was unlikely to adopt the sectional interest-oriented political option that he thought was necessary to create a truly liberal and democratic Germany.

### **3. The Foundation of the 'Non-Hegelian' University of Constance.**

Dahrendorf's analysis of the role of idealism in German history formed the intellectual background and context of his actions as an educational reformer, particularly in his role in the foundation of the University of Constance as Vice-President of its Foundation Committee between 1964 and 1966. This concern with education was not coincidental. For Dahrendorf, educational institutions were central to social structure, and thus determined power structures and social conflict. In twentieth-century societies, peoples' interests, and the political actions and groupings that grew out of these interests related very directly to structures within hierarchical institutions. In contrast to what Marx had taught, in contemporary society educational and other institutions were supplanting economic factors as the main determinants of social structure.<sup>49</sup> The way in which institutions operated in a particular society was therefore a central determining factor for the viability of liberal democracy. As he wrote in an essay on university reform published in 1963, '[i]f there is any significant difference between the liberalism of the Enlightenment and of the present, it is that the old liberalism was predominantly declarative,

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<sup>49</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/626, Vorlesung vom 7.7.64.

whereas the new one has to be institutional'.<sup>50</sup> Dahrendorf's engagement in the reform of educational *institutions* was thus first and foremost an attempt to alter the power structures of West German society.

The University of Constance was one of several new universities set up in West Germany to accommodate the rising number of students during the post-war years. In 1954, the Free University was set up in West Berlin, prompted by the fact that the re-named Humboldt University of Berlin was located in the eastern part of the city. This was followed by new universities in Bremen, Regensburg, Bochum, and Saarbrücken. In 1959 Kurt Georg Kiesinger, Minister-President of Baden-Württemberg and future Chancellor of West Germany, first aired the idea of setting up a university in Constance. By 1961, Dahrendorf was part of a preliminary group working towards a concept for the new university.<sup>51</sup> In March 1964, Kiesinger's state government instituted the Foundation Committee for the new university. In June 1965, the committee went back to the government with a report that summarized its recommendations. Exactly a year later, the new university started preliminary operations, with Dahrendorf as the first Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences.<sup>52</sup>

Dirk Moses argues that Dahrendorf's intention in education reform was to 'update rather than abandon the Humboldt model'.<sup>53</sup> This is an untenable

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<sup>50</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Seismograph der Freiheit: Gedanken zur Universitätsreform', in Georg Böse (ed.), *Unsere Freiheit morgen: Gefahren und Chancen der modernen Gesellschaft* (Dusseldorf: Eugen Diederichs, 1963), 201: 'Wenn es einen wesentlichen Unterschied zwischen dem Liberalismus der Aufklärung und dem der Gegenwart gibt, dann liegt er darin, daß der alte Liberalismus vorwiegend deklarativ war, der neue dagegen institutionell sein muß.'

<sup>51</sup> Moritz Mälzer, *Auf der Suche nach der neuen Universität: Die Entstehung der "Reformuniversitäten" Konstanz und Bielefeld in den 1960er Jahren* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 171. Unfortunately, the shared political and methodological impetus behind Constance and Bielefeld that gave true significance to the universities in the eyes of its founding fathers is not the focus of this book.

<sup>52</sup> On the beginning of operations, cf. *ibid.*, 346.

<sup>53</sup> Moses, *German Intellectuals*, 157.

assessment, as this Chapter hopes to show. Dahrendorf himself wrote in his own notes that the new university was a project geared at the ‘destruction of the nonsensical idea of the *Geisteswissenschaften* ... empirical investigation, liberally understood, would be its content. Social sciences, modern natural sciences and experimentalized (sit venia verbo) disciplines of the philosophical faculty would be at its centre’.<sup>54</sup> In retrospect, Dahrendorf reflected in an article in *DIE ZEIT* that the University of Constance had been ‘motivated by the idea to found a non-Hegelian university, that is, a university in which the Philosophical Department played a minor role, if it even existed’.<sup>55</sup> Dahrendorf’s personal sketch for the ideal institutional organization of the University of Constance relegated philosophy into a ‘Philosophical-Mathematical Interfaculty’ in which philosophers, mathematicians, and statisticians would collaborate as methodological auxiliaries for the proper faculties. In this Interfaculty Dahrendorf for instance envisioned a data centre and seminars on the logic of science.<sup>56</sup> The new university would go against the artificial separation of the humanities and the natural sciences that had been established ‘in the late nineteenth century with an incredible effort in methodological misconceptions’.<sup>57</sup> At Constance, the social sciences would instead be central to the university.<sup>58</sup> Dahrendorf’s desire to overcome the dominance of

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<sup>54</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers N1749/752, Frühe Bedenken gegen Konstanz (niedergeschrieben am 29.3.1964): ‘Die Vernichtung des Ungedankens der Geisteswissenschaften wäre wohl sein Ausgangspunkt; die liberal verstandene Empirie sein Gehalt. Sozialwissenschaften, modern Naturwissenschaften und experimentalisierte (sit venia verbo) Disziplinen der Philosophischen Fakultät stünden in ihrem Zentrum’.

<sup>55</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Gebremste Reform: Es war einmal...’, *DIE ZEIT*, 08 July 1977: ‘war getragen von der Idee, eine Nicht-Hegelsche Universität zu gründen, eine Universität also, in der die Philosophische Fakultät im Hintergrund steht, wenn es sie überhaupt gibt’.

<sup>56</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/752, Zum Aufbau und zur Stellung einer Philosophischen Fakultät an der Universität Konstanz 21.5.64: ‘Philosophisch-Mathematischen Interfakultät’.

<sup>57</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/516, Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Notizen zu einer Sozialwissenschaftlichen Fakultät’: ‘im späten 19. Jahrhundert mit ungeheurem Aufwand an methodologischen Irrtümern’.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*

idealism in the German education system was not limited to universities. In his view, one of the ‘three most important issues in German education’ was ‘the creation of a new type of school designed for the best to compete with the traditional “Humanistische Gymnasium”’.<sup>59</sup> With these motivations, Dahrendorf was not alone among university reformers in the 1960s. As we have seen in Chapter I, Helmut Schelsky played a similar and, at least in terms of its methodological conceptualization, less contested role during the foundation of the University of Bielefeld. Schelsky and Dahrendorf both sought to create institutions in which the empirical social sciences could find room that was denied to them at ‘idealist’ universities. For Schelsky, founding Bielefeld was central to his concern to equip higher education for the role it had to play in technocratic societies in which administration would increasingly replace more traditional politics.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, the two reformers retained their close contact that had characterized their relations in the 1950s, corresponding about each other’s publications and about their plans for university reform.

When Schelsky published his critique of idealist conceptions of university education in *Einsamkeit und Freiheit* in 1963, Dahrendorf congratulated him shortly after its publication, and wrote that a need for a ‘pilgrimage’ to Schelsky had arisen from his appointment to the Foundation Committee of the University of Constance. For this reason, he would appreciate the opportunity to speak to him about university reform.<sup>61</sup> Two-and-a-half years later, Dahrendorf again wrote to

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<sup>59</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/47, Ralf Dahrendorf to Ingeborg Assmann, 6 January 1966.

<sup>60</sup> For another university reform blueprint aimed at the creation of a new bureaucratic elite by Carl Friedrich, cf. Udi Greenberg, *The Weimar Century: German Émigrés and the Ideological Foundations of the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

<sup>61</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/44, Ralf Dahrendorf to Helmut Schelsky, 17 May 1963: ‘Wallfahrt’.

Schelsky saying that they should meet in order to discuss the foundation of their universities.<sup>62</sup> In 1964, Dahrendorf also made frequent references to Schelsky's book in an article in *DIE ZEIT*. Worded much more carefully than his private notes, the article sketched a non-idealist alternative to what he regarded as the outdated Humboldtian ideal of universities. The idealist university was a 'class university' for those who were able to fund their contemplative freedom. Oriented towards philosophical reflection, it was too theoretical and lacked practical research applications to real life.<sup>63</sup> In an essay published a year earlier in 1963, he had already elaborated on this point, arguing that the nineteenth-century Humboldtian concept of academic freedom was inseparably linked to the social reality of a university populated by members of the aristocracy.<sup>64</sup> It was no surprise, Dahrendorf observed, that universities were undergoing vast change, less so because of the political upheavals of recent German history, but rather due to 'the slower and less visible transformations of the social substrate of politics'.<sup>65</sup> What was wrong with German universities, Dahrendorf observed following the work of Joseph Ben-David and Abraham Zloczower, was their 'class character, that is, their insufficient rootedness in the non-aristocratic bourgeoisie'.<sup>66</sup>

In Ludwig Raiser and Waldemar Besson, Dahrendorf had two allies on Constance's Foundation Committee who were sympathetic to this outlook. Similar to Dahrendorf, Besson complained about the dominance of idealist philosophy in

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<sup>62</sup> BAArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/44, Ralf Dahrendorf to Helmut Schelsky, 3 December 1965.

<sup>63</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Traditionen der deutschen Universität', *DIE ZEIT*, 18 September 1964: 'Klassenuniversität'.

<sup>64</sup> Dahrendorf, 'Seismograph der Freiheit', 206-8.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, 203: 'langsamere und weniger sichtbare Wandlungen des sozialen Substrats der Politik'.

<sup>66</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Starre und Offenheit der deutschen Universität: Die Chancen der Reform', *European Journal of Sociology* 3 (1962), 290-1: 'Klassencharakter, d.h. im Fehlen von Wurzeln in der nicht aristokratischen Bourgeoisie'.

German politics, which he linked to widespread abhorrence of interest politics and public engagement.<sup>67</sup> Besson also described himself as someone who urged that higher education had to be adjusted to the realities of industrial society.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, for Besson, industrial society entailed realities that German universities ‘cannot escape’, thus following a line of argument about practical necessities popular among sociologists like Dahrendorf and Schelsky.<sup>69</sup> Minister-President Kiesinger, too, shared Dahrendorf’s views on the necessities that universities were confronted with in the present day. During the 1960s, Besson, Kiesinger, and Dahrendorf were closely involved with each other’s political activities. Dahrendorf later recalled how as Minister-President, Kiesinger had resided in Tübingen, not unlike a philosopher king, surrounded by “his” philosophers’.<sup>70</sup> In December 1966, Besson and Dahrendorf sat in the newly-elected Chancellor’s living room in Tübingen, conferring with Kiesinger on his first big speech before the *Bundestag*, the official government policy statement of the Grand Coalition.<sup>71</sup> This was the culmination of a trustful relationship that had developed during the foundation of the University of Constance, in which the three had fought for the same model. On 23 May 1964, in a speech at the Lake Constance Summit of Christian Politicians, Kiesinger engaged with the ideas informing the institutional set up of the new university. At the beginning of his speech, Kiesinger engaged with the argument that nineteenth-century thinkers such as Humboldt or Schiller were otherworldly figures who despairingly rejected industrial modernity. According to Kiesinger, the works of

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<sup>67</sup> Waldemar Besson, ‘Ohne mich! Geschichtsmüdigkeit und politische Lethargie’, in Böse (ed.), *Unsere Freiheit morgen*, 111.

<sup>68</sup> Waldemar Besson, ‘Eine philosophische Fakultät blickt in die Zukunft’, *Konstanzer Blätter für Hochschulfragen* 7 (1965), 15.

<sup>69</sup> Waldemar Besson, ‘Die Universität vor den Ansprüchen unserer Zeit’, *Konstanzer Blätter für Hochschulfragen* 13 (1966), 20: ‘nicht ausschließen’.

<sup>70</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Liberale und Andere: Portraits* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1994), 278: “seinen” Philosophen’.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, 279.

Theodor Litt had exposed the falsity of this argument.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, Kiesinger, argued, theorists like Schiller had realized that modernity entailed a danger of alienation, as humans were confronted with a dilemma, a contradiction between the necessities of social life on the one hand and individuality on the other.<sup>73</sup> In Kiesinger's narrative, nineteenth-century idealism constituted a heroic defence not against industry or technology, but rather against the 'spirit that capitulated against [the technological age] without a fight'.<sup>74</sup> This sounded different from Dahrendorf. However, Kiesinger made a turn in the middle of his speech by introducing a sharp distinction between past and present. In the nineteenth century, some degree of agency had still been preserved. In the twentieth century, Kiesinger stated, mankind was confronted with the 'frightening question' whether 'alienation has become our irremediable fate'.<sup>75</sup> He continued that it would be irresponsible to deny the existence of this 'tragic dilemma': in a world in which dynamic states such as the Soviet Union and China were advancing fast, developing along a certain trajectory was not a matter of choice anymore.<sup>76</sup> In such a world, higher education had to change, and it was certainly not possible to regard its task as the development of 'homo humanus'.<sup>77</sup> Not surprisingly, towards the end of the speech, Kiesinger used the word 'practical necessities [Sachzwänge]', which Schelsky and Gehlen used to describe constraints that politics was confronted with.<sup>78</sup> Given these convictions, it is not surprising that Dahrendorf used the word 'reverence' to describe his opinion

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<sup>72</sup> Kurt Georg Kiesinger, 'Universitas heute', *Konstanzer Blätter für Hochschulfragen* 4 (1964), 7-8.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, 6.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, 7: 'der sich ihm wehrlos unterwarf'.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*: 'bange Frage', 'Entfremdung unser unabwendbares Schicksal geworden ... sei'.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, 8: 'tragischen Dilemma'.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, 9.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, 12: 'Sachzwänge'.

of Kiesinger when the latter was elected Chancellor of West Germany in December 1966.<sup>79</sup>

While Kiesinger was sympathetic, Dahrendorf found a formidable antagonist on the Foundation Committee in Joachim Ritter, professor of philosophy at the University of Münster. In stark contrast to Dahrendorf, Ritter was an advocate of the humanities, and he successfully thwarted some of Dahrendorf's more radical plans for the new university.<sup>80</sup> As Jens Hacke has shown, Ritter spearheaded a school of former students that included Robert Spaemann, Hermann Lübke, and Odo Marquard, who vehemently opposed the idea that politics was rigidly constrained by practical necessities that effectively transformed politics into technocratic decision-making.<sup>81</sup> Lübke and Marquard in particular spent a great deal of energy criticizing philosophies of history that, they argued, grew out of unwillingness to recognize historical contingency.<sup>82</sup> Ritter's intellectual network of former students, Hacke attests, generally followed Popper in his critique of historicism and rejected the notion of 'inexorable laws of world-historical development'.<sup>83</sup> Unlike Dahrendorf, Ritter defended the humanities from the increasingly widespread demand that they should take methodological inspiration from the natural sciences. In a review of a cybernetics research proposal for the German Research Foundation, Ritter criticized the proposal's suggestion to include the humanities in the project. For Ritter, this was simply the latest instance of a tendency that had manifested itself repeatedly since the eighteenth century.

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<sup>79</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/47, Ralf Dahrendorf to Hans Paeschke, 08 December 1966: 'Verehrung'.

<sup>80</sup> On Ritter's views on the social function of the humanities, cf. Hacke, *Philosophie der Bürgerlichkeit*, 74.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, 190.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, 61.

<sup>83</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 59: 'unerbittlichen Gesetze eines weltgeschichtlichen Ablaufs'.

Whenever thinkers such as Julien de La Mettrie, Auguste Comte, Henry Thomas Buckle, or later scientific psychologists had attempted to establish a universal science on a natural scientific basis that would replace philosophy, insights had been gained in reaction to, rather than because of, these tendencies. The humanities were important as a counterweight rather than as a subsection of a new universal science with a unified method.<sup>84</sup>

It quickly became evident how much Dahrendorf and Ritter disagreed on university reform. In January 1964, both spoke at a seminar hosted by the liberal Friedrich Naumann Foundation at the University of Münster. In his lecture, Ritter argued that university reform in the Federal Republic should not completely reject tradition. Drawing on the recommendations of the *Wissenschaftsrat*, Ritter argued that the Prussian university that dated back to the reform period of the early nineteenth century was ‘in the present and in the future still capable in the full sense to fulfill the functions in society and state assigned to it’.<sup>85</sup> In his speech, Ritter explicitly rejected Max Scheler and Schelsky’s critiques of Humboldt, who both said that the social function of universities in industrial society differed from that of the past, and that university education should concentrate on specialized instruction for the purposes of practice.<sup>86</sup> Instead, Ritter advocated an Aristotelian conception of ‘freedom in the context of scientific discovery [wissenschaftlicher Erkenntnis] ... while the practical arts and their sciences do what is “necessary”,

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<sup>84</sup> German Literature Archives, Marbach, Joachim Ritter Papers, A:Prosa, Kybernetik-Gutachten fuer DFG August 1960, An die Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, Bad Godesberg, Betr.: Az.: 732,71, Bez.: Schr. Dr. Tr/O v. 14.12.59.

<sup>85</sup> German Literature Archives, Marbach, Joachim Ritter Papers, A:Prosa, Vorträge Neue Universitäten und Studienreform IV,2, Joachim Ritter, ‘Die Universität vor den Ansprüchen der Zeit: Zur gesellschaftlichen Funktion freier Forschung und Lehre’, 7-9: ‘gegenwärtig wie zukünftig die Funktionen in Gesellschaft und Staat zu erfüllen, die ihr übertragen sind’.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, 9.

free science undertakes to keep reality as itself open...'.<sup>87</sup> In the face of value-rational technocratic research, philosophy was needed to make possible genuine political decisions.

Dahrendorf's and Ritter's differing views on science and philosophy resulted in recurring disagreements on the Foundation Committee. In particular, Ritter was not enthusiastic about Dahrendorf's intention to relegate philosophy to the role of an auxiliary science within a so-called Interfaculty. Early on in the consultations, to Dahrendorf's chagrin, Ritter and other members of the Foundation Committee managed to ensure that the new university in Constance *would* have a fully-fledged Faculty of Philosophy.<sup>88</sup> When Ritter presented the results of a sub-working group on the organization of a Faculty of Philosophy at Constance, Dahrendorf commented on Ritter's presentation by saying that the suggestions were tantamount to 'basically keep the Faculty of Philosophy at Constance as it currently exists elsewhere'.<sup>89</sup> Instead, Dahrendorf reiterated, the Committee should consider the possibility of a 'Mathematical-Philosophical "Interfaculty" that would include statistics'.<sup>90</sup> In this way it could be emphasized that 'these subjects are relevant to all areas of the university and, so to speak, serve all as a "tool"'.<sup>91</sup> Ritter replied that it was not the point of philosophy to be a 'tool'.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*, 16: 'Freiheit im Zusammenhang mit wissenschaftlicher Erkenntnis ... Während die praktischen Künste und ihre Wissenschaften das "Notwendige" besorgen, übernimmt es die freie Wissenschaft, die Wirklichkeit als sie selbst offen zu halten'.

<sup>88</sup> University of Constance, University Archives, Akz. 147/6, Protokoll über die 1. Plenar-Sitzung des Gründungsausschusses am 19. bis 20. Mai 1964 in Stuttgart, 11.

<sup>89</sup> University of Constance, University Archives, Akz. 147/6, Protokoll über die 2. Plenar-Sitzung des Gründungsausschusses am 30. Mai 1964 (9 Uhr bis 17.30 Uhr) in Stuttgart, 14: 'im Grunde so zu belassen, wie sie heute an anderen Orten besteht'.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*: 'Mathematisch-Philosophischen "Interfakultät"'.  
<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*: 'diese Fächer für alle Gebiete der Universität wichtig seien und sozusagen als "Werkzeug" dienen'.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*: 'Werkzeug'.

It would be unfair to follow Dahrendorf's characterization of Ritter's position as a mere continuation of the status quo. There was a consensus among all Committee members that Constance should be a reform university. For this reason, the Committee agreed in February 1965 that the first chapter of its report would discuss the relation between considerations on the theory of science and the reform plans for the university. Dahrendorf, Ritter, and Hansjochem Autrum were then asked to write a further draft for the first chapter.<sup>93</sup> When the Committee gathered for its next meeting the following month, Dahrendorf and Ritter broke the news that in the end they had refrained from writing a draft because they had found it impossible to agree on its content.<sup>94</sup> Dahrendorf insisted that it was imperative that the first chapter should contain a 'scientific-theoretical elaboration'.<sup>95</sup> He duly proceeded to read out his own personal draft for the chapter that Ritter had found impossible to accept. Ritter for his part preferred restricting the chapter to an elucidation of the pragmatic reform measures pertaining to the organizational constitution of the university.<sup>96</sup> In the end, the Committee decided that Ritter, Autrum, and Herbert Nesselhauf should write an alternative proposal for the chapter, and that Gerhard Hess should merge the two into a compromise draft.<sup>97</sup> Among other things, Ritter's comments on Dahrendorf's draft, which were circulated among the Committee, took issue with Dahrendorf's historical narrative of nineteenth-century universities. According to Ritter, Dahrendorf's depiction of universities as institutions dominated by philosophy in which the sciences were

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<sup>93</sup> University of Constance, University Archives, Akz. 147/6, Protokoll über die 8. Plenarsitzung des Gründungsausschusses am 12. und 13. Februar 1965 in Stuttgart.

<sup>94</sup> University of Constance, University Archives, Akz. 147/6, Protokoll über die 9. Plenarsitzung des Gründungsausschusses am 4./5. März 1965 in Stuttgart, 4.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*: 'wissenschaftstheoretische Erklärung'.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*, 5.

deliberately shut out was historically inaccurate. In fact, the natural sciences had dominated universities to the degree that the humanities had had to develop their own methods in dialogue with, and in reaction to, the sciences. Dahrendorf's critique of nineteenth-century realities after Humboldt's reforms was therefore unfounded, Ritter stated.<sup>98</sup> If the final version of the chapter read more neutral than Dahrendorf's draft, it still stated on its first page that profound social change since the early nineteenth century had rendered Humboldt's ideal university anachronistic.<sup>99</sup>

The question of the relative merits of the empirical social sciences and 'normative' humanities dominated debates about the methodological orientation of the University of Constance. As late as 1977, the philosopher Jürgen Mittelstraß commented on an essay by Dahrendorf that reflected on the foundation of Constance: 'Dahrendorf's note mentions the humanities "that we after all wanted to overcome" and "philosophers" "who began to shape the University of Constance which in a certain sense had been founded against them".' Observing that for Dahrendorf, philosophers were mere idealist epigones, Mittelstraß charged him with 'scientism':

Scientism: that is that conception of science which does not attribute any normative power to [science] in excess of the establishment of rules that is inherent in methods. The result is a normative deficit, growing out of the intensification of a methodological deficit. The

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<sup>98</sup> University of Constance, University Archives, Akz. 57/3, Joachim Ritter, 'Zu "Wissenschaftsentwicklung und Hochschulreform: Prinzipien der Konstanzer Gründung" (Entwurf: H. Dahrendorf)', 22.3.1965.

<sup>99</sup> 'Die Universität Konstanz: Bericht des Gründungsausschusses', *Konstanzer Blätter für Hochschulfragen* 8 (1965), 9.

natural and technical sciences teach us how we can do what we want to do, but not what we ought to want.<sup>100</sup>

Mittelstraß repeated a critique that had been voiced by many others during the process of the foundation. Dahrendorf did indeed intend to make university teaching and research less normative. The discussions on whether higher education should be normative or value-free were waged passionately, at times at high-fever pitch. This was particularly so in debates on the role of the study of law and education at the new university.

The Foundation Committee's report that was submitted to the state government argued that the University of Constance should not have a fully-fledged Faculty of Law.<sup>101</sup> In contrast to other universities, where teaching and research was determined by the need to educate lawyers fit for practice, Constance would focus on legal research. Five chairs for legal studies were envisaged to be located in the Faculty of the Social Sciences in order to draw Law closer to the empirical sciences.<sup>102</sup> This number was intentionally restricted. As Raiser put it in a working session of the Foundation Committee, a fully-fledged law programme would lead to the manifestation of the legal profession's 'estate and corporate spirit' at the new university, and would thus isolate law from the other social sciences at Constance, a development that would go against the explicit goal of

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<sup>100</sup> Jürgen Mittelstraß, 'Universitätsreform als Wissenschaftsreform', in Hans Robert Jauss and Herbert Nesselhauf (eds.), *Gebremste Reform: Ein Kapitel deutscher Hochschulgeschichte: Universität Konstanz 1966-1976* (Constance: Universitätsverlag, 1977), 10: 'Szientismus, das ist jene Auffassung von Wissenschaft, die dieser über die in Methoden präsenste Regelbildung hinaus keine normative Kraft zubilligen möchte. Die Folge ist ein normatives Defizit wissenschaftlicher Orientierungen, das aus der Verschärfung eines methodischen Defizits entsteht. Von den Natur- und Technikwissenschaften lernen wir, wie wir können, was wir wollen, nicht aber, was wir wollen sollen.'

<sup>101</sup> 'Die Universität Konstanz: Bericht des Gründungsausschusses', 20-1.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, 26.

integrating law into the social sciences.<sup>103</sup> Law was therefore not intended to be available to students as a stand-alone degree. Instead, Constance's flagship degree would be a two-year postgraduate course [Aufbaustudium] in Law for non-lawyers, usually to be taken after the first state examination in Law, and in the social sciences for lawyers. This course would allow law graduates to move on to pursue doctorates in the social sciences.<sup>104</sup> It also enabled students to combine the study of public law with either political science or sociology, or the study of private law with economics.<sup>105</sup>

By reforming Law at Constance, Dahrendorf attempted to break the dominant position that lawyers occupied in German politics and social structure, as identified in *Society and Democracy in Germany*.<sup>106</sup> Heavily criticized by many law professors and members of the legal professions, the Constance reform plans for Law were the only aspect of the report that Kiesinger's state government objected to and asked to be revised.<sup>107</sup> Before the official report was submitted to the state government, the Law Faculties of the University of Freiburg and the University of Heidelberg had already protested against the scheme in official memoranda.<sup>108</sup> The reform plans were also the subject of controversial discussions at the official conferences of the West German Faculties of Law in Cologne in July

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<sup>103</sup> University of Constance, University Archives, Akz. 147/6, Protokoll über die 7. Plenarsitzung des Gründungsausschusses am 12. Dezember 1964 (9.00 bis 17.00 Uhr) in Stuttgart, 7-8: 'Standes- und Korporationsgeist'.

