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Introduction

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The present issue of our journal aims to explore some aspects of the emerging aspiration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to investigate various forms of knowledge with sensitivity to the sociological circumstances within which knowledge is generated and spread. Important tenets of this aspiration originated in the peculiar socio-cultural environment of East Central Europe, more precisely within the boundaries of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and since then these tenets have exerted important influence on subsequent developments in the sociology of religion, art, literature, and science.[1] Although in their own time these insights were located both geographically and intellectually on the periphery, they have since become central in various sociological and sociologically inspired disciplines. Some of those taking the first isolated steps in these directions have since become classics; and some others were and continue to be important sources of inspiration for subsequent work.

This collection aims to explore some of the more important figures and central themes drawn from the early history of social theories of knowledge as it started to take shape in East Central Europe. In this introduction I want to draw attention quickly to some recurrent themes in, and interconnetions among, the papers of this issue.

Most of the contributions concentrate on theories about how scientific knowledge is embedded in a network of sociologically relevant factors, and give hints as to how

[1] For a discussion of the social and historical circumstances of the emerging disciplines see e.g. Nyíri (1989), Smith and Grassl (2004). For further developments following the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy see Congdon (1991), Frank (2009).

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sociological considerations originally applied to non-scientific fields of knowledge, such as art, were extended to scientific knowledge. This approach, mainly in the cases of Hauser, Zilsel, Fleck and the young Lukács, tends to disregard the epistemic value of scientific knowledge, and to assimilate it to other fields of intellectual production, without devoting attention to its epistemic characteristics that give its *differentia specifica*. As a consequence, science is not represented as an exemplary field of ideal rationality but as one among many social enterprises in which a human being can take part as a whole, i.e. with all his characteristics and not only with his rationality:[2] perceptual and affective capacities, unreflected habits and practices, as well as social standing play an indispensable role in our cognitive enterprises.

Several related problems are discussed in various papers of this issue. A frequently recurrent question is how *perception* is shaped by social circumstances, thereby giving rise to various *Weltanschauungen* and *Gestalten*. The question pertaining to the sociological conditioning of perception became central in philosophy of science starting with Kuhn's work on the role the socialization of scientists plays in the formation of their perceptual sensibilities. Some of these papers also discuss how the ways in which those sensibilities are shaped by sociological factors give rise to specific styles of thought or *Denkstilen*, and explore the features of sociological understanding facilitated by interpretive strategies of philosophers and historians built around these concepts. These contributions allow for a comparison between Jerusalem's, Mannheim's, Lukács's, and Fleck's sociologies of knowledge; in the case of Polányi and Fleck they also clarify some of the tacit dimensions of knowledge production and acquisition.[3]

It is by means of the concept of *style* that some of the contributors to this issue try to show how the sociological study of various fields of knowledge, from artistic to scientific, is interlinked. And it is indeed the case that Lukács, Mannheim, Fleck, and Hauser exploited this concept with explanatory success while exploring sociological influences on various fields. One important lesson of this collection concerns the way in which the concept of style was developed in the context of various sociological theories as well as the many explanatory and interpretive uses of this concept in those contexts. This emphasis may strengthen the drive toward a reconsideration of the reception by the early sociologies of knowledge of the natural sciences,[4] and it may suggest as well a closer connection between the sociologies of scientific and non-scientific knowledge than is usually presupposed. This established distinction may be softened if looked at through the sociological concept of a 'style of thought' and its relatives.

Another related recurrent theme in this issue is the sociological *determination* of thought, which is sometimes contrasted here with sociologically oriented *interpre-*

[2] This insight may establish a link connecting sociologically inspired philosophies of science to Romantic views on science. In Neurath's case this link has been textually documented in Zemplén (2006).

[3] Beside the collection of papers reviewed in this issue I should draw attention to Mary Jo Nye's (2011) long-awaited book on Polányi which discusses his life and work from the perspective, and in the context of sociological theories of knowledge.

[4] See Bloor (1973), Barnes and Bloor (1982). For recent discussion see Seidel (2011a, b).

tations of intellectual production.[5] The aspiration to reveal law-like regularities in the background of knowledge production is prominent in Zilsel's "materialist historiography," and it is interesting to see how Lukács's Marxist critique of Zilsel's enterprise reflects the recollections of Lukács's pre-Marxist sociology of knowledge also discussed in this issue. Similar recollections are reflected in the development of Hauser's sociology of art: while gradually increasing his distance from a Marxist outlook, Hauser's sociology represents artistic value as less than adequately explicable in sociological terms.[6] One can be inclined to draw the conclusion that Lukács and Hauser may not have been as resolute in developing a historical materialist programme in their sociology of knowledge as Zilsel.

The discussion of these and other related problems of the early history of social theories of knowledge are not only historically interesting. We hope the lessons drawn here from historical material may provide inspiration for contemporary discussions on the problems and prospects of the history of science and intellectual history writing in general.

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[5] For an illustration of sociologically inspired interpretive attempts see Demeter (2004, 2010). For a theory of sociological interpretation see Márkus (2011), particularly chapters 15 and 16.

[6] For further discussion see Congdon (2004).

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