<sup>104</sup> 'Die Universität Konstanz: Bericht des Gründungsausschusses', 21.

<sup>105</sup> University of Constance, University Archives, Akz. 147/6, Protokoll über die 7. Plenarsitzung des Gründungsausschusses am 12. Dezember 1964 (9.00 bis 17.00 Uhr) in Stuttgart, 8.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. the discussion above.

<sup>107</sup> University of Constance, University Archives, Akz. 147/6, Protokoll über die 7. Sitzung des Großen Senats am 22. Juli 1966, 9.15 Uhr bis 19.30 Uhr in Konstanz.

<sup>108</sup> For Freiburg, cf. University of Constance, University Archives, Akz. 147/6, Protokoll über die 7. Plenarsitzung des Gründungsausschusses am 12. Dezember 1964 (9.00 bis 17.00 Uhr) in Stuttgart, 7-8. For Heidelberg and Freiburg, cf. University of Constance, University Archives, Akz. 147/6, Protokoll über die 8. Plenarsitzung des Gründungsausschusses am 12. und 13. Februar 1965 in Stuttgart.

1966 and in Freiburg in January 1967. At the second conference, Dahrendorf defended the plans that the Foundation Committee had drawn up.<sup>109</sup> After the publication of the Foundation Committee's report that outlined the plans for Law at the university, Richard Lange had already attacked the plans in the leading legal journal *Juristenzeitung*. Finding it remarkable that Constance was founded with definite methodological principles in mind, he argued that the plans were based on assumptions which were in the process of being superseded. Legal thought and political science were now overcoming the rigid separation of a 'pure science of norms and mere description of reality'.<sup>110</sup> Quoting Dieter Grimm and Wilhelm Hennis, Lange argued that *is* and *ought* were moving closer together.<sup>111</sup> Even if some still held on to Max Weber, Hans Kelsen, and legal positivism, law as a non-normative empirical science should not form the conceptual basis of a university.<sup>112</sup> Lange then proceeded to criticize sociology of law as offered by René König, Georges Gurvitch, and Theodor Geiger, as well as Dahrendorf's sociology for its disregard of anthropological considerations. Geiger was chided for having dealt with the problem of conscience and freedom in a mere seventeen lines in his main treatise on sociology of law.<sup>113</sup>

Raiser responded in the *Juristenzeitung*, which again prompted a reply by Lange. Raiser defended the two-year postgraduate degree and the idea of institutionalizing intellectual exchange between legal scholars and social scientists within a shared faculty. Such an environment of interdisciplinary work was sorely

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<sup>109</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/85, Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Aktennotiz', Konstanz, den 30.1.1967.

<sup>110</sup> Richard Lange, 'Konstanz und die Rechtswissenschaft', *Juristenzeitung* 20 (1965), 737: 'reiner Normwissenschaft und bloßer Wirklichkeitsbeschreibung'.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *ibid.*, 738.

needed in an age in which sociology of law could not live up to the height of early twentieth-century scholars such as Eugen Ehrlich, Weber, and Geiger.<sup>114</sup> Lange used his reply to Raiser's article to once again accuse the Foundation Committee of seeking to inject a crude Comtean positivism into legal thought, taking particular aim at Raiser's positive reference to Geiger.<sup>115</sup> For him, Geiger's value nihilism and his call to re-direct legal studies towards "state-instituted orders of life" as they are rather than as they should be epitomized the worst that sociology of law had to offer.<sup>116</sup>

After the publication of the Foundation Committee's recommendations, Dahrendorf and Raiser spent more than one and a half years defending their plans. In the short run, they emerged largely victorious, although several concessions had had to be made along the way. For instance, at a seminar that Dahrendorf and Raiser organized which assembled some of West Germany's leading legal scholars in June 1966, a compromise solution was reached which envisaged that former students of law *would* be able to pursue doctorates in not just the social sciences but also in law at Constance.<sup>117</sup> This went against the original intention of drawing lawyers towards the social sciences and of breaking the monopoly of normative, idealist legal thought in Germany. Moreover, the concession did not meet with enthusiasm in the Foundation Committee, but Dahrendorf advocated it as a tactical move to salvage the project as a whole.<sup>118</sup> In the long run, Dahrendorf and Raiser's success was pyrrhic, as Constance too saw the introduction of a fully-fledged Law degree.

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<sup>114</sup> Ludwig Raiser, 'Die Rechtswissenschaft im Gründungsplan für Konstanz', *Juristenzeitung* 21 (1966), 88.

<sup>115</sup> Richard Lange, 'Noch einmal: Konstanz und die Rechtswissenschaft', *Juristenzeitung* 21 (1966), 346.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> University of Constance, University Archives, Akz. 147/6, Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Protokollnotiz über die Erörterung der "Juristenfrage" in Konstanz am 1. und 2.6.1966', 28.6.1966.

<sup>118</sup> University of Constance, University Archives, Akz. 147/6, Protokoll über die 7. Sitzung des Großen Senats am 22. Juli 1966, 9.15 Uhr bis 19.30 Uhr in Konstanz.

Already in June 1968, Hess, Aebli, Besson, Brezinka, Dahrendorf, Grauhahn, and Scharpf debated the introduction of a full Law degree at Constance with several professors of law from other universities.<sup>119</sup> In the end, it took until autumn 1974 for Law to become a proper discipline at the new university.<sup>120</sup> Dahrendorf remained bitter about this process for years. Speaking at a celebratory occasion at Constance in June 1988, he referred to the first legal scholars who had worked at the university before the introduction of the degree as a ‘trojan horse’.<sup>121</sup> Gradually, he thought, the university was pulled back into the ossified tradition of the German university.

Similar to the controversies surrounding Law, the role of Education at Constance evoked passionate disputes both in and outside the Foundation Committee. The debate mainly revolved around the call to a Chair in the Philosophical Faculty. In August 1965, Ritter’s student Spaemann, then Professor of Philosophy and Education [Pädagogik] at Technical University of Stuttgart, was in the final stages of being appointed.<sup>122</sup> Curiously, at the next meeting, two months later, the Faculty of Philosophy’s appointment committee revoked its motion to appoint Spaemann, stating that the Faculty of Philosophy was already strongly overrepresented vis-à-vis the other faculties.<sup>123</sup> Instead, the Foundation Committee decided to relocate the Chair of Education to the Faculty of the Social Sciences.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/85, Ergebnisprotokoll einer Besprechung über die Aufgaben des Fachbereichs Rechtswissenschaft an der Universität Konstanz, 21. -22. Juni 1968.

<sup>120</sup> I am indebted to Daniel Wilhelm for this information, Private Correspondence, 16 July 2018.

<sup>121</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/490, Gründe und Abgründe der Hochschulreform: Zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte der Universität Konstanz (Vortrag aus Anlass der Verabschiedung des ersten Konstanzer Universitätskanzlers Günter Schlensag am 11.6.1988): ‘trojanisches Pferd’.

<sup>122</sup> University of Constance, University Archives, Akz. 147/6, Ergebnisprotokoll der Sitzung des “engeren” Gründungsausschusses für die Universität Konstanz am 2. August 1965 (15.00 Uhr bis 21.00 Uhr) in Stuttgart. On Spaemann, cf. Hacke, *Philosophie der Bürgerlichkeit*.

<sup>123</sup> University of Constance, University Archives, Akz. 147/6, Ergebnisprotokoll der Sitzung des “engeren” Gründungsausschusses für die Universität Konstanz am 13. Oktober 1965 (9.00 bis 18.00 Uhr) in Stuttgart.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*

During the next meeting, the appointment committee of the Faculty of the Social Sciences suggested the appointment of Wolfgang Brezinka as professor of education. On behalf of the Faculty, Dahrendorf explained that Brezinka was a researcher who was interested in ‘devising a programme for a new empirical science’ and to teach students on this basis.<sup>125</sup> Dahrendorf continued that Brezinka himself was ‘not interested in discussions with educationalists of the historical and philosophical kind’.<sup>126</sup> The minutes of the meeting recorded that Ritter vividly participated in the discussions on Brezinka’s appointment, although the point of view he took was left unspecified. Ritter was then asked to write a report for Brezinka’s appointment.<sup>127</sup> Meanwhile, Brezinka submitted an essay outlining his thoughts on the reform of ‘the science of education [Erziehungswissenschaft]’ to the Foundation Committee. The report stated that the study and teaching of education at German universities was in a poor state. An empirical understanding of educational science was sorely lacking in a field in which ‘systems of propositions [Aussagensysteme] that are referred to as “pedagogy” in faculties of philosophy are still predominantly thought of as a philosophical discipline [sic!]’.<sup>128</sup> Education in Germany was still artificially separated from the social sciences. This was partly due to theoretical misconceptions and prejudices against psychology and sociology, but also due to ‘strong normative interests’.<sup>129</sup> When

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<sup>125</sup> University of Constance, University Archives, Akz. 147/6, Ergebnisprotokoll über die Sitzung des “engeren” Gründungsausschusses am 19. November 1965 (8.30 bis 13.30 Uhr) in Stuttgart: ‘ein Programm für eine neuartige Erziehungswissenschaft zu entwerfen’.

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.*: ‘nicht an dem Gespräch mit Pädagogen der historischen und philosophischen Richtung interessiert sei’.

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> University of Constance, University Archives, Akz. 147/6, Wolfgang Brezinka, ‘Denkschrift über einen Fachbereich “Erziehungswissenschaft” in der Sozialwissenschaftlichen Fakultät der Universität Konstanz’, 30.11.1965, 1: ‘Aussagensysteme, die an den Philosophischen Fakultäten unter der Bezeichnung “Pädagogik” dargestellt werden, noch immer als vorwiegend “philosophische” Disziplin verstanden werden’.

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*, 2: ‘starke normative Interessen’.

the Foundation Committee confirmed its decision in favour of Brezinka in the next meeting, Ritter said that he would re-draft the report he had prepared on his appointment, and circulate it to the other members along with a non-disclosure agreement.<sup>130</sup> Dahrendorf had been unable to attend this meeting, but was later briefed on the proceedings by his ally Besson:

[There is] little to report. The discussion on Brezinka went very well, very fair and ended as you had suggested to me in your letter. Herr Ritter did not confront us with any insurmountable difficulties [hat keine unüberwindlichen Schwierigkeiten aufgetürmt]. I have got the impression that he gave in because he does not want to come to Constance anymore, though he is not saying that yet.<sup>131</sup>

Besson was proven right early on in the new year, when Ritter announced that after long deliberation he had decided not to take up his own appointment at Constance. The decision not to become a professor there would, as he told Gerhard Hess, hopefully help to pacify a situation characterized by quarrels and disagreements about the Philosophical Faculty.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> University of Constance, University Archives, Akz. 147/6, Ergebnisprotokoll über die Sitzung des “engeren” Gründungsausschusses am 22. Dezember 1965 (11.00 bis 18.00 Uhr) in Stuttgart.

<sup>131</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/277, Waldemar Besson to Ralf Dahrendorf, 27 December 1965: ‘wenig zu berichten. Die Diskussion über Brezinka lief sehr gut, sehr fair und endete so, wie Sie das in Ihrem Brief an mich vorgeschlagen haben. Herr Ritter hat keine unüberwindlichen Schwierigkeiten aufgetürmt. Ich habe den Eindruck, daß er nachgegeben hat, weil er selbst nicht nach Konstanz kommen will, dies aber im Augenblick noch nicht sagt.’

<sup>132</sup> German Literature Archives, Marbach, Joachim Ritter Papers, B: Briefe, Joachim Ritter to Gerhard Hess, 14. Januar 1966.

#### 4. Conclusion.

With the foundation of the University of Constance, Dahrendorf attempted to carve out a niche for his ideal of social science, which he had advocated since the early 1950s in debates about materialist and idealist readings of Marx and in controversies about sociological method and theory from the mid-1950s until the mid-1960s.<sup>133</sup> Constance was intended as a centre for non-utopian social scientific research that could contribute to better political decision-making. Although, as highlighted in Chapter III, Dahrendorf was very critical of the particular theories current in American social science and sociology, he nevertheless sought to emulate its influence on politics. Not without reason did he name John F. Kennedy as his role model in a newspaper interview in November 1967 after having decided to run for parliament for the Free Democratic Party in the federal state of Baden-Württemberg.<sup>134</sup> ‘Modern politics and modern science’, he maintained, were and had to be closely related.<sup>135</sup> Kennedy was a rare example of a politician able to harness scientific insights, even challenge scientists on an intellectual level, and still take independent decisions, Dahrendorf explained.<sup>136</sup> This passion for Kennedy is not surprising, given that his administration signified the high tide of political influence for sociologists, modernization theorists, and other social scientists.<sup>137</sup> Ensuring that social science could inform German politics

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<sup>133</sup> Cf. Chs. I, II, III respectively.

<sup>134</sup> ‘Zu spät, um in die politische Arena zu steigen?’, *Schwäbische Zeitung*, 04.11.1967, reprinted in Ralf Dahrendorf, *Für eine Erneuerung der Demokratie in der Bundesrepublik: Sieben Reden und andere Beiträge zur deutschen Politik, 1967-1968* (Munich: R.Piper, 1968), 92.

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.*, 91: ‘moderne Politik und moderne Wissenschaft’.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*, 92.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*.

in similar ways was one of the guiding thoughts behind his conception of the University of Constance.

But Constance was also more than that. By reforming law, education, and the social sciences at university level, Dahrendorf also sought to overcome the dominance of idealism in German education institutions, which *Society and Democracy in Germany* had identified as one of the cardinal problems of German political culture. In this way, he attempted to implement the political implications of the analyses of historians like Holborn, Krieger, and Stern that idealism was inherently linked to an authoritarian tradition in German history. When the report of the Foundation Committee was submitted to the state government, Dahrendorf made sure to send a copy to his friend Stern, who replied that '[a]fter reading the Bericht, I feel even more strongly that Konstanz is something I would love to belong to'.<sup>138</sup> In its first year of operation, the university's Great Senate returned the compliment by appointing him as a permanent guest professor in the Faculty of the Social Sciences.<sup>139</sup> Dahrendorf continued his scathing critique of the traditions of German universities in the years to come. It resurfaced in his statements at the German Sociological Association's conference in Frankfurt from 8 April to 11 April 1968, where he sat on a debate panel with the sociologists Ludwig von Friedeburg and Erwin Scheuch as well as three representatives of the student movement, Klaus Allerbeck, Hans-Jürgen Krahl, and Wolfgang Lefèvre. At this event, Dahrendorf maintained that 'the German university belongs to the most backward institutions in German society'.<sup>140</sup> Modernizing reforms that in other

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<sup>138</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/44, Fritz Stern to Ralf Dahrendorf, 6 October 1965.

<sup>139</sup> University of Constance, University Archives, Akz. 147/6, Protokoll über die Sitzung des Großen Senats am 22. Juli 1966, 9.15 Uhr bis 19.30 Uhr in Konstanz.

<sup>140</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/621, Mittwoch, den 10.4.1968, 2030 Uhr, Kongresshalle, Podiumsdiskussion zwischen Professoren und Studenten über:

parts of society had started as early as the 1920s had bypassed tertiary education. At German universities, he argued, ‘remnants of anachronistic [vergangenen] authoritarian forms of social organization’ were still alive and could at times take on proportions that were ‘unbearable for the individual’.<sup>141</sup> At the same time, education and research at German universities were more influenced by their traditions than by the social reality of West Germany in the 1960s.<sup>142</sup> Ensuring that social and institutional reality were aligned was central to Dahrendorf’s attempts at reforming university education, highlighting the dominant role he attributed to social structure in determining politics.

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“Herrschaftssysteme und studentische Aktionen”: ‘die deutsche Universität zu den rückständigsten Einrichtungen der deutschen Gesellschaft gehört’.

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*: ‘für die einzelnen schwer erträgliche oder unerträgliche Überreste autoritärer Formen einer vergangenen Gesellschaftsorganisation gibt’.

<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*

## Chapter V: Agonistic Liberalism after the Cultural Turn: Dahrendorf's Critique of Neoconservatism

'There are, as you may easily guess, a thousand issues that we need to discuss, given that I am increasingly beginning to practise your theories, which is leading to an even more curious dialectical relationship between the two of us.' (Ralf Dahrendorf to Jürgen Habermas, 24 January 1968.<sup>1</sup>)

### 1. Introduction.

The enthusiasm for reform that prevailed in West German academic and political circles in the 1960s provided a favourable environment for Dahrendorf's education reform programme at the University of Constance and beyond. However, this enthusiasm did not last as the decade grew to a close. In the wake of the student protests of the late 1960s, the notion that conflicts within society could be alleviated by regulating industrial relations, expanding the welfare state, making institutions more accessible, increasing social mobility, and redistributing wealth lost some of its persuasiveness. The issues that motivated protesting students seemed to be of a nature that post-war sociology could not account for. For those social scientists whose work up to this point had focused on the socio-economic realm, this constituted a veritable challenge. The picture of Dahrendorf and student leader Rudi Dutschke debating on the rooftop of a TV transmission van parked outside the convention centre in Freiburg where the Free Democratic Party was holding its party conference on 29 January 1968 has become an iconic image of this turbulent period.<sup>2</sup> Dahrendorf's role at the German Sociological Association's notoriously

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<sup>1</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/46, Ralf Dahrendorf to Jürgen Habermas, 24 January 1968: 'es gäbe, wie Sie sich leicht denken können, tausend Dinge, über die wir miteinander reden müssten, zumal ich in wachsendem Maße Ihre Theorien zu praktizieren beginne und damit ein noch kuzioseres dialektisches Verhältnis zwischen uns entsteht'.

<sup>2</sup> Meifort, *Ralf Dahrendorf*, 165-8.

tumultuous conference in Frankfurt in April the same year was also widely noted at the time. The economic shocks of the 1970s further eroded the political consensus of the post-war period. During these years, Dahrendorf sought to defend liberal political ideas against what he saw as a re-emergence of utopianism on both the left and the right. Neoconservatism in particular preoccupied him during these years, an intellectual movement in which sociologists from his transatlantic circle played a prominent role.

This chapter focuses on Dahrendorf's theory of the social causes of the student movement and his intellectual engagement with neoconservatism during the 1970s. In doing so, it places particular emphasis on his continuing reliance on socio-economic explanations during a period in which social scientists increasingly relied on 'cultural' explanations of politics. Here, it seeks to draw attention to Dahrendorf's close engagement with scholars at Columbia University, most importantly Daniel Bell, and his role in the Trilateral Commission. It then discusses West German political debates in the wake of the student movement that Dahrendorf engaged in, questioning the argument of a rapprochement with conservatism on his part during this decade.

In developing this argument, the chapter makes use of the ideal-typical concept of 'neoconservatism'. This term was coined by critics and was rejected by several of those thinkers associated with it, prominently Bell and, at first, Norman Podhoretz, the editor of the neoconservative periodical *Commentary*.<sup>3</sup> In spite of its limited self-descriptive usage, the term remains helpful if it can be shown that specific assumptions were shared by various thinkers who were prompted to think

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Hoeres, 'Von der "Tendenzwende" zur "geistig-moralischen Wende": Konstruktion und Kritik konservativer Signaturen in den 1970er und 1980er Jahren, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 61 (2013), 115.

about politics in new ways by the same contemporary events and developments. To show that this was the case with ‘neoconservatives’, and to explain how Dahrendorf interacted with their ideas, is the central aim of this chapter.

## **2. Methodological Change and the Intellectual Reaction to the Student Movement.**

The period from the later 1960s onwards constituted a time of change for the social sciences. Some of these methodological changes have been noted and referred to as the ‘cultural turn’.<sup>4</sup> Changing views on causality and predictability were a prominent part of this, as several historians of science have noted.<sup>5</sup> Anselm Doering-Manteuffel and Lutz Raphael argue that since the 1980s ‘conceptions of historical processes [Verlaufsbegriffe] first declined and then disappeared seemingly completely in western societies’.<sup>6</sup> While Dahrendorf’s case suggests that this change was not all-encompassing, politics increasingly came to be seen as an unstable, unpredictable, and contingent process. Consequently, intellectual interest in historical processes and long-term structural factors declined. Predicting the implications of present sociological phenomena for the future became less popular.

These changes began during the decade following the formation of protest movements on university campuses on both sides of the Atlantic. Beginning in

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<sup>4</sup> For an excellent introduction to the methodological reactions against post-war social science, cf. the Introduction to Isaac, *Working Knowledge*. Moreover, cf. Ariane Leendertz, *Die pragmatische Wende: Die Max-Planck-Gesellschaft und die Sozialwissenschaften 1975-1985* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future* arguably provides the best overview of this shift. Further cf. Andersson, *The Future of the World*; Seefried, *Zukünfte*; Tolon, ‘Futures Studies’.

<sup>6</sup> Doering-Manteuffel and Raphael, *Nach dem Boom*, 70: ‘Rückgang und dann ein scheinbar völliges Verschwinden der Verlaufsbegriffe in westlichen Gesellschaften’.

Berkeley in California in 1965, protests spread to other universities during the following years. In West Germany, the Free University in West Berlin and the University of Frankfurt were hotspots, whereas Dahrendorf's Constance remained comparatively calm. In the United States, Columbia University saw large-scale protests that in late April 1968 reached a climax when police forces cleared occupied university buildings. Perhaps even more so than at other American universities, protests at Columbia revolved around the problem of race relations. With its campus directly adjacent to Harlem, one of the catalysts of the protests were university plans to build a new gymnasium, which were felt to ignore the interests of the neighbourhood's predominantly Black community. As we have seen in Chapter III, Columbia was Dahrendorf's destination for two visiting fellowships from February to June 1960 and from March to May 1966 and assembled many of his closest American intellectual associates. It was here that many members of Dahrendorf's transatlantic circle gradually shifted their political position in the late 1960s in ways that prompted him to reformulate his political ideas, giving rise to two books and one eventually abandoned, unpublished book project: *The New Liberty* (1974), *Life Chances* (1979), and *Contradictions of Modernity* (unpublished). Intellectually, however, Dahrendorf felt somewhat distant from the university, particularly its Department of Sociology. After returning from Columbia in 1966, he wrote to David Lockwood that Columbia was 'a miserable place now, and by that I mean sociology in particular'.<sup>7</sup>

Dahrendorf's close friend Fritz Stern played a central role in events on campus during the Columbia student protests. When students tried to invade the

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<sup>7</sup> University of Essex, Albert Sloman Library, David Lockwood Papers, Box 1, Ralf Dahrendorf to David Lockwood, 12 May 1966.

office of Columbia's Vice-President David Truman in the Lower Library in May 1968, Stern joined Truman in his office to express solidarity with the embattled administrator. When bricks came crashing through the windows during that night, Stern and Truman hid under the desk together.<sup>8</sup> A month earlier, Stern had told Mark Rudd, the local Chairman of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), that his protest methods compared to those of the Nazis.<sup>9</sup> This was in spite of Stern's prominent opposition to the Vietnam War, an issue on which he agreed with protesting students.<sup>10</sup> Stern's disapproval of the student movement also shone through his analysis of its causes. In his opinion, the radical students represented the idealist and apolitical 'cultural pessimism' that he thought lay at the root of Germany's troubled history during the nineteenth and twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> In 1965, he recalled in 1970, Berkeley had reminded him of the 'pathetic, serious fling of German youth before the first World War'.<sup>12</sup> In particular, Stern was dismayed by the type of demands that students were voicing. The student movement was not a socio-economic phenomenon, he concluded. In fact, those involved in it explicitly rejected the 'materialism' of previous generations.<sup>13</sup> In order to account for it, attention had to be drawn to its 'cultural' character:

The underlying motives ... are not political or social, but cultural and psychological. The political disasters of the 1960s provided the setting for the discharge of essentially cultural grievances ... The present movement is closely related to the profound contemporaneous changes

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<sup>8</sup> Stern, *Five Germanys I Have Known*, 256.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, 251-2.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, 246-9.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Stern, *Politics of Cultural Despair*.

<sup>12</sup> Fritz Stern, 'Reflections on the International Student Movement', *The American Scholar* 40 (1970-1), 123.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, 126.

in Western art, Western consciousness and, above all, Western style of life. It is part of what may some day be called our own Cultural Revolution.<sup>14</sup>

Stern's cultural analysis of the student movement chimed with that of his Columbia colleague Bell.<sup>15</sup> Bell and Dahrendorf's itineraries crossed several times around the turn of the decade and during the 1970s. In May 1969, both delivered papers at the Bilderberg meeting in Denmark, offering their interpretations of the causes of student unrest. Moreover, as Bell mentioned in the preface of *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (1973), its sixth Chapter had been the basis of discussion at a seminar that he had co-organized with Dahrendorf in Zurich in June 1970. Funded by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the seminar was attended by Jean Floud, François Bourricaud, Giovanni Sartori, Peter Wiles, Kenichi Tominaga, Shmuel Eisenstadt, Reinhard Bendix, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Michel Crozier, Zygmunt Bauman, Helio Jaguaribe, Juan Linz, Ota Sik, Andrew Shonfield, David Lockwood, Stanley Hoffmann, and Stephen Graubard.<sup>16</sup> In autumn 1976, Bell arrived in London to spend the academic year of 1976/1977 at the LSE.<sup>17</sup> In May 1977, he also gave the LSE's Hobhouse Memorial Lecture. As *ex officio* head of the Hobhouse Memorial Lectureship Trust Committee, Dahrendorf was closely involved in getting Bell to deliver the lecture and ended up chairing the event.<sup>18</sup> In the later 1980s, Bell and Dahrendorf still corresponded. When Bell wrote an essay

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, 124-5.

<sup>15</sup> For Bell, cf. Nathan Liebowitz, *Daniel Bell and the Agony of Modern Liberalism* (London: Greenwood Press, 1985).

<sup>16</sup> Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1973), xii.

<sup>17</sup> I am indebted to Christopher Husbands for alerting me to this fact. For archival evidence, cf. LSE Archives, 225/2/D, Hobhouse Memorial Lectureship Trust Committee, 18 October 1976, Minutes.

<sup>18</sup> LSE Archives, 225/2/D, untitled document [secretarial note], handwritten comment by Ralf Dahrendorf.

on 'The German Question' for the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* in 1990, he still drew on Dahrendorf's *Society and Democracy in Germany*.<sup>19</sup>

Bell's *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* and the *Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (1976) engaged with the role of cultural factors in society, and with the political implications of the transition to post-industrial society that he diagnosed. According to Bell, post-industrial societies were characterized by an increasingly important 'knowledge class' in proportion to the growing importance of science and knowledge.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Bell argued that 'culture has become the most dynamic component of our civilization', a thesis that became widely debated in academic circles.<sup>21</sup> The economy, he stated, had lost influence as a shaping force of peoples' lives and consciences, leading to the decline of bourgeois values.<sup>22</sup> Culture had attained autonomy, and was no longer influenced by social structure.<sup>23</sup> Bell's Hobhouse Memorial Lecture on the 'Return of the Sacred: The Argument on the Future of Religion' formed a coda to these research concerns. These arguments about the importance of culture had already prefigured in Bell's contribution to the edited volume *The Radical Right* (1955). Quoting the progressivist historian Charles Beard, Bell had then argued that American history to date had been shaped by the interplay of diverging socio-economic interests. However, in the prosperous present, the politics of the radical right were not economic, but moralistic 'status politics', following Richard Hofstadter's formulation.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/925, Daniel Bell to Ralf Dahrendorf, 22 June 1990.

<sup>20</sup> Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, 213-21.

<sup>21</sup> Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, 33.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, 36-7.

<sup>23</sup> Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, 39.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel Bell, 'Interpretation of American Politics', in Daniel Bell (ed.), *The Radical Right: The New American Right* (New York: Anchor Books, 1964 [1955]), 50-8.

Similar to Stern, Bell's thinking about politics was greatly influenced by the upheaval on university campuses. Bell was appalled by police violence when university buildings at Columbia were cleared, as well as the politics of radical sections among the students. As Howard Brick points out, Bell initially expressed sympathy for the New Left's critique of bureaucracy in the name of freedom and democracy.<sup>25</sup> And yet, over the course of the late 1960s, he grew more critical. In particular, he objected to the 'moralism' that he thought was current among students. For Bell, progress through social reform depended on administrative measures based on sufficient knowledge of the workings of society; social policy failures in the United States during this period were due to 'the inherent complexity of our social problems, the lack of detailed social science knowledge as to how to "cut" into them, and the shortage of trained administrators'.<sup>26</sup> Refusing to engage with social reform in this way, the student movement was more moral than political.<sup>27</sup> Bell drew a distinction between moralistic students and problem-oriented policy-makers, which pointed to the question of the merits of value-free technocratic social science, one of the central issues of debate.

Similar to many other neoconservatives, Bell gradually shifted from rejecting moralism to the position that a return of morality in public life was necessary in the years following the student movement. In a review of an essay collection by Bell published in the *London Review of Books* in February 1981, Dahrendorf pointed to the Hobhouse lecture from 1977, 'The Return of the Sacred', as the clearest expression of his neoconservatism. Here, he professed to find it 'fascinating to follow Bell to his "retreat from the excesses of modernity". There

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<sup>25</sup> Brick, *Transcending Capitalism*, 205.

<sup>26</sup> Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol, 'Introduction', in Bell and Kristol (eds.), *Confrontation: The Student Rebellion and the Universities* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), x.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

are, he says, needs of morality, of redemption and of mysticism which suggest the return of the sacred...'.<sup>28</sup> In the lecture, Bell had developed his ideas on the prospects for religion in the modern age, arriving at conclusions ultimately opposite to those of Max Weber's disenchantment thesis. While he agreed that secularization had diminished religion's role in public life (with, as he thought, decidedly negative consequences), he did not believe that private religious beliefs had or would diminish. The existential impulses and questions that prompted religious beliefs and contemplations were still the same across all societies.<sup>29</sup> The previous year, Dahrendorf had already told Bell that he thought that his work was part of a shift in political thinking:

I do believe that you have been very much a part of changing times; and both the "part of" and the "changing" are characteristic of your unique contribution to our understanding of the world. For instance, I shall argue in my next book that the break between the first 300 plus (I have not got the book before me and must guess) pages of *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* and the rest marks the point of change around 1970-71-72 ... which in retrospect seems the most important since the Second World War.<sup>30</sup>

Historians of neoconservatism have awarded Bell a central place in the movement's history.<sup>31</sup> Already at the time, Habermas singled him out as one of its

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<sup>28</sup> Dahrendorf, 'Disjunction and Analysis'.

<sup>29</sup> Daniel Bell, 'The Return of the Sacred: The Argument on the Future of Religion', in Daniel Bell, *The Winding Passage: Essays and Sociological Journeys, 1960-1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

<sup>30</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/68, Ralf Dahrendorf to Daniel Bell, 31 October 1980.

<sup>31</sup> Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Peter Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives: The Men who are Changing America's Politics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1980); Gary Dorrien, *The Neoconservative Mind: Politics, Culture, and the War of Ideology* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

main representatives, writing that Bell and other neoconservatives located the causes of the pathologies of modernity in the realm ‘culture’, inverting cause and effect by disregarding ‘economic and social causes for the altered attitudes towards work, consumption and leisure’.<sup>32</sup> In 1982, Habermas noted that neoconservatives tended to locate those political conflicts that really mattered in what Podhoretz called the ‘realm of ideas’.<sup>33</sup> Justin Vaïsse echoes this assessment, arguing that for neoconservatives, the political crisis that they thought society was experiencing was ‘above all moral and cultural, a matter of ideas’.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Nathan Glazer, a close associate of Bell since their student days, later remembered:

What astonishes me in glancing over those early issues [of Public Interest] was how soon the simple notion that science and research could guide us in domestic social policy became complicated, how rapidly this theme was reduced ... Managing social problems was harder than we thought ... We began to realize that our successes in shaping a better and more harmonious society, if there were to be any, were more dependent on a fund of traditional orientations, ‘values’, or, if your will, ‘virtue’, than any social science or ‘social engineering’ approach.<sup>35</sup>

At Columbia, the liberal historian Richard Hofstadter, another member of Dahrendorf’s transatlantic circle, was also deeply embroiled in the unrest on campus. Like Bell and Stern, Hofstadter was an advocate of reform, and agreed

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<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Specter, *Jürgen Habermas: An Intellectual Biography*, 139.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Jürgen Habermas, ‘Die Kulturkritik der Neokonservativen in den USA und in der Bundesrepublik’, in Jürgen Habermas, *Die Neue Unübersichtlichkeit: Kleine Politische Schriften V* (Suhrkamp: Frankfurt, 1985), 30: ‘Welt der Ideen’.

<sup>34</sup> Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 77.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 53.

with protesting students that the construction of the gymnasium on the corner of the Columbia campus near Harlem was problematic.<sup>36</sup> He also sought to engage with radical students, inviting them to his home for discussions.<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, Hofstadter was troubled by the excesses of radicalism, and in the end even advocated a boycott of ‘withholding instruction, grades, and letters of recommendation from the agitators’.<sup>38</sup> These events left an imprint on Hofstadter’s work that corresponded to the transformation of the works of Bell, Stern, and others. As David Brown shows, for a long time, Hofstadter’s intellectual concerns had revolved around the issue of conflict and consensus. In his later work, Hofstadter gravitated towards emphasizing the importance of a ‘moral consensus’ and a shared ideology for the survival of a liberal political order.<sup>39</sup> It was this re-emergence of emphases on morality and prioritizing consensus over conflict, particularly among his intellectual interlocutors, that preoccupied Dahrendorf over the course of the decade that followed the student protests of the late 1960s.

In the Federal Republic, the student movement and the intellectual reaction to it also had a transformative impact on political discourse. Numerous German liberal intellectuals turned towards liberal conservatism in reaction to 1968.<sup>40</sup> Concerns about culture, language, values, and morality now acquired a status of increased political salience.<sup>41</sup> Christian Graf von Krockow, himself a

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<sup>36</sup> David Brown, *Richard Hofstadter: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006), 180.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, 182-3.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, 186.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 205-7.

<sup>40</sup> For a paradigmatic example cf. Riccardo Bavaj, ‘Turning “Liberal Critics” into “Liberal-Conservatives”’: Kurt Sontheimer and the Re-Coding of the Political Culture in the Wake of the Student Revolt of “1968”, *German Politics and Society* 90 (2009). Further, cf. Nikolai Wehrs, *Protest der Professoren: Der “Bund Freiheit der Wissenschaft” in den 1970er Jahren* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2014).

<sup>41</sup> For conservatives’ growing concerns about the influence of language on politics during the 1970s, cf. Martina Steber, *Die Hüter der Begriffe: Politische Sprachen des Konservativen in*

participant of contemporary political debates, observed that during the late 1960s, ‘technocratic conservatism’ became challenged by a ‘moralizing conservatism’ that sought to re-instate values and behavioural virtues.<sup>42</sup> In reaction to the student movement, German intellectuals increasingly emphasized the role of ‘culture’ in society. Richard Löwenthal, a contributor to the American journals *Encounter* and *Dissent* and founding member of the Association for Academic Freedom in November 1970, depicted the student movement and the ‘young Western intelligentsia’s disaffection from the democratic system’ as the ‘expression of a more long-term cultural crisis’.<sup>43</sup> For Löwenthal, the shift on the left could not be explained in terms of social factors, given that the political and social systems in the West were functioning.<sup>44</sup> Instead, the political crisis of the late 1960s and 1970s was linked to the decline of ‘basic values’ and ‘norms of conduct and institutions’.<sup>45</sup> A sizable number of commentators shared this assessment of a cultural crisis and thought that political power was increasingly exercised by intellectuals.<sup>46</sup> In 1975, as we have seen in Chapter II, disagreement about this point led to the falling out between Schelsky and Dahrendorf. Indeed, this point was still emphasized in the early 1980s. Thus, Hermann Lübke lamented the dominance of the ‘left media intelligence’ in West German politics.<sup>47</sup> Shortly after his election as Chancellor,

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*Großbritannien und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1945-1980* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2017), 359.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Wolfgang Lorig, *Neokonservatives Denken in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1988), 79: ‘Einem “technokratischen Konservatismus ... folgt ein moralisierender Konservatismus”’.

<sup>43</sup> Richard Löwenthal, ‘The Intellectuals between Social Change and Cultural Crisis’, in Richard Löwenthal, *Social Change and Cultural Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 27. For Löwenthal’s role in the Academic Freedom Association, cf. Wehrs, *Protest der Professoren*.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Richard Löwenthal, ‘Preface’, in Löwenthal, *Social Change and Cultural Crisis*, vii.

<sup>46</sup> Prominently Schelsky, *Die Arbeit tun die Anderen*; Kurt Sontheimer, *Das Elend unserer Intellektuellen: Linke Theorie in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1976).

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Hoeres, ‘Von der “Tendenzwende” zur “geistig-moralischen Wende”’, 115: ‘linke Medienintelligenz’.

Helmut Kohl spoke of the need for a ‘renovation of the ideal-moral foundations of politics’ at the Christian Democratic Union’s conference in Cologne in May 1983, quoting Lübke to make this point.<sup>48</sup> Habermas also noted the increasing importance of culture in *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981), which observed that social conflicts no longer revolved around material distribution. Present and future conflicts, he argued, were instead determined by questions of ‘cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization’.<sup>49</sup> Whereas workers and business still supported older political values, the younger generation and the educated were yearning for a new form of politics that moved beyond material issues.<sup>50</sup> For Social Democrats, too, material issues became somewhat less central after the late 1960s. Issues connected to the ‘quality of life’, as opposed to material redistribution, became more prominent in the SPD’s political rhetoric from 1972 and 1973 onwards.<sup>51</sup>

Paralleling American neoconservatives, many of those German social scientists whose political outlook changed as a reaction to the student movement also shifted their academic attention towards culture. Targeted by students at the University of Freiburg, Wilhelm Hennis reflected on the role of methodology in the political conflicts of his day. In July 1969, the political scientist argued in a radio lecture that the student movement was caused by a moral crisis created by the rise of value-free social science. The lack of engagement with norms in university teaching had created a generation of politically irresponsible students.<sup>52</sup> When the

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<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, 109: ‘Erneuerung der geistig-moralischen Grundlagen der Politik’.

<sup>49</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns: Band 2: Zur Kritik der funktionalistischen Vernunft*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982 [1981]), 576: ‘kulturellen Reproduktion, der sozialen Integration und der Sozialisation’.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, 576-7.

<sup>51</sup> Seefried, ‘Bruch im Fortschrittsverständnis?’, 442: ‘Qualität des Lebens’.

<sup>52</sup> University of Constance, University Archives, 148/19 – 148/22, Wilhelm Hennis, ‘Wissenschaft in der Entscheidung: Die gesellschaftliche Aufgabe der Universitäten – Kritische

Association for Academic Freedom was set up the next year, Hennis was one of the founding members and took on a prominent role in the organization.<sup>53</sup> Academically, Hennis' interests shifted away from a political science of institutions towards the study of ideas in reaction to the student movement.<sup>54</sup> While on leave at the New School of Social Research in New York in 1977, he started a project on Weber that led to the publication of *Max Weber's Question* in 1987.<sup>55</sup> Centrally, the book criticized the way in which Weber had been, as he saw it, appropriated by post-war modernization theorists. Weber, he claimed, was neither interested in modernization nor universal history.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, Weber's writings on value freedom were a 'never ending source of misunderstandings and useful for a conception of social science that is not bothered by "problems of culture"'.<sup>57</sup> Instead, Hennis portrayed Weber as profoundly interested in culture and morality. In this respect, Weber was said to be heavily indebted to Friedrich Nietzsche, whom 'he read as a moralist'.<sup>58</sup> Worried about the inability of value-free sociology to provide moral guidance to members of society, Hennis' interpretation was a frontal attack on the reception of Weber by advocates of empirical sociology. Above all, it was an attempt to contain methodological commitments that he thought had made the student movement possible.

The situation in the historical discipline was similar. On the one hand, historians interested in socio-economic conflict and social structures, like Hans-

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Betrachtungen über die Hochschulpolitik der Nachkriegszeit- 3. "Die selbstverantwortliche Universität", Süddeutscher Rundfunk, 26. Juli 1969'.

<sup>53</sup> Nikolai Wehrs, *Protest der Professoren*.

<sup>54</sup> Stephan Schlak, *Wilhelm Hennis: Szenen einer Ideengeschichte der Bundesrepublik* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2008), 148.

<sup>55</sup> For Hennis' stint at the New School cf. Schlak, *Wilhelm Hennis*, 186.

<sup>56</sup> For modernization, cf. Wilhelm Hennis, *Max Webers Fragestellung*, 202-5; for universal history, cf. *ibid.* 177.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, 61: 'eine nie versiegende Quelle von Mißverständnissen und nützlich für das Selbstverständnis einer Sozialwissenschaft, die von "Kulturproblemen" nicht bedrückt wird'.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, 173: 'als Moralisten hat er ihn gelesen'.

Ulrich Wehler and Jürgen Kocka at the University of Bielefeld, were disrupting the profession. Established at the university that Schelsky had set up with methodological commitments similar to those Dahrendorf had had during the foundation of the University of Constance, Wehler and Kocka challenged what they perceived as a methodologically impoverished historiographical establishment. Wehler joined the University of Bielefeld in 1971, followed by Kocka in 1972.<sup>59</sup> The first issue of their flagship journal *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* was published in 1975.<sup>60</sup> As a consequence, their historiographical orientation has become associated with this decade.<sup>61</sup> However, their theoretical commitment to a practice of history that focused on socio-economic questions, taking cues from Weber, Karl Marx, Alexander Gerschenkron, and indeed Dahrendorf, was representative of the methodological outlook of the post-war social sciences.<sup>62</sup> Developed during the 1960s, their outlook was heavily inspired by sociology. As soon as Wehler and Kocka were appointed at Bielefeld, their ideas came under fire. As Philipp Stelzel points out, the notion that the Bielefeld School represented a new ‘orthodoxy’ that had acquired hegemonic status, alleged by Thomas Nipperdey as early as 1979, is unfounded.<sup>63</sup> Confronted with protesting students whose grievances seemed ideal rather than material, historians questioned the idea that socio-economic aspects were central to politics in the early 1970s. In 1974, even Wolfgang Mommsen, who was more favourably disposed to the works of his colleagues in Bielefeld than many other historians, wrote that the recent past had

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<sup>59</sup> Stelzel, *History after Hitler*, 128.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, 106.

<sup>61</sup> This is particularly pronounced in Wehrs, *Protest der Professoren*, 20-1.

<sup>62</sup> Paul Nolte, *Hans-Ulrich Wehler: Historiker und Zeitgenosse* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2015), 53 draws attention to Wehler’s indebtedness to Gerschenkron.

<sup>63</sup> Stelzel, *History after Hitler*, 142. For Nipperdey’s statement, quoted by Stelzel, cf. Thomas Nipperdey, ‘Organisierter Kapitalismus, Verbände und die Krise des Kaiserreichs’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 5 (1979), 424-5.

disproved the assumption that socio-economic issues were central and that politics and culture were its derivatives.<sup>64</sup>

For conservative historians, the case was even clearer. Golo Mann's intervention at the neoconservative *Tendenzwende* conference, held in Munich in 1974, was emblematic for this. Mann's paper criticized both the New Left, whose increasing influence on the social sciences and humanities he considered a political and scholarly problem, and sociological approaches to history. He claimed that the structural approaches championed by Germany's social historians, which prioritized sociological aspects over events, depicted societies as completely rationalized total entities which rendered history predetermined, whereas history was in fact open-ended.<sup>65</sup> Likewise reacting against the historiographical influence of the left, Nipperdey and Lübbe published re-appraisals of historicism in 1975 and 1977, respectively.<sup>66</sup> History as the study of individuals and contingency had to be resurrected in order to contain the influence of structure-oriented historiography.<sup>67</sup> An ardent critic of the student movement, Lübbe drew on Karl Popper's work to make this case in the face of the perceived negative consequences of the 'academic cultural revolution' that he thought Germany had witnessed.<sup>68</sup> Nipperdey, like Hennis and Löwenthal a prominent member of the Association for Academic

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<sup>64</sup> Wolfgang Mommsen, 'Die Geschichtswissenschaft in der modernen Industriegesellschaft', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 22 (1974), 6.

<sup>65</sup> Golo Mann, 'Die alte und die neue Historie', in Clemens Graf Podewils (ed.), *Tendenzwende? Zur geistigen Situation der Bundesrepublik* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1975), 47.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Nipperdey, 'Historismus und Historismuskritik heute', in Eberhard Jäckel and Ernst Weymar (eds.), *Die Funktion der Geschichte in unserer Zeit* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1975); Hermann Lübbe, *Geschichtsbegriff und Geschichtsinteresse: Analytik und Pragmatik der Historie* (Stuttgart: Schwabe, 1977). For a contemporary critique, cf. Jörn Rüsen, 'Zur Kritik des Neohistorismus', *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 33 (1979).

<sup>67</sup> For Lübbe's plea for the recognition of contingency and his critique of social history, cf. Hermann Lübbe, 'Historie als Kultur der Kontingenzerfahrung', in Lübbe, *Geschichtsbegriff und Geschichtsinteresse*, 274-7.

<sup>68</sup> For Popper, cf. Hermann Lübbe, 'Einleitung', in Lübbe, *Geschichtsbegriff und Geschichtsinteresse*, 16-7. For 'academic cultural revolution', cf. Hermann Lübbe, 'Vorwort', in Lübbe, *Geschichtsbegriff und Geschichtsinteresse*, 7: 'akademischen Kulturrevolution'.

Freedom, continued this line of argument in his history of Germany since the Napoleonic Wars, which sought to challenge the structural approach of social historians.<sup>69</sup> Placing human agency at the centre of his narrative, his first sentence in the first volume (published in 1983) read: ‘In the beginning was Napoleon’.<sup>70</sup> For Nipperdey, the French leader personified personal power. That this stood at the centre of history was, he said, a fact that could be denied by ‘[o]nly those who have become ideologically blinded confronted with the phenomenon of power and concentrate all attention on the movements of society and “internal” politics and structures’.<sup>71</sup>

Similarly, Karl Dietrich Bracher noted in the preface to the English edition of *The Age of Ideologies*, penned in November 1983, that his work ‘was carried out in the face of the topical discussion about the profound change of social and political values in the seventies’.<sup>72</sup> Bracher was part of a generation of scholars whose career start had coincided with the Federal Republic’s foundational years, publishing his *Habilitation* thesis on the demise of the Weimar Republic in 1955. At the beginning of the characteristically entitled chapter on ‘Ideology and Social Structure’ of this book, he distanced himself from historians who studied ideas without reference to their socio-economic context.<sup>73</sup> In *The Age of Ideologies*, Bracher repeated this point with a reference to Karl Mannheim.<sup>74</sup> Nonetheless, a change of focus had taken place. Instead of chapters on ‘Ideology and Social

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<sup>69</sup> For Nipperdey’s role in the Association, cf. Wehrs, *Protest der Professoren*.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1800-1866: Bürgerwelt und starker Staat* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1983), 11: ‘Am Anfang war Napoleon’.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid*: ‘Nur wer ideologisch blind geworden ist gegenüber dem Phänomen der Macht und alle Aufmerksamkeit auf die Bewegungen der Gesellschaft und der “inneren” Politik und auf die Strukturen konzentriert, kann diese Grundtatsache gering achten.’

<sup>72</sup> Karl Dietrich Bracher, *The Age of Ideologies: A History of Political Thought in the Twentieth Century* (London: Methuen, 1985), x.

<sup>73</sup> Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik* (Villingen: Ring Verlag, 1960 [1955]), 150: ‘Ideologie und Sozialstruktur’.

<sup>74</sup> Bracher, *Age of Ideologies*, 4-5.

Structure’, the ‘Problem of Power Structure’, and ‘The Problem of Bureaucracy’, he now wrote chapters that looked at ‘The Struggle for Values and Orientations’ or ‘Changing Opinions and Political Culture in the Seventies’. Bracher began his new book by stating that a combination of ideologization and a ‘crisis of progress’ had led to a ‘clash of ideas and ideologies, capable of toppling long-established moral and value structures’.<sup>75</sup>

These arguments echoed the assessment of political scientists such as Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann or Ronald Inglehart that Germany (Noelle-Neumann) and the developed world more generally (Inglehart) were undergoing a value shift away from material towards post-material values.<sup>76</sup> Inglehart’s work was widely received in West Germany.<sup>77</sup> Habermas used Inglehart’s work to back up his claims for a shift towards culture in politics, and Bracher used his work to show that a value shift had taken place in the 1970s.<sup>78</sup>

Dahrendorf’s work was not exempted from critique by those who observed a turn towards culture in contemporary politics. Inglehart cited it as an example of sociology inapplicable to politics after the value shift.<sup>79</sup> As mentioned in the Introduction, Geoff Eley charged Dahrendorf and other proponents of the *Sonderweg* thesis for stipulating that societies must necessarily progress through a historical stage in which the ‘bourgeoisie’ dominated politics. Eley argued that Dahrendorf thought that Germany’s failure to develop a politically strong bourgeoisie ‘postponed the inevitable march of progress - the ultimate necessity of Germany’s “bourgeois revolution” or its functional equivalent, which would finally

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<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, 1.

<sup>76</sup> Ronald Inglehart, ‘The Silent Revolution in Europe: Intergenerational Change in Post-Industrial Societies’, *The American Political Science Review* 65 (1971), 992.

<sup>77</sup> Doering-Manteuffel and Raphael, *Nach dem Boom*, 62-4.

<sup>78</sup> Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, 576; Bracher, *Age of Ideologies*, 219.

<sup>79</sup> Inglehart, ‘The Silent Revolution in Europe’, 992.

“open the road to modernity”, in Dahrendorf’s revealing phrase’.<sup>80</sup> Part of a group of culture-oriented Gramscian neo-Marxist historians that included Richard Evans and David Blackbourn, Eley contributed to a methodological shift in an alliance with German historians of very different political backgrounds.

### 3. Dahrendorf’s Analysis of the Student Movement.

Dahrendorf himself argued that social scientists’ perspectives had changed since the early 1970s. In 1980 he observed:

the 1970s have brought about a change in the socio-economic climate (of which we have mentioned but some of the most obvious signs which surely must have consequences for the politics of advanced societies ... There is by comparison to the 1950s and 1960s, a strange silence of socio-political analysis, which is made all the more striking by the number of publications in the field.<sup>81</sup>

Not only was ‘socio-political analysis’ absent; there was also an increasing number of theorists like Bell who overestimated the influence of intellectuals and ideas in society.<sup>82</sup> This critical perspective on Bell’s work was a continuous theme in his writings and public statements throughout the whole decade. In July 1974, towards the end of his time on the European Commission, Dahrendorf had explicitly criticized Bell’s argument of an increasingly powerful ‘professional and technical class’, arguing that the members of this class were still dependent on those who

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<sup>80</sup> Eley and Blackbourn, *The Peculiarities of German History*, 45.

<sup>81</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Twenty-Five Years of Socio-Political Analysis: Notes and Reflections’, *Government & Opposition* 15 (1980).

<sup>82</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘Die Denunziation der Aufklärung’.

paid their salaries and were therefore not the true wielders of power. Given that parliaments and state institutions would continue to influence the kind of research that was conducted, ‘research and development, far from transcending the values of the society surrounding it, is in fact part of it, an indispensable element of an existing socio-economic structure...’.<sup>83</sup>

At the height of student protesting in 1968, Dahrendorf provided his theory of its origins at the Sixteenth Sociological Conference in Frankfurt in April 1968 and at the Bilderberg meeting in May 1968, mentioned above. He continued to put emphasis on the role played by bureaucratization in the structuring of political conflicts. In this way, he held on to a thematic focus that had characterized the German social sciences for decades, as we have seen in Chapter I. Dahrendorf explained that the student movement was merely one aspect of a general social trend that also led to the emergence of new separatist national movements in Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Canada, Italy, and Switzerland. In companies and in educational institutions, demands for increasing participation could be heard. In churches, too, calls for increasing layman influence were made, and discussions about democratizing armies were going on.<sup>84</sup> Developed societies were witnessing a general revolt against bureaucratization, which in turn was a necessary consequence of the expansion of civil rights. The symptoms of this dilemma could be felt particularly in higher education, as providing education opportunities to more members of society unavoidably curtailed the opportunities of those who were already inside the system. Having larger universities meant that it was

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<sup>83</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Observations on Science and Technology in a Changing Socio-Economic Climate’, in Ramkrishna Mukherjee (ed.), *Scientific-Technological Revolution: Social Aspects* (Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications, 1977), 75. This book was based on the proceedings of the World Congress of the International Sociological Association held in Toronto in July 1974.

<sup>84</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Politische Konflikte in entwickelten Gesellschaften’, in Dahrendorf, *Konflikt und Freiheit*, 98-100.

necessary to bureaucratize and streamline instruction inside these institutions, rendering impossible older aristocratic forms of university life.<sup>85</sup> The expansion of universities would thus unavoidably curtail some academic freedoms.<sup>86</sup> University students would cease to be able to freely move between universities and subjects. As student numbers increased as education opportunities were extended to previously disfranchised groups, regularizing, and thus bureaucratizing, university education became necessary. He therefore advocated the introduction of degrees with regularized curricula and more rigid examination processes and schedules.<sup>87</sup> Students could then move through universities more quickly, increasing the total capacity of universities.<sup>88</sup> He also called for the introduction of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees (at the time, most degrees took five years to finish).<sup>89</sup>

The topic of student unrest remained on Dahrendorf's mind over the coming years. As pointed out in Chapter II, delivering the 1974 BBC Reith Lectures, starting on 13 November 1974, was his first academic activity after transferring from the European Commission to the LSE. Inspired by the Marxian motivation to make sense of modernity's inherent contradictions, the lectures sought to make sense of the prospect for liberal democracy in developed societies experiencing little economic growth following the Oil Shock of the previous year and suffering from the ossified bureaucratic structures of the service class society. Like previous works, *The New Liberty* argued that developed societies had run into severe contradictions arising from the fact that the expansion of social rights

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<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, 102.

<sup>86</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/621, Mittwoch, den 10.4.1968, 2030 Uhr, Kongresshalle, Podiumsdiskussion zwischen Professoren und Studenten über: "Herrschaftssysteme und studentische Aktionen".

<sup>87</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Bildung ist Bürgerrecht: Plädoyer für eine aktive Bildungspolitik* (Hamburg: Nannen, 1965), 113-4.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*, 102-3.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*, 115-6.

increased bureaucracy. Even though he conceded that Weber may have overestimated the problem of bureaucratization (an opinion that he also expressed in a note of thanks to the Weber scholar Wolfgang Mommsen for sending him a copy of *The Age of Bureaucracy: Perspectives on the Political Sociology of Max Weber* (1974)), he nevertheless regarded it as an irremediable aspect of modernization.<sup>90</sup> Like Weber, Dahrendorf saw liberalism's task as protecting individual freedom against bureaucracy. This was a dilemma, since the provision of citizenship rights necessitated bureaucratization: 'we have to admit that we could not possibly live a reasonably secure and prosperous life without administrative services'.<sup>91</sup> Extending rights to education, health care, and other welfare provisions was a necessary outcome of the expansion of voting rights to the overall population. This process was to be welcomed, but at the same time it was unavoidable to administer all these provisions without considerable bureaucratization. As a consequence individuals increasingly found their lives governed by institutions and organizations. In this new society, bureaucratic encroachment on the individual hampered certain potentials of human development.

The assumption of dialectical theorists on the left that such contradictions would lead to 'systemic change' did not hold any water, Dahrendorf pointed out in 'The New Liberty: Comments on Italian Critics'.<sup>92</sup> Instead, what could be seen in developed societies was 'a new theme of history' that was less about growth than protecting individual liberty against bureaucratic encroachment.<sup>93</sup> The sociological question was who would 'carry the banner of the future. Where in other words,

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<sup>90</sup> Dahrendorf, *The New Liberty*, 39; BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/53, Ralf Dahrendorf to Wolfgang Mommsen, 30 August 1974.

<sup>91</sup> Dahrendorf, *The New Liberty*, 40.

<sup>92</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/487, Ralf Dahrendorf, 'The New Liberty: Comments on Italian Critics'.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*

does change come from if we look at it in terms of social groups, even classes?’<sup>94</sup> The student protests of the preceding years, he thought, had been a bellwether of this shift. Students and teachers, forming the ‘educational class’, were at the forefront of those who demanded the further democratization of society.<sup>95</sup> *The New Liberty* left no doubt about the importance which Dahrendorf attributed to the student movement as a social force, arguing that ‘[p]erhaps the student unrest of the late 1960s will one day occupy its place in the genesis of the new process of class articulation which is foreshadowed by the revolt of the individual’.<sup>96</sup>

Dahrendorf thought that many prominent sociologists had missed this dynamic of modernization. In 1969, he asked why ‘[e]ven the most intelligent analysts’, including thinkers such as Raymond Aron and Seymour Martin Lipset, thought that the 1950s had heralded an ‘end of ideology’, a period in which politics would increasingly be reduced to technical administrative problems?<sup>97</sup> And why were these intellectuals more puzzled and troubled by student unrest than others? Dahrendorf stated that they had missed a historical dynamic that T.H. Marshall *had* detected. Marx had been correct to refer to the ‘liberal idea of citizen participation rights’ as ‘both “revolutionary” and “unbearably formal”’.<sup>98</sup> Socialism, Dahrendorf sought to show, was an attempt to complement political rights of participation with social rights of participation.<sup>99</sup> Marshall had successfully shown that this process was a *necessary* outcome of the introduction of voting rights.<sup>100</sup> However,

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<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Dahrendorf, *The New Liberty*, 29.

<sup>97</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Das Ende des Sozialismus und die Wiedergeburt des Liberalismus’, in Klaus Hansen (ed.), *Frankfurter Schule und Liberalismus: Beiträge zum Dialog zwischen Kritischer Gesellschaftstheorie und politischem Liberalismus* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1969), 201: ‘Noch die intelligentesten Analytiker’, ‘Ende der Ideologie’.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*, 202: ‘liberalen Gedanken bürgerlicher Teilnahmerechte’, ‘zugleich “revolutionär” und “unerträglich formal”’.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*, 204.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, 203.

expanding social rights *necessarily* led to bureaucratization, which in turn gave rise to wholly new social conflicts within large hierarchical bureaucratic organizations. In this sense, Dahrendorf's analysis of the student movement of the late 1960s was in line with *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*, which had pointed to present and future social conflicts taking place within bureaucratic 'imperatively coordinated associations'.<sup>101</sup> The student movement thus acted as another case in point for Dahrendorf's Marxian conviction that 'social structures as distinct from most other structures are capable of producing within themselves the elements of their supersession and change.'<sup>102</sup> Only if one ignored the fact that new forms of political organization generated novel social conflicts could one believe that ideology had ended.

With this analysis of the student movement as a social force, Dahrendorf diverged from those social scientists in his transatlantic network who interpreted it as a cultural phenomenon. His interpretation also meant that he viewed it as a legitimate form of protest, which, being directed against power hierarchies within bureaucratic institutions, could not be wished away by relegating it to the realm of cultural change. He also sympathized with some demands made by students. While he did not think that it was a panacea, he considered tripartite representation of students, assistants, and professors on university decision-making bodies to be an important part of university reform.<sup>103</sup> He also thought that abolishing professorial tenure was worthy of serious consideration.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict*, 138.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, viii.

<sup>103</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/621, Mittwoch, den 10.4.1968, 2030 Uhr, Kongresshalle, Podiumsdiskussion zwischen Professoren und Studenten über: "Herrschaftssysteme und studentische Aktionen".

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*

Dahrendorf's analysis put him even more at odds with German neoconservatives. In a critical engagement with Karl Jaspers' *Die geistige Situation der Zeit*, written for Habermas' *Stichworte zur 'geistigen Situation der Zeit'* (1979), Dahrendorf was scathing about social democratic intellectuals of the *Tendenzwende* kind who had turned into critics of the student movement. This group, which he said shared Jaspers' cultural pessimist obsession with the decline of culture in modernity, wanted to close the drawbridge after having reached the 'saving shore of social privileges'.<sup>105</sup> Their opposition, he argued, had aspects of an ideological justification of the interests of those who refused to accept that their ideal of university life was forever lost because of historical developments that could not be rolled back. In turn, Dahrendorf looked to the student movement as a social force which could push for change. As much as he minded the utopianism of demands for 'freedom from domination', he still hoped that such ideas, even in their entirely exaggerated state, could help to break up the mould of the given institutional state of society.<sup>106</sup> While Bell's *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* also noted a 'society-side uprising against bureaucracy and a desire for participation', Dahrendorf's reaction to the student movement differed in that he did not think that this uprising should be contained by recourse to morality and culture.<sup>107</sup>

This did not mean that Dahrendorf agreed or even sympathized with radical sections of the student movement. While he agreed that students were

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<sup>105</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Kulturpessimismus vs. Fortschrittshoffnung: Eine notwendige Abgrenzung', in Jürgen Habermas (ed.), *Stichworte zur 'Geistigen Situation der Zeit': 1. Band: Nation und Republik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1980 [1979]), 224: 'rettende Ufer sozialer Privilegien'.

<sup>106</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Herrschaft, Klassenverhältnis und Schichtung', in Theodor Adorno (ed.), *Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft? Verhandlungen des Sechzehnten Deutschen Soziologentages* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1969), 96: 'Herrschaftslosigkeit'.

<sup>107</sup> Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, 365.

voicing legitimate grievances, he criticized those who advocated political violence and saw the liberal parliamentary system as a sham.<sup>108</sup> Likewise, student activists criticized Dahrendorf at Constance. In leaflets that seemed to have been distributed before his lectures, Dahrendorf found himself criticized for espousing a capitalist conception of rationality and for insisting on the need for political elites as a prerequisite for healthy democracies.<sup>109</sup> Dahrendorf would also later find himself criticized from the other side. It was not for nothing that Kurt Sontheimer, a critic of the student movement who *did* think that ideas and intellectuals played a prominent role in politics, criticized Dahrendorf for espousing a liberalism that had no substance and was solely concerned with ensuring that political systems remained open for new political developments. But open for what? Dahrendorf had no answer to this question, Sontheimer alleged.<sup>110</sup> These observations captured Dahrendorf well. Dahrendorf repeatedly admonished his readers that it was imperative to furnish social forces with the possibility of manifesting themselves in parliamentary politics. If not, political violence could ultimately ensue. In contrast to neoconservatives, Dahrendorf thought that the impetus behind politics would come from social forces instead of intellectuals. It should therefore not surprise that when discussing the ‘crisis in the 1970s’ in *The Modern Social Conflict* (1988), Dahrendorf questioned the validity of Inglehart’s argument about a value shift. In contrast, he thought that material values were still likely to trump non-material ones.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/271, [Flyer], Die aus der tendenziellen Basisgruppe Soziologie durch dieses Seminar hervorgegangene Basisgruppe Soziologie.

<sup>110</sup> Kurt Sontheimer, ‘Buntheit allein ist noch keine Politik’, *DIE ZEIT*, 17 July 1981. For Sontheimer’s critique of left-wing intellectualism, cf. Sontheimer, *Elend unserer Intellektuellen*.

<sup>111</sup> Dahrendorf, *The Modern Social Conflict*, 138-9.

#### 4. Debating Neoconservatism from the Trilateral Commission to *Life Chances*.

The Trilateral Commission was one of the most prominent settings in which Dahrendorf interacted with neoconservative theorists. Set up by Brzezinski and funded by David Rockefeller, it assembled leading figures from the worlds of social science and foreign policy to discuss the challenges facing developed societies. The Commission was Brzezinski's brainchild. In April 1972, he sent a memorandum to Rockefeller that argued that the 'postindustrial societies' of the United States, Europe, and Japan were confronted with the same political issues.<sup>112</sup> After Rockefeller and Brzezinski's recommendation to include Japanese delegates was not heeded by the Bilderberg Group, which they initially envisaged as the vehicle for their intellectual interests, the Trilateral Commission was set up in response.<sup>113</sup> In October 1973, the Commission met for the first time in Tokyo.<sup>114</sup> With Jimmy Carter, the Commission included a future President of the United States; in fact, with Brzezinski, Walter Mondale, Cyrus Vance, Harold Brown, Michael Blumenthal, and Warren Christopher, Carter later recruited several key members of the Commission for his administration.<sup>115</sup> Dahrendorf was one of the social scientists who Brzezinski asked to participate in the Commission.<sup>116</sup>

Based at Columbia, Brzezinski worked on issues that also preoccupied other members of Dahrendorf's transatlantic network. Brzezinski was interested in futurology and Bell's work in this area. He commented that '[r]ecent years have

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<sup>112</sup> Justin Vaïsse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: Stratège de L'Empire* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2016), 147. For Brzezinski's thought, further cf. David Engerman, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>113</sup> Vaïsse, *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, 149.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*, 151.

<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*, 159-60.

<sup>116</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/53, Ralf Dahrendorf to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 27 August 1974.

seen a proliferation of exciting and challenging literature on the future' in reference to the *Daedalus* issue 'Toward the Year 2000' that Bell had edited and published in 1967.<sup>117</sup> In contrast to Bell's emphasis on culture, however, Brzezinski argued that technology would increasingly become the cultural, psychological, social, and economic shaping force of society.<sup>118</sup> Brzezinski saw the scope for individual agency shrinking, and argued that '[h]uman conduct will become less spontaneous and less mysterious - more predetermined and subject to deliberate "programming"'.<sup>119</sup> In *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, Bell in turn took issue with Brzezinski's alleged 'technological determinism' and stated that social structure did not determine society.<sup>120</sup>

The Trilateral Commission reached its highest profile after the publication of the report on the 'Governability of Democracies', written by the social scientists Samuel Huntington, Michel Crozier, and Joji Watanuki, each representing one member region. The report was presented at a conference in Kyoto on 30 and 31 May 1975, where Dahrendorf had the privilege of delivering the opening statement in the discussion. Gilman points out that Huntington had been a leading critic of modernization theory since the mid-1960s who challenged the assumption that modernization was an 'irreversible' process.<sup>121</sup> Instead, Huntington argued that modernization was cyclical, a fact that, he argued, had not been lost on interwar commentators such as Oswald Spengler, Vilfredo Pareto, Pitirim Sorokin, and Arnold Toynbee.<sup>122</sup> For him, modernization theorists greatly underestimated the

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<sup>117</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'America in the Technetronic Age', in George Kateb (ed.), *Utopia* (New York: Atherton Press, 1971), 128.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*, 129.

<sup>120</sup> Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, 38.

<sup>121</sup> Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*, 233.

<sup>122</sup> Samuel Huntington, 'The Change to Change: Modernization, Development, and Politics', *Comparative Politics* 3 (1971), 290-8.

influence of culture and tradition on societies.<sup>123</sup> Two days after the conference, Dahrendorf described the proceedings as a ‘clash between the conservative majority of the Trilateral Commission ... who seem to seek a return to the good old values of discipline and secretive government, and those among us who do not regard modernity as corrupted [verderbt] from the outset...’.<sup>124</sup> In a separate letter written the same day, Dahrendorf argued that nothing less than the question of either returning to autocracy or finding new forms of democracy was at stake.<sup>125</sup> In their report, Huntington, Crozier, and Watanuki engaged with questions that Dahrendorf was also interested in. The student movement, alluded to as ‘oppositionist intellectuals and privatistic youth’, had made a deep impression on the authors.<sup>126</sup> They observed that ‘advanced industrial societies have spawned a stratum of *value-oriented* [my italics] intellectuals ... their behavior contrasting with that of the also increasing numbers of technocrats and *policy-oriented* [my italics] intellectuals.’<sup>127</sup> By drawing this contrast between technocrats on the one hand and intellectuals who rejected value-free research on the other, the authors made the same observation that Bell had made when he criticized the moralism that he saw current among students. The ‘intellectual world’ of advanced societies was out of balance, the report claimed: policy-oriented intellectuals had come to exert political influence and occupy the social standing that scholars in the humanities

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<sup>123</sup> *ibid.*, *passim*.

<sup>124</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/70, Ralf Dahrendorf to Wolfgang Ernst, 2 June 1975: ‘eine Auseinandersetzung zwischen der konservativen Mehrheit der Trilateralen Kommission ... die eine Rückkehr zu den guten alten Werten der Disziplin und der Geheimregierung anzustreben [sic!] scheint und jenen anderen unter uns, die die Moderne nicht von vorneherein für verderbt halten’.

<sup>125</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/72, Ralf Dahrendorf to Wolfgang Galinsky, 2 June 1975.

<sup>126</sup> Michel Crozier, Samuel Huntington, and Joji Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), 9 [online resource, accessed 19 March 2018; [http://trilateral.org/download/doc/crisis\\_of\\_democracy.pdf](http://trilateral.org/download/doc/crisis_of_democracy.pdf)].

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.* 6-7.

had held in the past. However, while declining, ‘value-oriented intellectuals ... find new and rapidly-developing openings in the fields of communications’, which created a group of political intellectuals of a ‘protest type’.<sup>128</sup> A new social fault line had thus opened up in which intellectual critics played a prominent role. Like many other social scientists at the time, Crozier, Huntington, and Watanuki spoke of a cultural crisis:

Daniel Bell has rightly pointed out the basic importance of culture in the coming of post-industrial society ... But neither Daniel Bell nor any other futurologist has foreseen the importance and the painfulness of such an ongoing process of change. There is no reason to believe that the contemporary cultural revolution will be more peaceful than the industrial revolutions of the past.<sup>129</sup>

At the Kyoto conference, Dahrendorf emerged as one of the report’s most vigorous critics. His points resembled earlier engagements with neoconservative critics of the changing political culture of western societies. Besides questioning some of the report’s assumptions, such as that the viability of democracy depended on economic growth, Dahrendorf took issue with the concept of ‘governability’, a crucial aspect of the Trilateral Commission’s *raison d’être*. In his statement on the report delivered at the conference, Dahrendorf remarked:

Governability presumably refers to the ability of governments to give direction to the economies, societies, and political communities in which they govern, and to do so effectively. Could it not be argued that

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<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*, 32.

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*, 30.

one of the traditional characteristics of democracies is that we do not ask governments to give direction to the economies, societies, and political communities, at least not to the extent to which non-democratic societies are doing this?<sup>130</sup>

This sounded similar to the ‘non-interventionist’ liberalism that became increasingly popular during this decade. Although it went into a somewhat similar direction, Dahrendorf did not object to proactive policies by the state in either the economic or the social realm. Instead, he objected to the idea that the initiative for such interventions should come from governments and civil servants rather than the population. In the report, Crozier argued that governments were suffering from an ‘overload’ of political demands coming from various angles.<sup>131</sup> Firstly, conditions in modern societies were such that ‘a great many more groups and interests [could] coalesce’.<sup>132</sup> Secondly, changes in information transmission made it impossible to ‘maintain the traditional distance that was deemed necessary to govern’.<sup>133</sup> Thirdly, the emergence of democratic values meant that access to information was less easily restricted.<sup>134</sup> Crozier’s point about the ‘overload’ of governments became a commonplace among political commentators during the 1970s. At Kyoto, Brzezinski made similar observations about a crisis in international relations resulting from the emergence of ‘new demands and ... the presence of many new participants’.<sup>135</sup> On this point, Dahrendorf diverged from the neoconservative converts of his liberal circle. Increasing demands for

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<sup>130</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/245, Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Excerpts of Remarks on the “Governability of Democracy” Study’, May 31 1975.

<sup>131</sup> Crozier, Huntington, and Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy*, 12.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*, 13.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/245, Zbigniew Brzezinski, ‘Trilateral Relations in a Global Context’, May 31 1975.

participation in the ‘machinery of decision-making’ in various institutions was a ‘natural consequence of the development of citizenship over the last century or two’, and as such could not be changed.<sup>136</sup> ‘There are historical forces’ that were ‘too powerful to be contained; citizenship is one of them’, he had observed in an article that grew out of a paper given at a conference organized by Robert Heilbroner at the New School of Social Research in April 1974.<sup>137</sup> When the title was published, Dahrendorf made sure that Podhoretz received a copy.<sup>138</sup> It was necessary to increase rather than restrict participation in order to safeguard democracy. The new social conflicts of the bureaucratic age arose from ‘manifest interests’ generated by structural conditions. From this perspective, it is not surprising that Dahrendorf returned to reading Marx closely during his time as European Commissioner in the early 1970s, and redirected attention to the role of ‘objective interests’ in social conflict.<sup>139</sup> As in his work on the sociology of revolution during the late 1950s and early 1960s, Dahrendorf insisted on the importance of accepting interests and social conflict as a necessary part of social life that could not be overcome. Chimerical hopes to turn back the clock and return to a time in which governments had not been ‘overloaded’ by demands were utopian. Demands by the citizenry were not a variable that could be adjusted in order to make technocratic governance practicable again.

At the *Tendenzwende* conference in Munich in November 1974, Dahrendorf had made similar points to the German neoconservatives assembled

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<sup>136</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/245, Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Excerpts of Remarks on the “Governability of Democracy” Study’, May 31 1975.

<sup>137</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Citizenship and Beyond: The Social Dynamics of an Idea’, *Social Research* 41 (1974), 699. For the conference, cf. BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/53, Ralf Dahrendorf to Robert Heilbroner, 18 April 1974.

<sup>138</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/53, T.C.J. Deunk, Secretary to Prof. Dahrendorf to Norman Podhoretz, 11 July 1974.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Chapter II of this thesis.

there. Jens Hacke, Franziska Meifort, and Nikolai Wehrs have taken Dahrendorf's participation at this conference and the ideas expressed in his paper as evidence of a rapprochement with conservatism.<sup>140</sup> Nevertheless, when he started to speak, Dahrendorf remarked that some participants may be surprised to see him at a gathering of this nature, as it 'is a fact that I come to you as someone on the left, because I am a liberal, and I am not prepared to relinquish this word to those on the right.'<sup>141</sup> Further, Dahrendorf expressed his scepticism about the term 'reversal of tendencies' since he regarded it as hopeless to assume that one could reverse historical developments by recourse to 'reminding a changing present about values that it has departed from; that it is possible to lead this present back to these values'.<sup>142</sup> Instead, Dahrendorf made it clear that the pressing issues of the day were connected to the particular 'socio-economic state' that developed societies found themselves in.<sup>143</sup>

These debates with neoconservatives left a deep impression on Dahrendorf. Indeed, the issue of democratic decision-making came to occupy the centre stage of his work over the following years. In reaction to Bell's assertion that "a society that does not have its best men at the head of its leading institutions is a sociological and moral absurdity", Dahrendorf insisted that '[t]his never happens, of course; what happens is that societies define what is "good" and "best" in new ways'.<sup>144</sup> Further, he detected an implicit assumption about the existence of a 'natural hierarchy' in Bell's chapter on 'Meritocracy and Equality' in *The Coming*

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<sup>140</sup> Wehrs, *Protest der Professoren*, 439; Hacke, 'Ralf Dahrendorf und die FDP', 136. Meifort, *Ralf Dahrendorf*, 233-4.

<sup>141</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Zukunft der Freiheit', in Podewils (ed.), *Tendenzwende?*, 94: 'es ist ... eine Tatsache, daß ich als Linker zu Ihnen komme, denn ich bin Liberaler, und ich bin nicht bereit, dieses Wort an die Rechten zu verschenken'.

<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*, 95: 'Tendenzwende', 'eine sich verändernde Gegenwart zu erinnern an Werte, die sie verlassen hat; daß es möglich ist, diese Gegenwart zurückzuführen zu diesen Werten'.

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*, 107: 'sozialökonomischen Lage'.

<sup>144</sup> Cited in Dahrendorf, 'Citizenship and Beyond', 685.

*of Post-Industrial Society*.<sup>145</sup> At Munich, Dahrendorf stated that it was misguided to hope – as John Stuart Mill had done in his view – for a form of representative government that would allow the ‘educated’ to force their views on the ‘uneducated’.<sup>146</sup> Dahrendorf engaged with the question of democratic participation in a way that differed markedly from other participants, arguing that increased democratic participation was ‘one of the greatest instances of progress in the development of developed societies during the last decades’.<sup>147</sup> Indeed, Dahrendorf prioritized aligning decision-making with popular demands over governmental efficiency. This is evident in handwritten notes Dahrendorf scribbled on the back of an offprint of the Herbert Lehman lecture by the American politician Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a key figure in the neoconservative movement. Here, Dahrendorf noted: ‘how important is effectiveness of govt.?’ in response to the arguments expressed in the offprint that Moynihan had sent him personally.<sup>148</sup>

To be sure, Dahrendorf agreed that the nature of increasingly complex political issues, which often required transnational solutions, was such that the scope for political participation was worryingly low. The existence of increasingly complex decision-making in politics was central to the arguments of those who worried about the ‘governability’ of post-industrial societies. However, in contrast to those concerned by the ‘overload’ of governments by popular demands, he considered this to be a challenge to think of new ways to establish parliamentary oversight. In a lecture at the University of St. Andrews in 1975, Dahrendorf stated:

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<sup>145</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 683-5.

<sup>146</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘Zukunft der Freiheit’, 104: ‘Gebildeten’, ‘Ungebildeten’.

<sup>147</sup> *ibid.*, 102-3: ‘einer der ganz großen Fortschritte ist in der Entwicklung der entwickelten Gesellschaften in den letzten Jahrzehnten’.

<sup>148</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/76, [attached document], Daniel Moynihan to Ralf Dahrendorf, July 12, 1978.

The economic consequences of the Smithsonian Agreement of December 1971 probably affected more people more deeply than a whole year of national economic policies under parliamentary control. However: where was the democratic control of these measures? How did the principle of regulated conflict apply to these decisions? It is difficult to find even traces of such control...<sup>149</sup>

For this reason, Dahrendorf worried about the political power of autonomous institutions in the economic sphere, such as large monopolistic companies or trade unions. The power of such bureaucratic institutions *vis-à-vis* parliament was a central issue that he flagged as relevant in his introductory remarks as chair of the panel ‘Are Free Societies Still Governable and Capable of Concerted International Action?’ at the Königswinter Conference in March 1975.<sup>150</sup> In this vein, Dahrendorf also criticized calls for increasing the power of the judiciary at the expense of the legislature that were being made in Britain at the time.<sup>151</sup> This was no call for radical democratization; Dahrendorf stayed clear of demands for direct democracy and criticized the ‘imperative mandates’ that the SPD practised in some of West Germany’s larger cities.<sup>152</sup> At Munich, he had rejected the concepts of imperative mandates, ‘permanent discussion’, and the notion that sections of the populations should be allocated seats in proportion to their share of the overall population.<sup>153</sup> However, it would be wrong to read a turn towards conservatism into these observations. Dahrendorf rejected the assumption that culture had

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<sup>149</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/247, Ralf Dahrendorf, *Democracy under Pressure: Problems of the Constitution of Liberty Today*.

<sup>150</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/245, Ralf Dahrendorf, Introductory Speech to Study Group IV, ‘Are Free Societies Still Governable and Capable of Concerted International Action?’, Königswinter 14-16 March 1975.

<sup>151</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘A Confusion of Powers: Politics by Jurisdiction and the Partisan Administration of Law’, *Modern Law Review* 40 (1977).

<sup>152</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘Citizenship and Beyond’, 690.

<sup>153</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘Zukunft der Freiheit’, 102: ‘permanente Diskussion’.

replaced socio-economic factors as the linchpin of politics, and consequently rejected the political conclusions neoconservatives drew from the emergence of a 'cultural crisis'.

Besides Dahrendorf, Habermas was undoubtedly one of the Federal Republic's leading critics of neoconservatism in this period. Indeed, the two sociologists increasingly gravitated towards one another over the course of the decade. In 1979, Dahrendorf was appointed as Habermas's co-director of the Max Planck Institute (MPI) in Starnberg to succeed the retiring Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker. Habermas had first asked Dahrendorf in April 1975 whether he would consider an appointment as director at the MPI in Starnberg.<sup>154</sup> Set up in 1970 (Habermas relocated from Frankfurt in 1971), the Institute was devoted to research on the 'living conditions of the scientific-technological world'.<sup>155</sup> Dahrendorf declined the offer at the time, but nevertheless held Habermas and his work in high regard. In July 1975, he told the sociologist Renate Mayntz that he thought that Habermas' work on the problem of legitimation was very important and worthy of continuous discussion.<sup>156</sup> Habermas seemed to think similarly about Dahrendorf's work. When he attempted to attract Dahrendorf to Starnberg for a second time three years later, he highlighted the convergence of their interests in the research proposal written for the time after Dahrendorf's arrival. In this proposal, which already pointed in the direction of the *Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas explained that 'Dahrendorf and I are equally interested in the construction of a theory of society that can describe and explain the structure-creating development

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<sup>154</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/355, Jürgen Habermas to Ralf Dahrendorf, 16 April 1975.

<sup>155</sup> Müller-Doohm, *Jürgen Habermas*, 223: 'Lebensbedingungen der wissenschaftlich-technischen Welt'.

<sup>156</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/355, Ralf Dahrendorf to Renate Mayntz, 24 July 1975.

tendencies of societies'.<sup>157</sup> In 1974, after he left the European Commission, Dahrendorf was appointed to the MPI's Scientific Advisory Board, and in this function visited the Institute to discuss book projects and other research activities. In 1978, Dahrendorf also acted as an expert witness for the Max Planck Foundation for the thematic orientation of the Starnberg Institute after Weizsäcker's retirement. Here, as Ariane Leendertz points out, Dahrendorf recommended focusing on international relations, with a particular emphasis on its economic dimension.<sup>158</sup> This area was also part of the thematic focus – alongside total social analysis, theory of social processes, and political theory – that Dahrendorf proposed when he was asked to succeed Weizsäcker.<sup>159</sup> The research proposal Dahrendorf wrote for the MPI shows that he was interested in re-thinking his conflict theory for the purpose of trying to make sense of the manifestation of conflicting interests within international negotiations at a time in which 'the chances to prevent international class struggle are small'.<sup>160</sup>

In the end, Dahrendorf turned down the appointment. To Wolfgang Zapf he described the decision as difficult because he 'valued Jürgen Habermas more than almost all other people who I know'.<sup>161</sup> As a consequence, Habermas and Dahrendorf's writings developed more independently than they might have done. Nonetheless, they continued to take an interest in each other's work. In response to Dahrendorf's book project on the 'Contradictions of Modernity', Habermas wrote

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<sup>157</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/637, Document with no Title. Content shows that it was written by Habermas. Annotated with Dahrendorf's handwriting: 'Dahrendorf und ich sind in gleicher Weise an der Konstruktion einer Gesellschaftstheorie interessiert, die die strukturbildenden Entwicklungstendenzen in Gesellschaften unseres Typs beschreiben und erklären kann.'

<sup>158</sup> Leendertz, *Die Max-Planck-Gesellschaft und die Sozialwissenschaften 1975-1985*, 29.

<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*, 30-1.

<sup>160</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/637, Zur Frage eines Arbeitsbereiches Dahrendorfs in der MPG (Entwurf): 'Die Chancen, den internationalen Klassenkampf zu vermeiden, sind gering'.

<sup>161</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/82, Ralf Dahrendorf to Wolfgang Zapf, 23 May 1979: 'Jürgen Habermas mehr als nahezu alle anderen Menschen, die ich kenne, schätze'.

that he was also working on a piece that engaged with ‘modernity and the rather hollow programme of post-Enlightenment and postmodernism’.<sup>162</sup>

Over the course of the preceding years, Dahrendorf had been a sympathetic yet critical supporter of the researchers at the MPI in Starnberg. The Institute achieved a certain notoriety in 1976, when the proceedings of a conference in Munich were prominently discussed in *DIE ZEIT* and elsewhere in the media. With contributions by scholars such as Hans Albert, Hermann Lübbe, and Nikolaus Lobkowitz, the conference concentrated on a critical discussion of the ‘finalization thesis’ of the Starnberg scholars Gernot Böhme, Wolfgang van den Daele, and Wolfgang Krohn. In two articles published in 1972 and 1973, the authors had sought to challenge what they described as history of science written from an enlightened-positivist perspective that presumed that scientific progress happened independent of outside influences.<sup>163</sup> Although Böhme, Daele, and Krohn took inspiration from Thomas Kuhn’s writings on this subject, they wanted to go further than Kuhn by pointing to the influence of socio-economic interests on the success of scientific theories.<sup>164</sup> At the same time, the programme to flesh out extra-scientific influences on the course of scientific progress was intertwined with a call to put science under the influence of a Habermasian ‘rationally produced social consensus’.<sup>165</sup> It was this point that would come to be criticized in particular as a call for the politicization of science.<sup>166</sup> In many ways, the debate on the ‘finalization

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<sup>162</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/356, Jürgen Habermas to Ralf Dahrendorf, 25 June 1980: ‘Modernität und die etwas hohle Programmatik von Nachaufklärung und Postmoderne’.

<sup>163</sup> Gernot Böhme, Wolfgang van den Daele, and Wolfgang Krohn, ‘Alternativen in der Wissenschaft’, *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 1 (1972), 302.

<sup>164</sup> *ibid.*, 313.

<sup>165</sup> Gernot Böhme, Wolfgang van den Daele, and Wolfgang Krohn, ‘Die Finalisierung der Wissenschaft’, *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 2 (1973), 143: ‘rational erzeugten Konsensus der Gesellschaft’.

<sup>166</sup> Hermann Lübbe, ‘Planung oder Politisierung der Wissenschaft: Zur Kritik einer kritischen Wissenschaftsphilosophie’, in Kurt Hübner, Nikolaus Lobkowitz, Hermann Lübbe, and Gerard

thesis' continued debates that had dominated during the Positivism Dispute, described in Chapter I. On the one hand, Böhme, Daele, and Krohn criticized Popper's argument that the question of the influence of extra-scientific factors on science was a moot one.<sup>167</sup> On the other hand, their concern that value-free science threatened to constrain the free collective development of society through democratic decision-making echoed Habermas' objections to 'positivism' in the early 1960s. To their mind, social science as it was commonly practised blindly facilitated the needs of industry, military, and other existing power structures.<sup>168</sup> It was thus no co-incidence that Popper's student Albert, perhaps his key popularizer in Germany, played a central role in criticizing the 'finalization thesis'. Correspondingly, Lübbe's contribution to the conference critical of the Starnberg theorists took aim at Habermas' earlier critique of so-called positivism from the 1960s.<sup>169</sup> Drawing attention to the 'moralism' underlying this anti-positivism, Lübbe defended a value-free conception of science that recognized a distinction between politics and the 'execution of practical necessities', and the necessity of both.<sup>170</sup>

Dahrendorf's defence of the Starnberg group in the debate thus symbolized his continuous and increasing distance from strict interpretations of critical rationalism by Popper and his followers. Whereas Dahrendorf expressed his admiration of Habermas, Popper had called Habermas an 'idiot' in December 1969.<sup>171</sup> While the debate was held in newspaper columns, Dahrendorf

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Radnitzky (eds.), *Die politische Herausforderung der Wissenschaft: Gegen eine ideologisch verplante Forschung* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1976), 16.

<sup>167</sup> Böhme, van den Daele, and Krohn, 'Alternativen in der Wissenschaft', 311.

<sup>168</sup> Böhme, van den Daele, and Krohn, 'Finalisierung der Wissenschaft', 128-9. Also cf. Chapter I of this thesis.

<sup>169</sup> Lübbe, 'Planung oder Politisierung', 15.

<sup>170</sup> *ibid.*, 18: 'Exekution von Sachzwängen'.

<sup>171</sup> Quoted in Stefan Müller-Doohm, *Jürgen Habermas*, 156: 'Flachkopf'.

simultaneously fought plans to cut funding for or even close the Starnberg institute that were being considered by the Max Planck Association's senate, of which he was a member. Allusions Dahrendorf made in a letter to Heinrich Popitz suggest that he suspected that these plans were ideologically motivated.<sup>172</sup> Reacting to the Munich conference, Dahrendorf wrote a column for *DIE ZEIT* that denied that the finalization thesis was a 'red theory' and that its proponents were radicals, dismissing this perspective as symptoms of contemporary political panic.<sup>173</sup> In correspondence exchanged after the publication of the article, Dahrendorf further sought to make it clear to Albert that he thought that the latter overestimated the influence of the Starnberg group in public discourse:

I recently spent a whole evening debating with the Starnberg scholars, and I went away with two impressions from this discussion. The first impression is one of stagnation in the thought of the Starnberg scholars, who have basically not managed to add anything to their first theoretical ideas. The other one is that they feel downright persecuted despite everything that you, Herr Albert, may say about their chances of success. The bliss at the fact that an article got published in English in an insignificant journal struck me as a remarkable sign of the group's isolation. If my articles had any additional political intention, it was to ensure that the Federal Republic does not make the mistake of ridding itself of a significant part of inconvenient fellow citizens.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/77, Ralf Dahrendorf to Heinrich Popitz, 12 May 1976.

<sup>173</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Bitte um Klarstellung', *DIE ZEIT*, 23 April 1976: 'rote Theorie'.

<sup>174</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/67, Ralf Dahrendorf to Hans Albert, 24 May 1976: 'Ich habe neulich einen Abend lang mit den Starnbergern diskutiert und bin mit zwei Eindrücken aus dieser Diskussion gegangen. Der eine Eindruck ist der der Stagnation des Nachdenkens bei den Starnbergern, die im Grunde über ihre ersten theoretischen Ansätze nicht wesentlich hinausgekommen sind. Der andere Eindruck ist aber der, daß sie sich geradezu verfolgt fühlen trotz allem, was Sie, Herr Albert, über ihre Erfolgchancen sagen mögen. Die Seligkeit darüber, daß ein Aufsatz auf englisch in einer unbedeutenden Zeitschrift abgedruckt wird, schien mir ein erstaunliches Zeugnis für die Isoliertheit der Gruppe. Wenn ich mit meinen Artikeln nebenbei ein

In contrast to Dahrendorf, Albert did assume that ideas had a strong influence on society. At the conference in Munich, he argued that was overly optimistic to assume that politics was the pursuit of soberly analysed interests. It was not the case, Albert submitted, that interests trumped ideas in politics.<sup>175</sup>

This debate on the merits of critical theory developed at Starnberg continued for several years. Dahrendorf did not conceal his negative attitude towards Albert and other followers of Popper, and indeed to some extent even Popper himself. Thus, he described Albert and the ‘Popper people’ as humourless in a letter to Helmut Spinner, the author of a book that critiqued critical rationalism for itself resting on a philosophy of history.<sup>176</sup> This was the context in which Dahrendorf aired his critique that Popper was ignorant of the existence of an ‘Oppenheimer dilemma’ in the social sciences.<sup>177</sup> Dahrendorf’s attention was again directed to opposition to the Starnberg project after the publication of the proceedings of another conference held in Munich on 15 and 16 January 1980, which he reviewed for *DIE ZEIT*. With Lübbe, Nipperdey, Friedrich Tenbruck, Gerard Radnitzky, and Robert Spaemann, the conference assembled speakers who had already contributed to previous debates with members of the Frankfurt School. The preface to the publication explicitly located the conference in the tradition of

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politisches Ziel verfolgt habe, dann das, dafür zu sorgen, daß die Bundesrepublik nicht den Fehler macht, sich von einem beträchtlichen Teil unbequemer Mitbürger zu trennen.’

<sup>175</sup> Hans Albert, ‘Die Idee der Wahrheit und der Primat der Politik: Über die Konsequenzen der deutschen Ideologie für die Entwicklung der Wissenschaft’, in Hübner, Lobkowitz, Lübbe, and Radnitzky (eds.), *Die politische Herausforderung der Wissenschaft*, 149-50.

<sup>176</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/75, Ralf Dahrendorf to Helmut Spinner, 17 July 1978: ‘Popper-Leute’. For the book, cf. Helmut Spinner, *Popper und die Politik: Geschlossenheitsprobleme, Rekonstruktion und Kritik der Sozial-, Politik und Geschichtsphilosophie des kritischen Rationalismus* (Bonn: Dietz, 1978).

<sup>177</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘On Representative Activities’, 24. Cf. the discussion in Chapter III.

the *Tendenzwende* conference of 1974, where Dahrendorf had participated.<sup>178</sup> Yet again, the debate unfolded as a coda of the Positivism Dispute. Radnitzky's contribution emphasized falsification as the core principle of science and rejected the notion that ideas and knowledge were 'socially determined'.<sup>179</sup> Like Popper, Radnitzky dismissed sociology of knowledge as a field of enquiry unworthy of attention.<sup>180</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, given Dahrendorf's fascination with sociology of knowledge, it was Radnitzky's essay that his review focused on specifically. Further, it criticized Tenbruck's statement which suggested that West Germany had undergone a veritable 'cultural revolution' at the hands of intellectuals:

For decades society has been depicted as a place in which conflict has to be fought rationally, all types of tradition or need for community have been ridiculed, all institutions have been reduced to mere domination, values have been turned into impositions.<sup>181</sup>

As in the case of other critics of the student movement, culture, values, and tradition occupied a central place in Tenbruck's thinking. Not only had the intellectual distance between Dahrendorf and self-professed Popperian philosophers of science become apparent in Dahrendorf's writings. In a written reply to the review addressed to the editors of *DIE ZEIT*, Radnitzky argued that Dahrendorf's

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<sup>178</sup> Michael Zöllner, 'Vorwort', in Michael Zöllner (ed.), *Aufklärung heute: Bedingungen unserer Freiheit* (Zurich: Edition Interfrom, 1980), 7.

<sup>179</sup> Gerard Radnitzky, 'Der politische Wert der nichtpolitischen Wissenschaft', in Zöllner (ed.), *Aufklärung heute*, 111: 'sozial determiniert'.

<sup>180</sup> *ibid.*, 110.

<sup>181</sup> Quoted in Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Zwei links zwei rechts: Etiketten statt Argumente: Die geistige Auseinandersetzung ist erstarrt', *DIE ZEIT*, 20 March 1981: 'Kulturrevolution', 'Jahrzehntelange wurde die Gesellschaft als Stätte rational ausgetragener Konflikte dargestellt, jede Art von Überlieferung oder Gemeinschaftsbedürfnis ridiculisiert, wurden alle Institutionen auf bloße Herrschaft reduziert, Werte in Zumutungen umgedeutet'.

argumentation was inconsistent with Popper's ideas, despite his constant insistence to be indebted to him.<sup>182</sup>

From this perspective, it does not surprise that Dahrendorf spent the turn of the decade trying to update and improve the theoretical backdrop of his agonistic version of liberalism. Centrally, this involved a restatement of his methodological assumptions. In contrast to the growing tendency among political theorists to conceive of history as an indeterminate open process, in *Life Chances*, Dahrendorf reformulated his conception of causality in social action. In late March and early April 1977, Dahrendorf delivered three lectures at the Christian Gauss Seminar at Princeton University. At this point, the 'Life Chances' project still had the provisional subtitle 'Essay in the Theory of Social Processes'.<sup>183</sup> Two years earlier, he had already complained to Robert Merton about the 'inability of people to imagine that "social relations" are neither micro-random (i.e. in themselves) nor macro-random (i.e. in their context)'.<sup>184</sup> It was not without reason that the published version of *Life Chances* discussed Weber's concept of 'chance' at length.<sup>185</sup> Prompted by early twentieth-century discussions in both the social sciences and philosophy of law, Weber had developed an understanding of causality that eschewed both strict determinism and the argument that considerations of causality were irrelevant to the humanities.<sup>186</sup> In a preliminary draft of the book's introduction, Dahrendorf's discussion of Weber was in some aspects more detailed than in the final version. As he pointed out, Weber's fascination with the concept

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<sup>182</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/78, Gerard Radnitzky. 'Habile Schreibweise statt Seriosität: Kommentar zu Dahrendorfs Rezension "Etiketten statt Argumente".'

<sup>183</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/248, *Life Chances: Essay in the Theory of Social Processes*, Christian Gauss Seminar on 28 March, 31 March and 7 April 1977, Princeton University U.S.A. Further cf. Chapter II of this thesis.

<sup>184</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/76, Ralf Dahrendorf to Robert Merton, 10 May 1975.

<sup>185</sup> cf. Weber, 'Objektive Möglichkeit und adequate Verursachung'.

<sup>186</sup> Fritz Ringer, *Max Weber's Methodology: The Unification of the Cultural and Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

of ‘chance’ stemmed from the fact that it allowed him to conceive of ‘social laws’ as ‘not simply regularities of social processes, but “chances” of processes occurring regularly ... Events which theories would lead us to expect to happen may in fact not happen; there is room for deviance, for the unexpected, for freedom...’.<sup>187</sup> At the same time, social laws and regularities were not random: ‘Chances are probabilities anchored in social structure’.<sup>188</sup> With these observations, Dahrendorf had moved considerably beyond his condemnation of Weber a decade earlier.

In a similar vein, Dahrendorf reacted to Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers’ *La Nouvelle Alliance*, which Prigogine sent to Dahrendorf after its publication in 1979. Prigogine, recipient of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1977 for his work on thermodynamics, collaborated with the Belgian philosopher Stengers to write a critique of ‘mechanistic’ understandings of science which thought in terms of universal laws and necessity. Based on thermodynamics, the authors instead advocated recognising the role of chance, openness, and uncertainty. Moreover, Prigogine and Stengers maintained that science and scientific research were heavily influenced by culture and ideology.<sup>189</sup> In writing the foreword for the English translation of the book, the futurist Alvin Toffler took this idea one step further. For him, the industrial age had given birth to mechanistic notions of science and causality. It should therefore not surprise, he stated, that the transition to post-industrial societies would lead to the emergence of new world views.<sup>190</sup> Confronted with this book, which he professed to have read immediately

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<sup>187</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/248, *Life Chances: Essay in the Theory of Social Processes* [manuscript].

<sup>188</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order out of Chaos: Mans New Dialogue with Nature* (London: Flamingo, 1985 [1984]), 18-20.

<sup>190</sup> Alvin Toffler, ‘Foreword: Science and Change’, in Prigogine and Stengers, *Order out of Chaos*, xiv.

after its arrival, Dahrendorf promised to send Prigogine a copy of *Life Chances*, ‘because in two of its chapters I am in fact applying a similar approach to the understanding of history’.<sup>191</sup> After alerting Prigogine to the relevance of Popper’s *The Self and its Brain* to his interests and asking him about his opinion on Paul Feyerabend’s “post-modern” answers to the questions of post-modernity’, Dahrendorf ended the letter with an expression of doubt: ‘but there remains a little question mark: have you really suspended “necessity” for good?’<sup>192</sup>

In the Gauss lectures, Dahrendorf defended himself against the charge that he was engaged in a sort of ‘socio-metaphysics’ by recourse to Weber’s probabilistic understanding of causality.<sup>193</sup> Social structures governed the behaviour of members of society in all realms:

The fact that people do not necessarily behave in accordance with structural patterns also means that they do not have to be aware of the expectations governing their behaviour. This is the truth in the much-discussed concept of “objective interests” (“class interests”) of which people become aware (“conscious”) only under certain conditions. Similarly, it is possible to provide an analysis of structural opportunities – chances, life chances – without assuming that people are necessarily aware of their options. The objective-subjective dimensions are quite misleading to describe this matter...<sup>194</sup>

Weber had held a similar middle position between voluntarism and determinism, Dahrendorf observed: ‘Weber shies away from stating categorically the necessity

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<sup>191</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/77, Ralf Dahrendorf to Ilya Prigogine, 20 October 1979.

<sup>192</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/248, *Life Chances: Essay in the Theory of Social Processes* [manuscript].

<sup>193</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> *ibid.*

of certain events on forms or forms of action occurring: he protects himself by using the word “chance”. On the other hand he recognizes that the first axiom of social analysis is that social action is not random’.<sup>195</sup>

When *Life Chances* was published as a book, Dahrendorf did not include the lengthy discussion of method the introduction to his lectures had offered. In the book Dahrendorf relegated some of the passages on Weber and causality from the beginning of the introduction to a middle section in the book. It is not clear why he made this change. The passages on Weber constituted the oldest part of the book, with parts of it dating back ‘more than ten years’.<sup>196</sup> Arguably, the change ultimately worked against Dahrendorf, as the charge that he engaged in metaphysical philosophy of history formed the cornerstone of Stuart Hampshire’s critique in the *London Review of Books*.<sup>197</sup> On the other hand, Dahrendorf now introduced a reading of Weber’s concept of ‘chance’ that was not present in the lectures, explaining that Weber used the word in two senses pertaining to both ‘probability of behaviour’ and individual ‘chance of satisfying interests’.<sup>198</sup> These two meanings were intricately linked in Weber’s thought, since the chances individuals had to realize their interests were connected to social circumstances: ‘Chances themselves are socially determined. Social structures are arrangements of chances’.<sup>199</sup> Dahrendorf further criticized that Weber conceived of political legitimacy in exclusively ideal terms, that is that for Weber legitimacy really meant ‘believed legitimacy, indeed the belief in legitimacy’.<sup>200</sup> On this point, Dahrendorf was inspired by Habermas’ critique of Weber in *Zur Rekonstruktion des*

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<sup>195</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> Dahrendorf, *Life Chances*, 168.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. the beginning of the Introduction of this thesis.

<sup>198</sup> Dahrendorf, *Life Chances*, 66-7.

<sup>199</sup> *ibid.*, 67.

<sup>200</sup> *ibid.*, 69.

*historischen Materialismus*.<sup>201</sup> When it came to legitimation, Dahrendorf felt, Weber ‘[c]haracteristically ... abandons structural analysis’.<sup>202</sup> In this way, Dahrendorf continued the theme touched on in his *Habilitationsprobevorlesung* of 1957, which had argued that Weber tended to privilege the ideal over the socio-economic realm.<sup>203</sup> The changes Dahrendorf made between lectures and book helped to obscure the methodological gulf that existed between Dahrendorf and liberals like Popper, Berlin, and Hayek in relation to the role of ideas and interests in history. Nonetheless, one reviewer read the book as a ‘friendly critique of Karl Popper’s *The Open Society and its Enemies* ... and a rich alternative to F.A. Hayek’s *Constitution of Liberty*...’.<sup>204</sup>

The book’s published version also included a paper that Dahrendorf had given at the annual European Forum Alpbach in Austria in 1978, which offered an interpretation of the reasons why developed societies found themselves in the midst of what Habermas called ‘legitimation crisis’. Habermas’ work during this period also responded to neoconservative ideas. His writings on the question of legitimation partly unfolded in dialogue with Hennis. In his own work on legitimation, Hennis took Habermas to task for ignoring the fact that legitimacy can only arise from culture and tradition. Similar to Bell, he worried that increasing rationality in modern societies chipped away at ‘pre-political cultural and religious norms’.<sup>205</sup> Likewise, Hennis argued that the usage of the word ‘legitimation’ rather than ‘legitimacy’ implied a process, which only made sense if one knew what

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<sup>201</sup> *ibid.*, 109.

<sup>202</sup> *ibid.*, 69.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Chapter II of this thesis.

<sup>204</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/765, Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Life Chances: Approaches to Social and Political Theory’, *Library Journal*, 1 January 1980.

<sup>205</sup> Wilhelm Hennis, ‘Legitimität: Zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft’, in Hennis, *Politikwissenschaft und politisches Denken* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 285: ‘vorpolitischen, kulturellen und religiösen Normen’.

would come at the end of this process.<sup>206</sup> Correspondingly, he saw Habermas' work as prompted by a frustrated search for causality in a historical process.<sup>207</sup> By way of discussing the 'subtle contributions of Jürgen Habermas to our subject', Dahrendorf sought to provide an exposition of his own theory of history, and to show that it did not commit himself to a historicist logic of history.<sup>208</sup> Following Habermas' critique of Weber, Dahrendorf further agreed that it was hopeless to try to overcome legitimation crises by way of "“normativistic” [attempts] to find pervasive bases of valuation for assessing the justice of power'.<sup>209</sup> However, he took issue with Habermas' 'reconstructive' concept of legitimation, as it professed the intention to discern the 'logic of development' of different legitimacy systems over the course of history.<sup>210</sup> For Dahrendorf, Habermas' attempt to make sense of political events since the late 1960s thus served as a useful prompt to discuss his ideas about historical development. Dahrendorf argued that the danger of historicism could be avoided if Habermas' system was changed in one significant aspect, namely if a project of enquiry was formulated which would study the historical succession of different systems of legitimation 'structurally, without any attempt to find a logic of development'.<sup>211</sup>

This did not mean that Dahrendorf subscribed to the radical rejection of philosophy of history imputed to him by Hübinger.<sup>212</sup> He still thought that discrete historical periods were governed by particular principles which gave periods characters that set them apart from the past and the future.<sup>213</sup> What struck him as

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<sup>206</sup> *ibid.*, 255.

<sup>207</sup> *ibid.*, 253.

<sup>208</sup> Dahrendorf, *Life Chances*, 109.

<sup>209</sup> *ibid.*.

<sup>210</sup> *ibid.*, 110.

<sup>211</sup> *ibid.*.

<sup>212</sup> Hübinger, *Engagierte Beobachter der Moderne*, 7.

<sup>213</sup> Dahrendorf, *Life Chances*, 110.

unpersuasive was the assumption that discrete historical periods succeeded one another with an inherent logic. The ‘hegemonial values’ that Dahrendorf saw at play in determining the character of a period were connected to social forces, that is, the economic, social, and technical reality given in a particular society. However, at times, the potential for the realization of life chances in societies outgrew the possibilities and restrictions offered by society, giving rise to situations in which legitimation crises ‘may be inevitable’.<sup>214</sup>

One of *Life Chances*’ core arguments was that chances for individual development depended on two variables, chances and ligatures, the latter of which had been much discounted in previous decades. The book thus took up the thread of the debate on norms, values, and morality of the preceding years. Indeed, the way Dahrendorf now discussed Émile Durkheim’s concept of ‘anomie’, i.e. the absence of ligatures in a given society or group, seemed to indicate a change of heart about the issues that had concerned neoconservatives for a decade already. By ‘ligatures’, Dahrendorf referred to factors that ‘relate people to an anchorage which transcends special social relations and power decisions and escapes rapid historical change, the relation itself being naturally to change in long historical rhythms’.<sup>215</sup> Religion, history, patriotism, or a sense of family could provide a sense of purpose in a modernizing world which seemed to destroy traditional bonds while creating new options.<sup>216</sup>

Meifort has noted the similarity between this assessment and conservative ideas.<sup>217</sup> However, a year after the publication of *Life Chances*, Dahrendorf admitted that he felt uneasy about the wording of his book because it left room for

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<sup>214</sup> *ibid.*, 111-2.

<sup>215</sup> *ibid.*, 74.

<sup>216</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> Meifort, *Ralf Dahrendorf*, 233-4.

the interpretation that he had argued in favour of attempting to create ligatures. Ligatures, however, could not be organized; they emerged in and of themselves. Anyone who assumed the role of ‘organizer of ligatures’ should be regarded with the utmost suspicion.<sup>218</sup> Dahrendorf then went on to remark that he had recently re-read Weber’s writings on the ‘return of the sacred’, and that he found Weber’s pessimism about the likelihood of this to be well-founded.<sup>219</sup>

## 5. Conclusion.

When the decade drew to a close in 1979, it had become commonplace to speak of a return of ideology in politics. Many of Dahrendorf’s liberal associates had shifted towards the right in reaction to the student movement. By contrast, Dahrendorf did not interpret the student movement as a cultural phenomenon or a symptom of a deeper cultural crisis. As a consequence, he was less worried about the role of ideas in the public sphere, and did not shift towards emphasizing the importance of morality and virtues. Instead, he held on to a sociological vision of politics that prioritized the role of ‘objective interests’ in determining political behaviour, while an increasing number of theorists argued that politics and society were more unpredictable and contingent than had previously been realized. Reformulating his conception of causality in social action therefore became central to his ‘Life Chances’ project of the late 1970s. This divergence in conceptions of causality would play a similar role in Dahrendorf’s critique of neoliberalism in the 1980s. Even more so, his reception of neoconservative moralism carried over into

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<sup>218</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/255, Soziale Lebens-chancen in einer sich wandelnden Welt. Siemens-Stiftung, Muenchen 10. Juni 1980: Diskussion zum Vortrag von Prof. Dahrendorf, Mentor: Prof. Dr. Lobkowitz: ‘Ligaturenorganisator’.

<sup>219</sup> *ibid*: ‘Wiederkehr des Heiligen’.

this critique. Dahrendorf's *Law and Order*, published in 1985, drew a connection between the resurgence of moralism on the right and renewed emphases on the free market.<sup>220</sup> As we shall see in the following chapter, his thoughts on these two new political currents were intricately linked.

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<sup>220</sup> Dahrendorf, *Law and Order*, 77.

## Chapter VI: Dahrendorf's Critique of Neoliberalism

'Not everything that is distasteful to some, or to me, or even to Hayek, has by the same token constitutional status. Whatever is raised to that plane is thereby removed from the day-to-day struggles of normal politics, until in the end a total constitution emerges in which there is nothing left to disagree about, a total society, another totalitarianism.' (Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe* (New York: Random House, 1990), 36.)

### 1. Introduction.

Half way through Dahrendorf's Directorship at the London School of Economics and Political Science, Margaret Thatcher was elected Prime Minister of the United Kingdom after a decisive victory by the Conservative Party in the General Election of May 1979. Together with Ronald Reagan's triumph in the US Presidential Election in 1980 and the FDP's shift of allegiance from the SPD to the CDU/CSU to form a new government with Helmut Kohl as Chancellor in October 1982, Thatcher's arrival at 10 Downing Street was symptomatic of a veritable change of political currents around the turn of the decade. During the preceding years, intellectual conservatism had been resurgent in the wake of the student movement and left-wing terrorism.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, economic liberalism was gaining ground in political debates. In 1974, Friedrich Hayek was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics, followed by Milton Friedman in 1976.

Dahrendorf's attitude towards this political realignment was mixed. In the Federal Republic, he supported his party's decision to leave the coalition with Helmut Schmidt's Social Democrats for the Christian Democrats. In fact, in late

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Chapter V.

1982 and early 1983 Dahrendorf seriously considered a return to politics, taking part in the FDP's election campaign in 1983 on a scale that he had not done since 1969. In Britain on the other hand, he was very critical of Thatcher's politics from the very beginning of her tenure. In addition to Thatcher, his critique of free-market oriented liberalism extended to economists such as Hayek, Friedman, Robert Nozick, and, in particular, proponents of 'public choice theory' and 'constitutional economics' like James Buchanan or Gordon Tullock.

As shown in Chapter II, Dahrendorf had initially praised Hayek as an inspirational liberal theorist in *Society and Democracy in Germany* (1965) and *Konflikt und Freiheit* (1972). By the late 1970s, Dahrendorf's view of Hayek had changed radically. On 17 May 1978, Hayek came to the LSE to deliver that year's Hobhouse Memorial Lecture on 'The Three Sources of Human Values', which was subsequently published in the third volume of *Law, Legislation and Liberty*. *Ex officio*, Dahrendorf chaired the lecture and hosted the subsequent dinner party in honour of the speaker in his private dining room in his flat at The Anchorage on the LSE's campus. His dinner speech seemed to have been sufficiently lukewarm that the anthropologist Raymond Firth felt urged to write to Dahrendorf a few days later. In the letter, Firth said:

I hope you were not a trifle disappointed in saying that it was an anecdotal evening. It seemed to me that given the assembly this was probably the mood most in accord with the occasion, of honouring a distinguished colleague whose thought processes commanded respect if not agreement.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> LSE Archives, Central Filing Registry, 225/2/D, Raymond Firth to Ralf Dahrendorf, 21 May 1978.

In his reply, Dahrendorf admitted that Firth's observation was 'at least half correct. I had in fact expected a substantive discussion that evening'.<sup>3</sup> Half a year later, Dahrendorf's changed attitude towards the Austrian economist manifested itself again. In his Lionel Trilling Lecture on 'Life Chances: On the Dimensions of Liberty in Society', given at Columbia University on 7 December 1978, Dahrendorf referred to Hayek's *The Constitution of Liberty* as 'only a half liberal book'.<sup>4</sup> By 1990, when he felt that Hayek was unduly celebrated in Eastern European countries that were about to abandon communism, Dahrendorf argued that Hayek's political theory had the potential to lead to a totalitarianism that would not necessarily be preferable to the type that Eastern Europe had just managed to throw off.<sup>5</sup>

Franziska Meifort takes Dahrendorf's engagement in the FDP's election campaign in 1983 as evidence for an alleged turn from social liberalism towards market liberalism.<sup>6</sup> This chapter seeks to nuance this picture, shedding light on Dahrendorf's critique of Hayek and neoliberal theory as it evolved over the course of the later 1970s and 1980s. In so doing it emphasises the continuity between Dahrendorf's earlier thought, grounded in a materialist vision of politics, and his critique of neoliberalism. Criticizing Hayek, Buchanan, and Tullock, for their attempts to settle political questions on the constitutional level, Dahrendorf continued to emphasize the importance of allowing sectional interest groups to pursue their politics in the parliamentary sphere. Taking into account Dahrendorf's

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<sup>3</sup> LSE Archives, Central Filing Registry, 225/2/D, Ralf Dahrendorf to Raymond Firth, 23 May 1978.

<sup>4</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/252, Life Chances: On the Dimensions of Liberty in Society, Lionel Trilling Lecture, Columbia University, 07 December 1978.

<sup>5</sup> Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, 29-36.

<sup>6</sup> Meifort, *Ralf Dahrendorf*, 238-9.

critique of market- and constitution-oriented versions of liberalism, a different picture of his intellectual development during the 1980s emerges. This puts Dahrendorf's support for the FDP's break with the SPD in 1982 in a somewhat paradoxical light. Prominent members of the party's left wing, such as Günter Verheugen, Ingrid Matthäus-Meier, and Andreas von Schoeler, left the FDP and joined the SPD after the end of the coalition. However, there are alternative ways of accounting for Dahrendorf's support for ending Helmut Schmidt's time in office as Chancellor of the Federal Republic. When rumours circulated that Schmidt would become co-publisher of *DIE ZEIT* in early 1983, Dahrendorf threatened to stop writing for the newspaper. In a letter to Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, one of the other co-publishers, Dahrendorf depicted Schmidt as a quasi-authoritarian figure with profoundly anti-liberal views. Reminding her that the committed National Socialist Schmidt had sat in the audience rows when his father Gustav Dahrendorf was prosecuted at Roland Freisler's *Volksgerichtshof*, Dahrendorf admitted that his wife was probably right that his views on Schmidt were emotional. As he reminded Dönhoff, he and Schmidt had a history of disagreements that dated back to their student days at the University of Hamburg, when they had clashed in social democratic student politics circles.<sup>7</sup> Dahrendorf's personal loyalty to Schmidt was thus limited.

Moreover, during the run-up to the change of coalition Dahrendorf had reiterated his opinion that the role of the market in society was subject to considerable limitations. Gerhart Baum, Minister of the Interior and one of his close allies on the FDP's left wing, received a letter from Dahrendorf which argued that

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<sup>7</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/922, Ralf Dahrendorf to Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, 7 April 1983.

the ‘market is indeed a nice liberal word – as long as intelligent people do not start to believe that we have a market economy.’<sup>8</sup> The strength of the German economy, Dahrendorf added, had always been connected to the prefix ‘social’.<sup>9</sup> Dahrendorf’s support for the FDP’s shift of allegiance should thus not be read as a shift towards economic liberalism. Moreover, several historians have pointed out that foreign policy considerations were as important as, if not more than, economic policy during the Liberals’ decision-making process in favour of leaving the coalition.<sup>10</sup> In his memoirs, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, party leader and Foreign Secretary under both Schmidt and Kohl, remembered that the NATO double-track decision and the SPD’s flagging support for it had been the decisive issue at the time.<sup>11</sup>

Similar to the term ‘neoconservatism’, ‘neoliberalism’ has been predominantly used by its critics. As with neoconservatism, this thesis uses the word as a concept to describe a trend within liberal thought in the 1970s that can be described as new, notwithstanding the fact that the origin of the term neoliberalism stretches back much further. This is not to say that the ideas described as ‘neoliberal’ in this thesis were not around before the 1970s. The more profound change of that decade related to the way in which ideas that had been in circulation for several decades became increasingly accepted by wider circles in politics and society.

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<sup>8</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/727, Ralf Dahrendorf to Gerhart Baum, 10 August 1982: ‘Markt ist in der Tat ein schönes Wort – solange nicht intelligente Menschen zu glauben beginnen, wir hätten eine Marktwirtschaft.’

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*: ‘sozial’.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the historiographical discussion in Joachim Scholtzseck, ‘Die FDP in der Wende’, *Historisch-Politische Mitteilungen* 19 (2012).

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 202.

## 2. Neoliberalism as Utopia.

In 1966, the Walter Eucken Institute invited Dahrendorf to give a guest lecture at the University of Freiburg. The Institute was one of the most important intellectual centres of economic liberalism in the Federal Republic, established at the university that had lent its name to the liberal Freiburg School. It was not without reason that Hayek came to Freiburg as professor of economics in 1962, where he stayed until 1969. Dahrendorf's lecture on 'market and plan rationality' was his first intellectual attempt to make sense of the liberalism espoused by the Freiburg economists, and it prefigured some of the points that would become more prominent in his writings ten to twenty years later. Delivered a year after the publication of *Society and Democracy in Germany*, which had praised Hayek's liberalism, the lecture provided Dahrendorf with an opportunity to engage with Hayek's ideas. Indeed, Hayek's distinction between two kinds of rationalism, developed in a lecture in Tokyo in April 1964 that was published by the *Economic Studies Quarterly* in 1965, inspired Dahrendorf's choice of theme.<sup>12</sup> Dahrendorf professed to 'accept ... without reservation' Hayek's distinction between Humean 'critical rationalism' and Cartesian 'constructivist rationalism'.<sup>13</sup> For Hayek, Hume was one of the first theorists to realize that conventions ordering the interaction of humans did not emerge through conscious design. Descartes on the other hand anticipated the conception that human societies needed to be organized in accordance with rationally conceived designs, and thus figured as the forefather of social and economic planning in the twentieth century.<sup>14</sup> Dahrendorf agreed that

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<sup>12</sup> Friedrich Hayek, 'Kinds of Rationalism', *Economic Studies Quarterly* 15 (1965).

<sup>13</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Market and Plan: Two Types of Rationality', in Dahrendorf, *Essays in the Theory of Society*, 220.

<sup>14</sup> Hayek, 'Kinds of Rationalism', 82-5.

market rationality was in many ways preferable to plan rationality. Not only did it provide space for individual preferences and decisions; it also made social conflict less likely to lead to ‘revolutionary upheavals’.<sup>15</sup>

Dahrendorf’s professed agreement with Hayek could be read as evidence that in 1966, he was still closer to Hayek than he would be in later years. While this is true, the extent to which their liberal theories were in agreement should not be overestimated. Characteristically, Dahrendorf’s homage to Hayek’s arguments about different kinds of rationality came at the very end of the first section of the lecture, suggesting that there was a significant rhetorical element in it. In the second part, he explained why the pure interpretation of Hayek’s distinction was problematic, and that there were sociological reasons why unfettered markets were not preferable to a mix of both rationalities that was more suitable to a more complex reality.<sup>16</sup> In all societies, social structures existed that systematically undermined the rules of the game set in a purely market-rational environment. Tenant farmers could be coerced not to vote, or husbands could tell their wives how to vote. Purely market-rational politics ignored the existence of power within society: ‘Under all conceivable social conditions, the market is a fiction; the game always takes place in front of city hall’.<sup>17</sup> Market rationality had to be supplemented by compensatory measures and other social rights ‘unless it is to remain an ideology of systematic privilege for those who are already in a position to participate’.<sup>18</sup> Political theories solely reliant on market rationality failed to recognize the prominent role that interests played in politics, and that interests invariably led to ossifying structures and the privileging of entrenched positions.

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<sup>15</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘Market and Plan’, 220.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, 221.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, 226.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, 222-3.

Some non-market counteracting mechanism was necessary to break these structures up when they emerged. This assessment of Hayek was in line with Dahrendorf's broader political theory. Crucially, he disagreed with the optimistic assumption that material interest conflicts could be superseded through win-win scenarios. In a review of Jan Pen's *Harmony and Conflict in Modern Society*, he stated that it was wrong to assume that if 'A increases his income two-fold and B three-fold', social conflict was resolved. It was utopian to assume that this worked – those left behind in relative terms would not be pacified by increases in their real income.<sup>19</sup> On this point, he was unable to make an assumption that was central to Hayek's thinking.

After 1966, Hayek did not attract Dahrendorf's attention again until the later 1970s. This was not for a lack of interest in economic matters. His years in Brussels as European Commissioner for Trade included the tumultuous weeks and months following the 'Nixon shock' in August 1971, when the American government decided to decouple the US dollar from its gold backing. Looking back, Dahrendorf remembered how the members of the European Commission returned to Brussels overnight from holiday to find emergency measures to cope with the new economic context that the world found itself in.<sup>20</sup> International economic matters subsequently occupied Dahrendorf in a way that they had not done before his time in politics, when his sociological work had concentrated on domestic social conflict. The BBC Reith Lectures mentioned in Chapter V, given from November 1974 onwards and published as *The New Liberty*, were closely

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<sup>19</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Jan Pen, Harmony and Conflict in Modern Society', *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 19 (1967), 133: 'Wenn A sein Einkommen verdoppelt und B es verdreifacht'.

<sup>20</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/598, Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Entwurf über einige wichtige Fragen der Außenbeziehungen der Europäischen Gemeinschaften zum Zeitpunkt ihrer Erweiterung am 1. Januar 1973: Eine persönliche Bilanz'.

concerned with the implications of economic issues for politics after the Oil Shock of 1973. Over the coming years, Dahrendorf would be in close intellectual exchange with economists. In February 1976, he spoke at the European Management Forum in Davos. In October 1977, Dahrendorf corresponded with Chancellor Schmidt about possible solutions to the problem of unemployment, alerting the head of the West German government to American policy experiments about which Mitchell Sviridoff had told him at a meeting of the Ford Foundation.<sup>21</sup> The following year, he visited 10 Downing Street to discuss Britain's intractable unemployment and inflation with economists from the LSE and Prime Minister James Callaghan.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter V, Dahrendorf intended to conduct research on the role of economic interest conflicts in international diplomacy at the Max Planck Institute in Starnberg in his research proposal written in 1978 for the purposes of his appointment.

As shown in the previous chapter, Dahrendorf interpreted the student movement as a counter-movement against increasing bureaucratization. A decade after the student movement, he located the causes of the rise of 'libertarianism' in the same realm. In a lecture at the University of Michigan in September 1980, he said that 'they express the desire of many to be freed of the iron cage of bondage of modern bureaucratic states'.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, bureaucracy and the growing regulatory burdens on business was one of the issues that neoliberals were keenest to address. From their perspective, inefficient large conglomerates and monopolies were the consequences of government interference with market mechanisms. In 1975,

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<sup>21</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/79, Helmut Schmidt to Ralf Dahrendorf, 20 October 1977; Ralf Dahrendorf to Helmut Schmidt, 03 October 1977.

<sup>22</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Theorie und Praxis', in Ralf Dahrendorf, *Fragmente eines neuen Liberalismus* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1987), 21-2.

<sup>23</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/255, Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Understanding Society: On the State of the Art', University of Michigan, 22 September 1980.

Friedman sent Dahrendorf a note that took issue with the central claim of *The New Liberty*, of which he had sent Friedman a copy. As we have seen in Chapter V, Dahrendorf's laboured worries about how liberalism and individual liberty could survive in an inexorably bureaucratizing environment dominated by overpowering state institutions, big business, and trade unions were central to his intellectual preoccupations. According to Friedman, this dilemma simply did not exist, since government intervention was to blame for 'giant companies and giant trade unions'.<sup>24</sup> It was a fallacy to think that bureaucracy was inevitable, and therefore to think that a new liberalism devised for the bureaucratic age was necessary. Dahrendorf nonetheless reiterated his call for rethinking liberalism in the light of new social realities, arguing that at some point, market economies ran into a 'contradiction' because the economic growth that they depended on could only be generated by large-scale organizations.<sup>25</sup> Dahrendorf came back to Friedman's critique in the Michigan lecture mentioned above, speaking of libertarians who were 'likely to follow Friedman on his sentimental journey to renew old memories' of a past before the trajectory of modernization had created the irremediable bureaucracy of the present.<sup>26</sup>

Dahrendorf also had to defend his views on bureaucratization against critics from the left. In Italy, the sociologist Luciano Pellicani voiced objections to Dahrendorf's views on bureaucracy as expressed in *The New Liberty*. Responding to his 'Italian critics', Dahrendorf again insisted that '[b]ureaucracy is no

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<sup>24</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/715, Milton Friedman to Ralf Dahrendorf, 11 September 1975.

<sup>25</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Liberalismus heute – wofür und wogegen?', *Merkur: Deutsche Zeitschrift für europäisches Denken* 29 (1975), 797: 'Widerspruch'.

<sup>26</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/255, Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Understanding Society: On the State of the Art', University of Michigan, 22 September 1980.

accident’.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, he not only saw bureaucratization as a necessary element of western modernization, but indeed as a precondition for modernity *tout court* – socialism as practised in the Soviet Union was subject to the same logic of modernity. When Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker wrote from the Max Planck Institute in Starnberg that it was a ‘practical necessity’ that revolutionary socialism developed into a bureaucratized system if it was established in power for long enough, Dahrendorf replied that the Soviet Union did not have anything to do with revolutionary socialism at all, but rather that it represented the bureaucratic attempt at economic development.<sup>28</sup> This necessitated a ‘painful transition from late feudal society’; the bureaucracy of the Soviet Union was a ‘practical necessity in the simple sense that the problem of economic development has to be addressed’.<sup>29</sup>

These exchanges came at a crucial juncture when key assumptions about the irremediable bureaucratic tendencies of modern industrial societies, laid out in Chapter I, became challenged as part of a more general crisis that the social sciences found themselves in after the late 1960s.<sup>30</sup> As scholars increasingly came to see historical development and modernization as more contingent than social scientists had previously thought, the conviction that bureaucracy was not an inexorable part of modernity became more widely accepted.<sup>31</sup> The optimism of

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<sup>27</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/487, Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘The New Liberty: Comments on Italian Critics’.

<sup>28</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/637, C.F. von Weizsäcker to Ralf Dahrendorf, 10 February 1975: ‘Sachzwang’.

<sup>29</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/637, Ralf Dahrendorf to C. F. von Weizsäcker, 14 February 1975: ‘schmerzhaftes Übergang von einer spätfeudalen Gesellschaft’, ‘Sachzwang in dem einfacheren Sinne, daß das Problem der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung eben bewältigt werden muss’.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Chapter V.

<sup>31</sup> The disappearance of the association of capitalism with bureaucracy in this period is also noted by Roman Köster, ‘Transformationen der Kapitalismusanalyse und Kapitalismuskritik in Deutschland im 20. Jahrhundert’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 24 (2012).

free-market oriented liberals that bureaucracy could be reduced through deregulation thus dovetailed with a more general intellectual shift.

Friedman was not the only liberal economist who sought ways of cutting back bureaucracy. In 1975, Buchanan noted that the current decade had seen a surge in demands for ‘a dismantling of bureaucracy’, an objective that he emphatically agreed with.<sup>32</sup> Tullock engaged with this problem in his book *The Politics of Bureaucracy* (1965). The existence of large-scale organizations that could pursue sectional interests at the expense of the overall public was also central to Mancur Olson’s explanation of economic stagnation since the early 1970s in the *Rise and Decline of Nations*.<sup>33</sup> Friedman’s insistence on bureaucracy’s contingency in modern society – expressed in his letter to Dahrendorf – was in line with a longer tradition of classical liberal thought. In *The Good Society* (1937), Walter Lippmann similarly insisted that ‘corporate concentration’ in big business and monopolies was not an ‘inexorable consequence’ of technological change.<sup>34</sup> Instead, Lippmann blamed the introduction of limited liability legislation for the rise of large-scale conglomerates.<sup>35</sup> Two years later, Lionel Robbins made the same point in his appropriately entitled essay on ‘The “Inevitability” of Monopoly’, which argued that monopolistic concentration was not inevitable but rather a consequence of ‘state policy’.<sup>36</sup> Writing during the Second World War, Hayek’s mentor Ludwig von Mises attacked the idea that the growth of bureaucracy, monopolies, and the power of managers was an inexorable process and ‘therefore an inescapable evil’.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> James Buchanan, *The Limits of Liberty: Between Anarchy and Leviathan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 14.

<sup>33</sup> Mancur Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

<sup>34</sup> Walter Lippmann, *The Good Society* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1937), 14.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Lionel Robbins, ‘The “Inevitability” of Monopoly’, in Robbins, *The Economic Basis of Class Conflict* (London: Macmillan, 1939), 50-1.

<sup>37</sup> Ludwig von Mises, *Bureaucracy* (London: William Hodge & Company, 1945), 19-20.

Bureaucracy was ‘not inherent in the evolution of business. It is an outcome of government meddling with business’.<sup>38</sup> By implication, the problem of bureaucracy could be dealt with if one was willing to rein in state interference. In the late 1930s and the following decades, these views stood outside the mainstream of social thought. Only after the late 1960s and early 1970s had seen the demise of assumptions about the ‘inevitability’ of certain aspects of modernization were these ideas seriously considered.

For Dahrendorf, however, bureaucracy was there to stay. Commenting on the Swedish general election of September 1985, he was happy to draw attention to the research of the Swedish sociologist Hans Zetterberg which showed that this had been the first election in human history in which more than 50 per cent of the electorate received their income, in some form or another, from the state. In other countries this was only different in degree but not in kind.<sup>39</sup> One of the publications that Dahrendorf closely engaged with on the question of bureaucracy was Olson’s aforementioned *The Rise and Decline of Nations*. Published in 1982, Olson’s book was one of many attempts to make sense of the causes of economic stagnation in Western Europe and the developed world more generally. Dahrendorf and Olson met for the first time at a conference in Turin on 6 to 8 June 1985 and afterwards started corresponding. In response to Dahrendorf’s ‘uneasiness about my comments at the end of the book about its implications for public policy’, Olson sent him his essay on ‘Ideology and Growth’.<sup>40</sup> Olson also asked Dahrendorf to speak at a symposium about his book at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin on 28 October 1985, an invitation that Dahrendorf duly accepted.<sup>41</sup> This did not stop

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<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, 20.

<sup>39</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Der Staat und seine Kinder’, *Finanz und Wirtschaft*, 18 September 1985.

<sup>40</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/285, Mancur Olson to Ralf Dahrendorf, 18 June 1985.

<sup>41</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/285, B. Golf to Ralf Dahrendorf, 25 October 1985.

Dahrendorf from criticizing Olson for his arguments about sclerotic rigidity. Austria, Switzerland, and Sweden, those European countries that had been most economically successful in the 1980s, he argued, were furthest from Olson's ideal of a free market. Moreover, Japan's incomparable economic success was based on a model of bureaucratic co-ordination which was decidedly at odds with what Olson had in mind.<sup>42</sup> In a review of Hayek's *The Fatal Conceit* published three years later, he reiterated this point by highlighting the role of bureaucratic business and government in 'some of the most spectacular growth stories', Germany, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.<sup>43</sup> There was thus no sign that modernity would cease to be an iron cage. For Dahrendorf, the existence of large-scale organizations was the crucial factor that rendered neoliberal theories anachronistic and dangerous. Encouraging large bureaucratic corporations to behave in accordance with the business virtues of earlier periods would only lead to what Susan Strange called 'casino capitalism'.<sup>44</sup>

This was also the reasoning behind Dahrendorf's declaration that Thatcher's politics were utopian and anachronistic in the *DIE ZEIT* article of 17 October 1980 mentioned in Chapter II.<sup>45</sup> When people wanted to protect something that did not actually exist, Dahrendorf urged, one should suspect ideology to be at play, that is, the 'pretence of falsities for the purpose of protecting certain interests'.<sup>46</sup> Big business, cartels, trade unions, and other big structures necessitated a departure towards a 'new' kind of liberalism.<sup>47</sup> Ideological politics that pretended

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<sup>42</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'The Europeanization of Europe', in Andrew Pierre (ed.), *A Widening Atlantic? Domestic Change & Foreign Policy* (New York: New York University Press, 1986).

<sup>43</sup> Literaturarchiv Marbach, Newspaper Collection, Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Socialism's Honourable Exit', 25 November 1988.

<sup>44</sup> Dahrendorf, 'Die Liberalen und der Gesellschaftsvertrag', in Dahrendorf, *Fragmente eines neuen Liberalismus*, 242: 'Kasino-Kapitalismus'.

<sup>45</sup> Dahrendorf, 'Der Markt als Kraft des Fortschritts'.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*: 'die Vorspiegelung falscher Tatsachen zur Verteidigung bestimmter Interessen'.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

that this was not so would soon or later break down in the face of reality. Thatcher's government was a case in point for him. In 1981, the year of the radical monetarist budget and the Brixton riots of April 1981, Dahrendorf placed a bet that Thatcher would not survive another year in office.<sup>48</sup> In the same vein, he used his regular column in *Finanz und Wirtschaft* to highlight how constrained Thatcher really was. While she had been adamant about her intention to cut state spending, the British budget kept growing under her auspices.<sup>49</sup> Ironically, Thatcher had been pushed into increasing subsidies for those state industries that she had previously wanted to expose to market mechanisms. In December 1981 he wrote that the next general election was very likely already lost for the Prime Minister.<sup>50</sup> In June 1982, in the wake of the Falklands War when Thatcher's approval ratings surged, Dahrendorf suggested that her poll numbers were likely to fall as fast as they had risen.<sup>51</sup>

The longer Thatcher stayed in office, the more complicated Dahrendorf's claims about the utopian character and impossibility of Thatcherism became. The 1983 general election at the latest suggested that Thatcher's Premiership was not a brief episode that would soon be ended by a traditional, moderate Conservative Prime Minister, as Dahrendorf had predicted. Nevertheless, Dahrendorf continued to argue that Thatcherism was a political phenomenon whose long-term success was improbable. In this vein, he pointed out that Thatcher's politics was based on a plurality of votes (43 per cent) which was only turned into a majority by an anachronistic voting system. Even among those who voted for the Conservative

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<sup>48</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/490, Demokratie ohne Opposition (1): Margaret Thatcher und die Mesallianzen ihrer Gegner, undated.

<sup>49</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Die Bonner Haushaltsakrobatik', *Finanz und Wirtschaft*, 23 September 1981.

<sup>50</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Hat der Thatcherismus noch eine Zukunft?', *Finanz und Wirtschaft*, 23 December 1981.

<sup>51</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Der Falkland-Krieg und die britische Wirtschaft', *Finanz und Wirtschaft*, 16 June 1982.

Party there was a sizable number who did not agree with her economic policies.<sup>52</sup> In spite of their radical rhetoric, Thatcher's Conservative government tended to be pulled back into the centre, already content if they managed to limit the growth rate of government instead of actually rolling back the state.<sup>53</sup> Economic policy, he claimed, was still heavily constrained by the 'much derided practical necessities'.<sup>54</sup> In 1988, Dahrendorf saw the same happening in the US Presidential Election, with all candidates moving into a centrist direction. What could any candidate offer to do differently than the incumbent President Reagan? Firstly, even the President of the United States was confronted with a world economy that he could not influence. Secondly, while voters in the late 1980s often preferred policies that were more social than those of Reagan and Thatcher, they also did not want a return to the strong state and the bureaucracy that such a change would entail.<sup>55</sup> In the late 1980s, Dahrendorf felt that technocratic government was back more than ever. Politics as the execution of practical necessities was again the mode of governance:

[O]ne is reminded of the 'practical constraints [Sachgesetzlichkeiten]' that many find scary for good reasons. Do we not live in manmade circumstances, which for this reason can also be changed by men? Sure, sure, but nonetheless many things suggest that the constraints under which governments are operating limit freedom of action more strongly than in the past.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Nach dem demokratischen Klassenkampf', in Dahrendorf, *Fragmente eines neuen Liberalismus*, 76.

<sup>53</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Die Rolle des Staates im Wandel sozialer Strukturen', Dahrendorf, *Fragmente eines neuen Liberalismus*, 117.

<sup>54</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Die Zukunft des Sozialismus', *Finanz und Wirtschaft*, 23 January 1985: 'vielgeschmähten Sachgesetzlichkeiten'.

<sup>55</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/490, Demokratie ohne Opposition (2): Realisten, Traditionalisten und soziale Bewegungen.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid*: 'man erinnert sich an die "Sachgesetzlichkeiten", die vielen mit Recht so unheimlich sind. Leben wir nicht in menschengemachten Umständen, die daher Menschen auch anders machen

Dahrendorf continued that politicians like Spain's Felipe Gonzales who accepted these constraints could lead their countries to a 'bearable and even prosperous future'.<sup>57</sup> Those who did not accept them – like Greece's Andreas Papandreu – led their countries to disaster.<sup>58</sup> Long after their demise, Dahrendorf thus still adhered to the assumptions of the paradigms of the post-war social sciences. However, he still did not see the requirement to govern in line with practical necessities positively. The lack of an effective democratic opposition that could deal with and transform the constraints of the present would likely lead to widespread frustration and apathy. For the time being, the lack of a powerful social force that had an interest in transformation left the task of opposition to small 'moral minorities'.<sup>59</sup>

Lacking a dynamic new social class, the social structure of the present meant that those members of society who had an objective interest in changing the status quo were unable to do so. In making this argument, Dahrendorf drew heavily on the concept of an 'underclass' proposed by Ken Auletta in 1982 in a book about poverty in the United States.<sup>60</sup> According to Dahrendorf, the new poverty of the present involved the bottom ten per cent of society, who were excluded from all essential aspects of civil society by the so-called 'majority class', a large collection of social groups who accounted for about two thirds of society and shared an interest in the maintenance of the post-war settlement. It was this 'majority class'

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können? Gewiss, gewiss, aber es spricht dennoch viel dafür, daß heute die Zwänge, unter denen heute Regierungen operieren, Spielräume stärker einengen als früher'.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*: 'erträglichen, sogar prosperierenden Zukunft'.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/490, Demokratie ohne Opposition (3): Die moralische Minderheit: 'moralische Minderheiten'.

<sup>60</sup> Ken Auletta, *The Underclass* (New York: Random House, 1982).

that was increasingly politically dominant, rather than the members of the ‘stockbroker belt’ whose interests and social prejudices were best served by the free market.<sup>61</sup> The underclass, by contrast, had no means of collective organization, and its members were largely politically apathetic. There was thus little chance that it would turn into a formidable social force that could break the mould of present-day politics.<sup>62</sup>

### **3. Against Strong Constitutions: Dahrendorf’s Agonistic Critique of Neoliberalism.**

In the mid-1980s, Dahrendorf began working on a critique of neoliberalism and constitutional economics, although in the end he did not manage to produce more than fragments. After his term as Director of the LSE ended in September 1984, Dahrendorf returned to the University of Constance. In Summer 1986, he went to the University of Basel as a Visiting Professor, a role followed by a stint as Visiting Scholar at the Russell Sage Foundation in New York in late 1986 and early 1987. In 1987, he moved back to the United Kingdom to become Warden of St Antony’s College, Oxford. Engaging with the new currents of liberal theory of the day became an integral part of his academic work during these years. Two essay projects on ‘Market, Power, and Law’ and ‘Liberals and the Social Contract’ that he worked on in spring and early summer 1986 respectively, of which the former ultimately remained unpublished, are particularly relevant.<sup>63</sup> Critically

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<sup>61</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘Nach dem demokratischen Klassenkampf’, 69.

<sup>62</sup> Dahrendorf, *Law and Order*, 107.

<sup>63</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/1020, Markt, Macht und Recht: Essay zur politischen Theorie der Freiheit. For information about the date of creation of this unpublished fragment, cf. Dahrendorf, *Fragmente eines neuen Liberalismus*, 247.

engaging with constitutional economics was central to their concerns. When Dahrendorf was asked to give recommendations for the thematic orientation of the Institute of Advanced Study in Princeton, he wrote that ‘political economy (constitutional economics, political theory)’ was among the most topical issues. More specifically, he added, his own interests in this area circled around the topics ‘welfare state, role of the state, law and order, poverty, development, and related subjects’.<sup>64</sup> A list of books on constitutional economics that he compiled shows which authors he engaged with: Anthony Downs (*An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1956)), Friedrich Hayek (*The Constitution of Liberty* (1960), *Law, Legislation and Liberty* (1973, 1976, 1979)), James Buchanan (*The Calculus of Consent* (1962), *The Limits of Liberty* (1975), *The Power to Tax* (1981)), R. B. MacKenzie (*Bound to be Free* (1982), *Constitutional Economics* (1984)), D. L. Lee and R.B. MacKenzie (*Constitutional Economics* (1985)), Geoffrey Brennan and James Buchanan (*The Reason of Rules* (1985)), and George Stigler (*The Citizen and the State* (1985)).<sup>65</sup>

At the end of 1985, Dahrendorf drafted an application for a research grant which provides a window into his interests at the time. Outlining his idea for a proposed new book, he asked for financial assistance to spend time in four different places for research purposes. Firstly, Dahrendorf wanted to work in Washington, for instance at the Witson Center, in order to familiarize himself with constitutional economics. Secondly, he sought to spend time in Oxford, preferably Nuffield College. As a third base, Dahrendorf asked for funding for a period in Berlin, suggesting the Wissenschaftskolleg, ‘in order to look more closely at what has

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<sup>64</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/148, Ralf Dahrendorf to James Wolfensohn, 11 July 1985.

<sup>65</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/470, note, no title.

come to be called “eco-libertarian” thinking’.<sup>66</sup> Finally, he wanted to cap off these research trips at an interdisciplinary institution such as the Institute for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Palo Alto or the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton.<sup>67</sup> Dahrendorf’s outline provides several clues to the direction of his thinking in the mid-1980s. He intended to write a critique of liberal and libertarian ideas that involved using constitutional measures to ensure that irresponsible parliamentarians did not excessively interfere with the market.

Constitutions were indeed central to liberal thought in the 1970s and 1980s. They were central to Hayek’s *Law, Legislation, and Liberty*, whose author stated that he would have named the book *The Constitution of Liberty* had he not already published a book under the same name.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, Buchanan and Tullock were concerned with the role of constitutions in political economy. Chapter II has highlighted Dahrendorf’s adoption of Marx’s rejection of the concept of ‘justice’. Chapter IV has covered his political attempts to break the dominant position that, he thought, lawyers held in West German politics. This profound scepticism towards law and lawyers resurfaced in his works on neoliberalism. When constitutions and the ‘social contract’ re-emerged as topics of political debate with books such as John Rawls’ *Theory of Justice* (1971) and Robert Nozick’s *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1974), Dahrendorf’s attitude towards law continued to form an integral part of his critique of neoliberal appraisals of strong constitutions as a safeguard against parliamentary encroachment on markets and individual freedom. When interviewed alongside Hayek in 1983, Dahrendorf insisted (in stark contrast

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<sup>66</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/879, Ralf Dahrendorf to Edson Spencer, 12 December 1985.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty.*, 3.

with Hayek's political vision) that the increasing power of judges was a threat to the rule of law.<sup>69</sup>

Continuity also characterized Dahrendorf's thinking about industrial conflict. As shown in Chapter II, in 1957 he had told other CASBS Fellows in Palo Alto that suppression of such conflicts should 'never even be considered'.<sup>70</sup> In 1981, he re-iterated this point to the FDP politician Gerhart Baum, quoting the Gaitskell Memorial Lecture of 1970 on 'Trade Unions, the Law and Society' by the German émigré legal scholar Otto Kahn-Freund. Dahrendorf translated what he held to be the key passage for Baum, which read: 'The law is likely to be a failure whenever it seeks to counteract habits of action or of inaction adopted by large numbers of men and women in pursuance of established social custom, norms of conduct or ethical or religious convictions'.<sup>71</sup> Dahrendorf seemed to be fascinated by Kahn-Freund's statement, as he quoted the same passage in a lecture on 'Law and Politics in the European Community', where he repeated his conviction that law cannot replace politics.<sup>72</sup> Intellectually, Kahn-Freund had a certain affinity with Dahrendorf. He had studied law in Frankfurt during Weimar, moving in a socialist circle that included Hugo Sinzheimer, Ernst Fraenkel, and Franz Neumann.<sup>73</sup> After emigrating he became one of Britain's most prominent advocates of the sociology of law, and helped publish and translate Karl Renner's *The Institutions of Private Law and their Social Functions*.<sup>74</sup> Both Kahn-Freund and

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<sup>69</sup> Franz Kreuzer, *Markt, Plan, Freiheit: Franz Kreuzer im Gespräch mit Friedrich von Hayek und Ralf Dahrendorf* (Vienna: Franz Deuticke, 1983), 70.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Chapter II.

<sup>71</sup> Otto Kahn-Freund, 'Trade Unions, the Law and Society', *The Modern Law Review* 33 (1970), 241. For the letter, cf. BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/67, Ralf Dahrendorf to Gerhart Baum, 14 February 1981.

<sup>72</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Law and Politics in the European Community', in *The Lord Fletcher Lectures 1979-1982* (London: The Law Society Solicitors' European Group, 1983).

<sup>73</sup> Greenberg, *The Weimar Century*, 80-1.

<sup>74</sup> Karl Renner, *The Institutions of Private Law and their Social Functions* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949).

Dahrendorf held that social forces were stronger than the law. In his lecture, Dahrendorf only felt the need to point out that Kahn-Freund should have added ‘interests’ to the list of those social factors that superseded positive law.<sup>75</sup>

Constitutional measures used to ensure that sectional interests did not influence policy-making were a central concern of Hayek as well as Buchanan and Tullock’s public choice theory. In *The Calculus of Consent* (1962), Buchanan and Tullock argued that in many cases there were few rational reasons for the use of simple majority voting procedures, and that unanimity requirements for constitutional settlements should be reappraised.<sup>76</sup> In addition to that, supermajority requirements or checks and balances such as bicameral systems could be used to minimize special interest politics. Conceding that rational actors will depart from the unanimity principle in a number of cases, Buchanan and Tullock nevertheless insisted that ‘[t]hese variants will be rationally chosen, not because they will produce “better” collective decisions (they will not), but rather because, on balance, the sheer weight of the costs involved in reaching decisions unanimously dictates some departure from the “ideal” rule’.<sup>77</sup> Going further, they reasoned that ‘for *any* change *in* the public interest, unanimous support can be achieved’.<sup>78</sup> In a similar way, Hayek argued against what he considered rigid conceptions of majoritarian democracy. Indeed, he explicitly rejected agonistic conceptions of democracy that considered politics to be a material conflict. In the last volume of *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, published in 1979, Hayek snubbed at the ‘cynical realism which is characteristic of some contemporary political

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<sup>75</sup> Dahrendorf, ‘Law and Politics’.

<sup>76</sup> James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, *The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965 [1962]), 301-2.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, 96.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, 285.

scientists who regard democracy merely as just another form of an inevitable struggle in which it is decided “who gets what, when, and how”.<sup>79</sup> In the following pages, Hayek consequently offered a theory of democracy that sought to avoid the excesses of majoritarianism and interest politics.

Implicitly, these observations entailed the assumption that a free market unhampered by interest politics and rent-seeking was in the ultimate interest of society as a whole. This point went to the heart of Dahrendorf’s critique of neoliberalism, which itself was based on the fear that calls for strong constitutional rules about what kind of political measures parliaments could take would cancel parliament’s role as a theatre for interest politics. In its essence, the disagreement involved three dimensions. Firstly, Dahrendorf denied that such an overall interest could be established. Based on the conviction that conflicting group interests existed in all societies, he had criticized the notion that establishing consensus along the lines of a common interest was possible throughout his career. Secondly, Dahrendorf’s political theory had always revolved around the question of how social change could be translated into politics while avoiding the risk of violent revolutions. Settling those matters that Hayek, Buchanan, and Tullock wanted to solve constitutionally would seriously impair a society’s capacity to adapt to future social forces that no one could foresee. When Buchanan and Dahrendorf met at a CIVITAS conference at the University of Herdecke in late October 1986, Dahrendorf criticized the economist for making the implicit assumption that there was one type of constitution that was equally suited to all points in history. Speaking as the commentator on Buchanan’s paper on ‘Market Failure and Political

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<sup>79</sup> Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, 346.

Failure’, he observed that the social contract was not something that could be imposed irrespective of time, as it was a historical process itself.<sup>80</sup>

The third difference related to Dahrendorf’s views on what factors were dominant in history and society. As shown in the Introduction and Chapter II, in *The Counter-Revolution of Science* (1952) and *The Constitution of Liberty* (1960), Hayek emphasized the influence of ideas and rejected so-called ‘positivism’ in its many guises. For him, Marx’s historical materialism was part of long canon of sociological writings with fundamentally flawed methodologies.<sup>81</sup> Assumptions of historical inevitability and practical necessities were anathema to him. Hayek still adhered to this outlook when the three volumes of *Law, Legislation, and Liberty* were published from 1973 onwards. Its first volume reformulated these principles. In the chapter on ‘Principles and Expediency’, Hayek took aim at decision-makers and social scientists who argued that that the age of ideology was over and that politics and administration were now a matter of ‘social techniques’.<sup>82</sup> According to Hayek, it was a mistake to regard politics as a matter of Max Weber’s ‘purposive rationality’.<sup>83</sup> It was not the case, he added, that policy-making was often a matter of ‘inevitable necessities’.<sup>84</sup> In this vein, he also insisted that his earlier book *The Road to Serfdom* (1945) had been misunderstood. In no way had it attempted to argue that societies that pursue certain socialist policies will ‘ineluctably be driven to go the whole way to a totalitarian system’.<sup>85</sup> It was always possible to change the direction of things. These methodological commitments allowed Hayek to be

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<sup>80</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Anmerkungen zu James Buchanan’, in Dahrendorf, *Fragmente eines neuen Liberalismus*, 135.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Introduction.

<sup>82</sup> Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, 55-6.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, 56.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, 57.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, 56.

optimistic that members of society could be persuaded to act in their ultimate rather than immediate interest, that is, to cooperate in imposing the constitutional means that he thought were necessary. Politics, he said, should be utopian in the positive sense of being directed towards an ideal society. It was the fault of those who argued in favour of necessity to have turned ‘utopia’ and ‘ideology’ into a ‘bad word’.<sup>86</sup>

In his path-breaking study of Hayek’s political theory, Chandran Kukathas argues that it ultimately suffers from a contradiction between anti-rationalist Humean and rationalist Kantian impulses that Hayek himself failed to resolve. On the one hand, Hayek insisted that society’s complexity meant that it was beyond the capacity of human reason to actively design social orders.<sup>87</sup> Human morality, norms, and laws had to be understood as a product of social evolution rather than of conscious creation.<sup>88</sup> Notwithstanding this commitment, Kukathas states, Hayek did not manage to avoid normative commitments when he sought to give substance to the meaning of concepts such as private property or freedom of contract.<sup>89</sup> In other words, Hayek’s constitutional politics were not free of normative requirements addressed to members of the political order. Dahrendorf also claimed that neoliberalism contained a moralistic element. In *Die Chancen der Krise* (1983), he argued that neoliberal rhetoric often involved the claim to be in possession of a ‘moral truth’.<sup>90</sup> While questioning labelling Hayek as a conservative, Kukathas nonetheless sees conservative elements at play in his ideas, as his scepticism towards rationally designed reforms led him to value continuity,

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<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, 62.

<sup>87</sup> Chandran Kukathas, *Hayek and Modern Liberalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 47-59.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*, 46.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*, 12-3; 167.

<sup>90</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Die Chancen der Krise* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1983), 54: ‘moralischen Wahrheit’.

tradition, and institutions.<sup>91</sup> Although this is true, Kukathas does not include Hayek's fundamentally optimistic perspective on the possibility and desirability of change, depicted in the previous paragraph, in his analysis. Adding this aspect in fact reinforces Kukathas' overall argument about the contradictory nature of Hayek's Humean and Kantian instincts.

Dahrendorf's critique of constitutional economics throws this contradiction into relief. For him, agonistic parliamentary politics amounted to a process of discovery of institutions and measures best suited to the particular circumstances at a given point in time, similar to the way Hayek conceived of the market as a process of discovery. Hayek was unable to answer the question of how, based on a pessimistic view of the capacity of the human mind, one could be sceptical of rational and conscious designs for interventions in the market and at the same time advocate measures that hamper the process of rewriting and rediscovering politics in the parliamentary sphere. If it was true that social structure and the structure of interest conflicts changed over time, certain redistributive measures might be necessary at one point even if they may later become unjustified (and vice versa).<sup>92</sup> Constitutional instruments that preclude redistribution and innovation in social welfare would then be a dangerous choice, and indeed one that is based on what Hayek himself called the 'pretence of knowledge', hampering the introduction of new redistributive measures that may be rendered appropriate or even necessary by future social conflicts whose prediction lies beyond the capacity of the human mind.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*, 178.

<sup>92</sup> Land reform serves as an obvious example of a redistributive measure whose appropriateness has fluctuated over time.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Hayek's Nobel Memorial Lecture given on 11 December 1974, Friedrich Hayek, 'The Pretence of Knowledge', *American Economic Review* 79 (1989).

Both Dahrendorf's and Hayek's liberalism were thus based on a form of epistemic modesty. The claim that no single institution could process sufficient amounts of economic information was central to Hayek's advocacy of the market over centrally planned economies. Similarly, Dahrendorf's writings emphasized the uncertainty of human knowledge. In fact, both Dahrendorf and Hayek quoted Popper to make these points.<sup>94</sup> For Dahrendorf, the uncertain nature of human knowledge was a strong reason to oppose rigid constitutional settlements that constrained the freedom of political decision-making: 'We are assuming that nobody knows or can know what form of social order is ultimately satisfactory, good, just'.<sup>95</sup> By contrast, Hayek's epistemic modesty aimed at limiting the state's remit of making decisions on behalf of individuals. Unlike Dahrendorf, Hayek assumed that it could be established that certain political orders were more just than others, judging by the extent to which they respected individual liberty and the rule of law. In different ways, both of their liberalisms were non-interventionist. Hayek's liberalism was geared at safeguarding individual freedom from state interference. Dahrendorf, by contrast, sought to safeguard the political process as such from prejudicial interferences that would intensify social conflict and, by removing the parliamentary safety valve for interest politics, making political violence and revolutions more likely.

Buchanan and Tullock in turn based their 'hope for some "improvement"' on persuading interest groups to at least partially consent to stricter constitutional rules that, while hampering their own ability to pursue special interest politics, would ultimately help them profit from the fact that all other groups were similarly

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<sup>94</sup> Hayek, 'Kinds of Rationalism', 94; Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Uncertainty, Science, and Democracy', in Dahrendorf, *Essays in the Theory of Society*, 240-1.

<sup>95</sup> Dahrendorf, 'Uncertainty, Science, and Democracy', 247.

restricted, thus leading to a situation that was ultimately better for everyone.<sup>96</sup> Conceptually, the public choice theorists were able to entertain this hope because they assumed that the degree to which politics was characterized by special interest politics was a variable rather than a given. On this point, they directly challenged what they perceived as the social scientific consensus of their day, namely that ‘[i]n recent years the role of the pressure or special-interest group in democratic political process has come to be more widely accepted as inevitable’.<sup>97</sup> In contrast to this view, they argued that the dominance of interest groups was a consequence of the growth of government.<sup>98</sup> If government could be cut back, interest politics would diminish as well. Buchanan and Tullock did not argue that it was the task of social scientists to alter the political behaviour of citizens. In an essay appended to *The Calculus of Consent*, Buchanan argued that economists, social scientists, and political theorists ‘should take his human actors as he finds them’ and not engage in normative prescriptions as to what their political action should look like.<sup>99</sup> This was a curious statement in the light of the fact that altering political behaviour was the central intention of their constitutional recommendations.

Given his materialist methodological preconceptions about the role of ‘objective interests’ in governing political behaviour, these were assumptions that Dahrendorf was incapable of entertaining. In direct contrast to Hayek, he thought that there was an ‘inherent logic of process’ in the development of citizenship rights over the course of the past centuries. He repeated this thought, taken from T.H. Marshall, at a prominent point at the very beginning of the introduction of his

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<sup>96</sup> Buchanan and Tullock, *Calculus of Consent*, 291.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*, 284.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*, 286.

<sup>99</sup> James Buchanan, ‘Marginal Notes on Reading Political Philosophy’, in Buchanan and Tullock, *Calculus of Consent*, 310.

unpublished essay on ‘Markt, Macht und Recht’.<sup>100</sup> In analogy to Keynes’ theorem about sticky real wages, Dahrendorf claimed that citizenship rights were ‘sticky ... Once citizenship has advanced to a certain point, the probability is that it will stay there, and if it does not, a rupture of political continuity has occurred’.<sup>101</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion.

The present and the previous chapter have studied Dahrendorf’s critiques of neoconservatism and neoliberalism as they developed in a changing intellectual context in which the focus of the social sciences shifted from sociological towards cultural and ideal political themes. Between the late 1960s and early 1980s, the notion that the process of modernization was much more contingent than had previously been recognized became increasingly accepted by a growing number of scholars. Taken together, the two chapters constitute one whole: the collapse of modernization theory and the post-war methodological consensus from the later 1960s and early 1970s onwards on the one hand and the rise of market-oriented liberalism in the following years on the other were two sides of the same coin. The liberal tradition that ran from Mises, Lippmann, and Robbins in the inter-war period to Hayek and Friedman in the post-war period insisted that bureaucratization was *not* an irremediable part of modernity, and that the problem of economic inefficiency and infringements on individual liberty by big organizations could be solved if only the role of the state in the market was rolled back. As surveyed in Chapter V, in contrast to many other scholars, Dahrendorf’s thematic focus did not

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<sup>100</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/1020, Markt, Macht und Recht: Essay zur politischen Theorie der Freiheit: ‘innere Logik des Prozesses’.

<sup>101</sup> Dahrendorf, *Modern Social Conflict*, 49.

change radically in reaction to the student movement. This continuity coloured his reception of neoliberalism – he continued to view bureaucratization as an integral part of modernity and to treat politics as closely connected to social structure. For him, interests continued to trump ideas in politics. Modern societies, irrespective of whether they were industrial or post-industrial, heavily constrained individual freedom of choice. The point that social structure constrained politics and rendered political ideas relating to previous structures anachronistic was what Dahrendorf had in mind when he criticized Hayek, Friedman, Buchanan, Nozick, and Olson for their ‘lacking sense of history’ in early 1986.<sup>102</sup> The relation between bureaucratization and modernity also occupied a very prominent place in *The Modern Social Conflict* (1988).<sup>103</sup> During the same year, he even criticized Popper for failing to take into account the problem that bureaucracy posed to the theory of democracy. Reacting to Popper’s article in *The Economist* in April 1988, mentioned in Chapter II, which made the case that majoritarian voting systems were preferable to proportional systems, Dahrendorf argued that this view overestimated ‘the importance of changes in government personnel’ in a society in which policy decisions were increasingly taken within the bureaucracy rather than the government.<sup>104</sup> Designing voting systems in a way that made radical changes of government easier than in proportional systems was harmful, as it would give the population the impression that their lives were much more dependent on bureaucratic servants who ‘cannot be dislodged’.<sup>105</sup> Yet another decade later, Dahrendorf advocated establishing institutions for so-called ‘counter-experts’ who

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<sup>102</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Die Liberalen und der Gesellschaftsvertrag’, in Dahrendorf, *Fragmente eines neuen Liberalismus*, 239: ‘fehlendes Geschichtsverständnis’.

<sup>103</sup> Dahrendorf, *The Modern Social Conflict*.

<sup>104</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/490, Ralf Dahrendorf, ‘Democracy is not Simple’. For Popper’s article, cf. ‘Popper on Democracy’, *The Economist*, 23 April 1988.

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*

could act as checks and balances on the rule of experts in areas in the international sphere in which democratic legitimacy was difficult to achieve because of the ‘highly technical questions’ that decision-makers had to deal with.<sup>106</sup> By this time, however, fortunes had turned. It was no longer widely assumed that the range of choices open to individuals and societies as a whole were severely limited. In the political imaginations dominating this period, the future was open and contingent. In contrast to the post-war period, it was Dahrendorf who now stood outside the mainstream of the social sciences.

Apart from short essays and fragments that survived among his papers, Dahrendorf never wrote an exhaustive synthesis of his critique of neoliberalism. This raises the question of how important engaging with neoliberalism really was to him. If he really cared that much about the neoliberal challenge to his own conception of liberalism as this chapter suggests, why did he not finish the ‘Market, Power, and Law’ project? It is impossible to provide an exhaustive answer to this question based on the available evidence. However, after his move into politics in October 1967, it was not at all out of character for Dahrendorf to begin working on academic projects that he eventually abandoned. *Life Chances* (1979), arguably the most substantial publication that he produced after his political career, was intended as a methodological preliminary that would introduce the theme of the larger and unfinished ‘Contradictions of Modernity’ project. More importantly, in the mid-1980s he faced an intellectual problem that made producing an exhaustive critique of neoliberalism a challenging endeavour. While arguing that the attempt to re-write the social contract through imposing stringent constitutional limits was

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<sup>106</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Die Krisen der Demokratie: Ein Gespräch mit Antonio Polito* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2002), 50-1: ‘hochtechnischer Fragen’. The same idea is repeated in Ralf Dahrendorf, *Auf der Suche nach einer neuen Ordnung: Vorlesungen zur Politik der Freiheit im 21. Jahrhundert* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2007 [2003]), 125.

dangerous, Dahrendorf conceded that the social contract needed to be rewritten. He also conceded to be hard pressed to say what constitutional reforms were in fact needed. As he wrote in December 1986 while based at the Russell Sage Foundation in New York: 'It is not yet clear to see who will have an interest in making liberal rejuvenation their task.'<sup>107</sup> In other words, what social groups had an interest in seeking constitutional renewal? What developments could bring politics back in line with social structure? In an age in which social conflict ran along the lines of the 'underclass' and the 'majority class', there was little hope for a vigorous reform movement of those who had an 'objective interest' in change.

For Dahrendorf, this was a dilemma since he assumed that he could only produce recommendations for constitutional politics if he had an understanding of the social-structural context for which a constitutional settlement had to be found. In the research proposal submitted in January 1986 mentioned above, Dahrendorf professed his intention to 'concentrate on the points at which social analysis and political theory can inspire each other. The two never meet; statements of fact and value remain forever divided. But they can be related...'.<sup>108</sup> In the same vein, he criticized Hayek's *The Fatal Conceit* for having no concern for reality.<sup>109</sup> His problems were exacerbated by the fact that in contrast to the post-war period, he could no longer draw on the works of a large number of other social scientists who were interested in similar questions. To his mind, many issues were still waiting to be investigated and translated into political theory. It was not uncharacteristic that

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<sup>107</sup> Dahrendorf, 'Die Liberalen und der Gesellschaftsvertrag', 243: 'Noch ist keineswegs abzusehen, wer ein Interesse daran hat, die liberale Erneuerung zu seiner oder ihrer Sache zu machen'.

<sup>108</sup> BArch, Ralf Dahrendorf Papers, N1749/879, Citizenship and Life Chances: Project Description.

<sup>109</sup> Literaturarchiv Marbach, Newspaper Collection, Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Socialism's Honourable Exit', 25 November 1988.

the last sentence of one of Dahrendorf's books produced during the decade ended with the statement that answers to the questions of the day had yet to be found.<sup>110</sup> In *Reisen nach Innen und Außen* (1984), he recounted how he had received numerous letters asking for concrete remedies after publishing an article on the underclass in *DIE ZEIT*. Notwithstanding the demands of his contemporaries, he stated that all he could offer for the time being was 'ruthless analysis'.<sup>111</sup> In this way, it is not surprising that he never produced a synthesis of his thoughts on neoliberalism that would include not only a critique, but also a positive alternative.

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<sup>110</sup> Dahrendorf, 'Die Liberalen und der Gesellschaftsvertrag', 243.

<sup>111</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reisen nach Innen und Außen: Aspekte der Zeit* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1984), 272: 'erbarmungslose Analyse'.

## Conclusion

This thesis has sought to provide an interpretation of Dahrendorf's liberal political thought through a close study of the methodological ideas and commitments that he developed and expressed over the course of his academic and political career between the early 1950s and late 1980s. Situating Dahrendorf in the context of longstanding debates about modernity in German social thought, it has sought to establish a hitherto neglected connection between his materialist method and his agonistic liberalism. This remained central to his thinking about politics throughout his entire career.

In the aftermath of the First World War, insisting on the inevitability of modernity's unpleasant corollaries formed a central part of liberal rhetoric, finding expression in the political writings Max Weber, Friedrich Naumann, Joseph Schumpeter, Ernst Troeltsch, and Friedrich Meinecke. These arguments soon became challenged by other intellectuals, many of which later developed sympathy for National Socialism, which came to be seen as a movement that could reverse bureaucratization and alienation, and act freely irrespective of constraints associated with modernity. After the Second World War, the fortunes of this perspective waned. In fact, many intellectuals who had sympathized with Nazism now came to insist on modernity's irremediable character, prominently Helmut Schelsky, Arnold Gehlen, and Hans Freyer. At the time, members of the Frankfurt School and other critics of empirical research criticized this outlook, insisting on the contingency of a modernity that could in fact be changed. In contrast to the claims of the existing literature, this was the origin of the debates that subsequently acquired the name 'Positivism Dispute' (Chapter I). From the late 1960s onwards,

however, a shift in the opposite direction took place. Reacting against the student movement, scholars such as Daniel Bell or Samuel Huntington in the United States and Thomas Nipperdey or Wilhelm Hennis in the Federal Republic started to put culture at the centre of their research. Individual agency and historical contingency again came to be seen as highly significant (Chapter V).

Dahrendorf's political thought developed in this context. In his youth and early career, he espoused political socialism and held a much more radical political outlook than previous commentators have allowed for. This was combined with a decidedly materialist reading of history, an orientation that he retained throughout his life and which heavily impacted his political theory. Influenced by Karl Marx, Karl Mannheim, Karl Renner, and Theodor Geiger, Dahrendorf's liberalism rested on the assumption that the political behaviour of groups and individuals had to be accepted as a given. Opposing political projects that sought to change how voters and citizens acted, Dahrendorf advocated a version of liberalism that emphasized the importance of constitutional settlements that facilitate the pursuit of interest politics in parliamentary settings. Channelling interests democratically was supposed to prevent the escalation of social conflicts into violence and revolution, which he thought was likely to occur if the pursuit of interest in politics was suppressed. This put him at fundamental odds with Karl Popper, Isaiah Berlin, or even Friedrich Hayek, who all considered ideas to trump interests in politics (Chapter II).

During the debates that had prompted the Positivism Dispute, advocates of empirical sociology like Schelsky and Gehlen argued that the sociological discipline and universities more generally had to adapt to the realities of modern industrial society in order to fulfil their new social function. They argued that as

the importance of administration in public life grew, universities had to facilitate exchange between politics and research and educate a new cohort of administrators for a society in which bureaucratic decision-making was becoming increasingly dominant. Dahrendorf agreed with the broader methodological spin of these arguments. In the debates held in the Foundation Committee of the University of Constance between 1964 and 1966, he advocated giving the university a new character that abandoned the allegedly dominant idealist type modelled on Wilhelm von Humboldt's University of Berlin. Facing the opposition of Joachim Ritter on the Foundation Committee, Dahrendorf strove to establish a university where scholars could study social structure in a way that he thought was not possible at the Federal Republic's older universities, which he took to be dominated by scholars who treated society and politics as phenomena to be studied philosophically. He also attempted to challenge the centrality of law faculties to the formation of the Federal Republic's elite, which he had highlighted in *Society and Democracy in Germany* (1965). With this methodological programme at its outset, Constance paralleled the foundation of the University of Bielefeld, where Schelsky played a similarly central role (Chapter IV).

Despite his methodological agreement with advocates of technocratic visions of politics during the Positivism Dispute and his broad agreement with Schelsky on university reform, Dahrendorf fundamentally disagreed with their positive view of bureaucracy. Even though he accepted bureaucratization as an irremediable part of modernity, he nevertheless found himself 'in despair' facing the consequences that he thought increasingly bureaucratic politics entailed for the prospect of liberty. Both in his academic work and his political statements, he called for ways of alleviating the perceived power of experts and administrators

*vis-à-vis* parliaments and voters. From his *Habilitation* lecture in Summer 1957 at the University of Saarland onwards, his sociological writings repeatedly criticized Max Weber's ideal of value-freedom for its alleged affinity with the ideology of bureaucracy (Chapter III).

The last two chapters of this thesis have had two aims. Covering Dahrendorf's intellectual engagement with neoconservatism (Chapter V) and neoliberalism (Chapter VI), this part has also made a more general argument about the history of the social sciences and liberal political thought in Germany and beyond in the second half of the twentieth century.

From the vantage point of the twenty-first century, historians have been puzzled by the degree to which twentieth-century theorists based their ideas on the conception of inexorable social trends. Thus, Stefan Eich and Adam Tooze criticize Weber for an alleged ahistorical outlook in which '[h]istory is no longer a contingent and open-ended process'.<sup>1</sup> By arguing that certain aspects of political life (such as the violent character of state power) were invariably present throughout history, they argue, Weber failed to recognize that history at certain times entailed profound novelty.<sup>2</sup> In a second step, Eich and Tooze contrast Weber's work with that of Troeltsch and Meinecke, who are said to have recognized that history is a contingent process.<sup>3</sup> In this reading, Weber emerges as a misguided political theorist *as a consequence of* his misguided methodological orientation. Chapter I of this thesis has shown that drawing this contrast between Weber on the hand and Meinecke and Troeltsch on the other does not capture the

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<sup>1</sup> Stefan Eich and Adam Tooze, 'The Allure of Dark Times: Max Weber, Politics, and the Crisis of Historicism', *History and Theory* 56 (2017), 202.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, 210-14.

complexity of any of these theorists.<sup>4</sup> Both Meinecke and Weber, as we have seen, treated bureaucratization as an inevitable aspect of modernity. Troeltsch employed a similar rhetoric of inevitability in his political writings as Weber did.

The methodological outlook exemplified by Eich and Tooze has become widely accepted among historians of Germany over the last two decades. Christopher Clark for instance draws on Georg Jellinek's concept of the 'normative power of the factual' to make the case that previous historians have been too concerned with uncovering the causes of the First World War, leading them to downplay contingency and the degree to which the future was open – rather than pre-determined – before the July Crisis of 1914.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, commenting on the Weimar Republic's fiscal policy during the inflation years around 1923, Niall Ferguson castigates the existence of an alleged 'determinist consensus'.<sup>6</sup> Arguing that alternative policy paths were in fact open during the inflation, Ferguson argues that it is 'condescending to the past to suggest that people at the time had no free will; that they were the helpless "objects" of impersonal "structural" forces over which they had no control.'<sup>7</sup> Today, such revisionist interpretations abound.<sup>8</sup> Almost forty years after Geoff Eley and David Blackbourn criticized Dahrendorf

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<sup>4</sup> For further similarities between Troeltsch and Weber in this respect, also cf. Harry Liebersohn, *Fate and Utopia in German Sociology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT University Press, 1988). Troeltsch's thinking in terms of inevitability is also noted by Greenberg, *The Weimar Century*, 29.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Penguin, 2013), 361-2.

<sup>6</sup> Niall Ferguson, 'Constraints and Room for Manoeuvre in the German Inflation of the Early 1920s', *Economic History Review* 49 (1996), 636.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, 662.

<sup>8</sup> For the broader historiographical movement that Eley and Blackbourn were a part of cf. above all the work assembled in Richard Evans (ed.), *Society and Politics in Wilhelmine Germany* (London: Croom Helm, 1978). For another contribution to this debate that, like Eley and Blackbourn, put a critique of Dahrendorf at its heart, cf. Konrad Jarausch, 'Illiberalism and Beyond: German History in Search of a Paradigm', *Journal of Modern History* 55 (1983). Further recent prominent critiques of alleged historiographical determinism are Jürgen Osterhammel, 'Gesellschaftsgeschichte und historische Soziologie', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 22 (2006) and Tim Müller, 'Demokratie und Wirtschaftspolitik in der Weimarer Republik', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 62 (2014).

for his alleged determinism and Nipperdey sought to reorient historiography in reaction to the student movement, their perspective has become a new consensus.<sup>9</sup>

It is the great merit of this new consensus that it recognizes that a fundamental methodological shift took place over the course of the second half of the twentieth century, which has resulted in scholars placing stronger emphasis on historical contingency. In this respect it is superior to the secondary literature on Dahrendorf that has portrayed him as a Popperian liberal or even a ‘Cold War liberal’.<sup>10</sup> As we have seen in the Introduction, Gangolf Hübinger has described Dahrendorf as part of an intellectual tradition that he lauded for its recognition of historical contingency, a reading that this thesis hopes to dispel.<sup>11</sup> However, this thesis suggests that the new historiographical consensus itself rests on an ahistorical reading of twentieth-century German intellectual history, one that overlaps with the ahistorical narratives that form the basis of the writings of Hayek and Popper. Instead of asking why mid-century theorists were so oriented towards structures and necessity, this thesis turns this question on its head and asks why this orientation was supplanted by novel methodological commitments after the early 1970s. Once the question is altered, a new perspective emerges: the post-war social scientific paradigm within which Dahrendorf worked and developed his perspective on the nature of politics did not decline because of its inherent contradictions, as is implied by contemporary scholarship. Instead, this thesis suggests that the thematic shift away from socio-economic aspects towards culture and ideas that took place in history and the social sciences was rooted in a political reaction to contemporary events, most importantly the student movement. By the

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<sup>9</sup> For Eley and Blackbourn’s critique of Dahrendorf cf. the Introduction and Ch. V.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Introduction.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Introduction.

time Dahrendorf travelled to Kyoto in May 1975 to comment on the Trilateral Commission's 'Report on the Governability of Democracies', the report's diagnosis of a so-called cultural crisis had become a commonplace (Chapter V).

Over the following years, this shift profoundly altered the thematic focus of the social sciences and the structure of liberal political thought. The neoliberal reform programme that gained widespread acceptance during the later 1970s and 1980s was centrally underpinned by the argument that bureaucracy, large-scale monopolies, and cartels were contingent rather than inherent aspects of modernity. As the post-war social-scientific paradigms fell apart in reaction to the student movement and the political-economic crises of the 1970s, belief in the predictability of social processes disintegrated. Once this theoretical shift had happened, politics became an open field of possibilities, freed from the constraints of the post-war consensus – the future was no longer a field governed by probabilistic causality. The new versions of liberalism that now gained widespread currency operated with a wider horizon of expectations that differed fundamentally from the consensus liberalism of the post-war period, of which Dahrendorf's liberalism was one variant.<sup>12</sup> In contrast to many of his intellectual interlocutors, his political interventions in these decades evidenced a much greater deal of continuity in terms of thinking about the constraints with which he thought politics to be confronted. However, by this point, this argument had lost the persuasiveness that it had carried in previous decades (Chapter VI).

It may be reasonably said that while this interpretation helps to resolve many questions surrounding Dahrendorf, it also raises a new one. That is, why did

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<sup>12</sup> For the concept of 'horizon of expectations' cf. Reinhart Koselleck, "'Erfahrungsraum" und "Erwartungshorizont" – zwei historische Kategorien', in Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft*.

someone who argued that the political behaviour of both groups and individuals depended on the 'binding character of natural forces' become so engaged in the public spheres of the Federal Republic, Britain, and the United States? This apparent contradiction is only surprising if his materialist-inspired agonistic liberalism and philosophy of science is presented as determinist, as Eley and Blackbourn as well as Stuart Hampshire have done.

The argument put forward here is different. Those aspects of public life that Dahrendorf insisted had to be accepted as given in politics provided a framework that constrained the meaningful range of action, but, within this framework, diverging options and routes were still possible. In fact, his decision to enter politics in October 1967 was prompted by his fear of the consequences of the rise of what he, following Renner, called the 'service class society'. The rise of bureaucracy and expert-led politics was to a very considerable degree inevitable, but this did not mean that genuine political action was completely impossible. The realities of modern industrial society provided a bounded field within which political decisions could take place. His worst fears were reserved for the potentially disastrous consequences of utopian versions of politics gaining acceptance that ignored the realities that he thought all developed societies were facing. This impulse, first evident in his critique of idealist interpretations of Marx in the early 1950s, still animated him during the 1980s when he criticized Margaret Thatcher's politics. His political engagement was instead motivated to ensure that social structure and politics did not drift apart. Politics needed to remain open: his rejection of strong constitutions, presented in Chapter VI, was connected to his fear that rigid political systems were incapable of adapting to changing social structures

and altering political landscapes characterized by new social conflicts and shifting frontiers between interest groups.

Dahrendorf was aware that his theoretical formulations sometimes clashed with our everyday perceptions of how politics works. While his sociological theory suggested that rigid causalities were at play in society, he recognized that experience often suggested otherwise. However, he was adamant that common-sense experience of individual cases must not distract from the fact that when examined at a higher level, politics *was* subject to regularities that put individual cases in a different light: this was why sociology needed an ideal-typical concept of a 'Homo Sociologicus', in analogy to those employed by economists and psychologists. In individual instances, regularities could be broken, but for the sake of science behaviour had to be formulated causally. Until the publication of *Life Chances* in 1979, Dahrendorf struggled to theoretically conceptualize structural causality. Given that he differentiated between science (formulating general laws) and common sense (confronted with individuality), it is not surprising that he frequently engaged in politics and political debate during his career.

Indeed, the perception of a tension between Dahrendorf's methodological commitments and his active politics seems to point towards a misapprehension of historical materialism. Not unlike Dahrendorf, Marx also took an active part in the politics of his day. This also applied to other members of the intellectual networks discussed in this thesis. While it is easy to misconstrue the meaning of Schelsky's statement that sociology ought to 'make visible that which is happening anyway and cannot be changed', he also occupied himself with practical politics.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Schelsky, *Ortsbestimmung der deutschen Soziologie*, 122-6.

Moreover, while he did see some social trends as inexorable, this did not apply across the board. In this vein, his *Sociology of Sexuality* (1955) criticized biological interpretations that considered human sexuality to be determined by nature. Instead, he argued that sexuality was to a considerable extent a cultural product.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Hans-Ulrich Wehler criticized modernization theorists for their failure to recognize that history and modernity were more diverse than the experiences of a few western countries.<sup>15</sup> By demonstrating Germany's divergence from the trajectories of modernization in the United States, France, and Britain, his attempt to make sense of its diverging path was motivated to highlight modernity's diversity. For him, recognizing diversity as well as structures was not a contradiction. In this way, Schelsky and Wehler were both more nuanced theorists than subsequent commentators have allowed for – theirs was not a global metaphysical determinism.<sup>16</sup>

The same was true in Dahrendorf's case. Situating him in the context of this debate about structure and contingency in twentieth-century German scholarly circles, this thesis presses the case that his generation's adamant insistence on structures, necessity, and the importance of socio-economic issues has to be set into the perspective of its rejection of interwar emphases on culture and contingency by conservative intellectuals, some of which welcomed National Socialism as the political vehicle that could break the perceived iron cage of serfdom. By making this emphasis, Dahrendorf and other adherents of the post-war liberal consensus, like Fritz Stern, Hajo Holborn, or Leonard Krieger, made a conscious political

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<sup>14</sup> Helmut Schelsky, *Soziologie der Sexualität: Über die Beziehungen zwischen Geschlecht, Moral und Gesellschaft* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1955).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. the argument developed in Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Modernisierungstheorie und Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975).

<sup>16</sup> Liebersohn, *Fate and Utopia in German Sociology*, 4-8 argues that the same applied to German sociologists in the early twentieth century.

effort to contain the political influence of culture and contingency-oriented conceptions of society that had prompted the previous generation to opt for political extremism in the hope that it offered a way out of a modernity dominated by rationality, technology, and bureaucracy. This involved making a conscious value judgement in favour of material over cultural political questions. In this, they resembled the liberal generation of Weber, Naumann, Schumpeter, Troeltsch, and Meinecke, who had opted for a similar rhetoric of inevitability (while placing much more emphasis on the importance of culture). While Dahrendorf shared some of the concerns about technocracy that the interwar generation of conservatives had entertained, his liberalism barred him from opting for the solutions that they had advocated. As a consequence, his liberalism remained a despairing one that was conscious of its own limitations.

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