

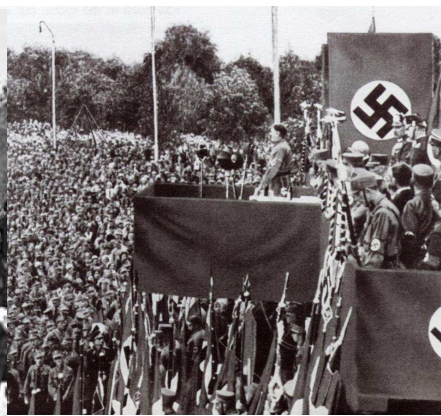


THE CHICAGO STRIKES—UNITED STATES INFANTRY IN THE STOCK-YARDS.
"To deal with the United States Government."



Conceptualizing the Masses

Discipline Formation & Concepts of Modernity



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*(...) there is not a simple page, not a simple word, on earth – for all pages, all words,
predicate the universe, whose most notorious attribute is its complexity*

Jorge Luis Borges

Cover illustrations

Above from left to right: 1. The masses on the Left: Barricades at the Paris Commune (1871); 2. The masses at strike: workers and federal troops. Chicago strike (1894); 3: The masses as consumers and allies: Famous actors Charlie Chaplin and Douglas Fairbanks at Wall Street, New York, selling U.S. government bonds during World War I. They were promoting the idea that buying a “liberty bond” was “the patriotic thing to do”.

Below from left to right: 1. The masses at war: the trenches of World War I 2. Mass unemployment in the 1930s: demonstration in the Netherlands 3. The masses on the Right: speech by Hitler

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Introduction

“‘Masse’ verweist kritisch oder zustimmend auf ‘Elite’; Masse is deshalb immer zugleich ein provokativer Aktions- und ein Distanz herstellender und Distanz wahrender Beschreibungsbegriff”¹

Elites throughout Europe have theorized, used and interpreted the concepts ‘mass’ or ‘the masses’ in various ways ever since the French Revolution. Fears of revolution, mob violence, workers’ strikes, and unsanitary city districts became big concerns for nineteenth and twentieth century elites, not the least because these troubles could harm their own well being. Portraits of the masses by novelists like Dickens, Tolstoy and Zola settled in their minds.² Related to large historical developments like industrialization, urbanization, and democratization, the masses became a constant and menacing factor of modern life in the minds of artists, politicians and scientists alike. The main focus of this thesis is the conceptualization of the masses between 1890 and 1939. The concept is positioned in a debate on discipline formation: mass conceptions by early sociologists and psychologists are put in a larger framework of circulating knowledge. The mass is a concept exceeding single disciplines and exceeding the chosen time period. Themes, patterns, possibilities and limitations of mass conceptualizations will be analyzed by focusing on well-known social scientists and on scientists with specific interest in the masses. The history of sociology and psychology – with matters like discipline formation, the role of intellectuals, the difference between ‘real’ and ‘pseudo’ science, and the connection between ‘cognitive’ and ‘ideological’ - are underlying issues.

The concept ‘masses’ has ambivalent meanings; it can imply an active subject or a passive object; it can be seen as a sign of modernity or a sign of degeneration into barbarity; it can stand for a short-lived assembly of people or a long-term organization of

¹ Brunner, Otto, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politischen-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland. Band 7* (Stuttgard 1992) 416.

² For a discussion of the masses in novels, see Jaap van Ginneken, *Mass movements in Darwinist, Freudian and Marxist perspective. Trotter, Freud and Reich on war, revolution and reaction 1900-1933* (Apeldoorn and Antwerp 2007).

people; it can be approached with pessimism or optimism. In short: it is a contested concept. Uncontested however, was the significance of the masses in modern life. Both facets (the contested-ness and the significance) make it such an appropriate concept for the investigation of disciplines dealing with modern society. The social sciences developed in an age of modernization; new problems and dilemmas were approached by new disciplines of knowledge. Between 1890 and 1939 significant changes in the intellectual landscape took place. Scientists had to deal with the dilemmas of modernity: how to acquire rational knowledge about the irrational parts of life, how to deal with the problems of time and history, and – last but not least – how to study society and individuals in it?³ This last dilemma is closely connected to the problem, and conceptualization, of the masses. The mass is made up by individuals and – as a whole - is a part of society. The behavior and manipulation of those groups of people that were now called masses, were relevant for all sciences dealing with the modern human world. Thus, the subject is two-layered: the masses became a reality in the nineteenth century – as a result of democratization, urbanization, and industrialization – while sociologists and psychologists theorized about the masses in an abstract manner. The second layer – mass theory - is the main focus of this thesis, with the first functioning as historical background.

The conceptualization of the masses by a various social thinkers occurred simultaneously with the emergence of the social disciplines. The main question is: how can mass conceptualizations be positioned in a context of the emerging social disciplines? Central is the relationship between key concepts and discipline formation. What is the impact of a key concept transcending disciplinary boundaries on the formation of those disciplines? What – in the end – prevails: urgent concepts and context or methods and institutions? I will make use of a combination of conceptual history and the ‘circulation of knowledge’: the changing use and meaning of the concept masses is positioned in both social, cultural, and national contexts and in an international context. I will argue that the concept had international relevance and that there were national trends - and compare individual thinkers in an impressionistic manner.

To answer the main question, derivative questions are answered in different chapters. In the following sections of the introduction the concept ‘masses’ and the

³ According to: Stuart H. Hughes, *Consciousness and society* (New Brunswick 2002 [originally published: New York 1958]).

connection between conceptual history and discipline formation are discussed. Central are the value of conceptual history for the history of science and ideas and the difficulties of writing discipline history. After that, the first chapter is on the rise of sociology and psychology in historical context. Paradigmatic literature on the period and main issues of the social sciences are considered. In the second, third, and fourth chapter sociological and psychological conceptualizations of the masses are discussed. Because of the international character of mass theories, I am aiming at an international rather than a national perspective (though differences per country or language area are touched upon when of importance). Unlike in some traditional intellectual histories, American scientists are an integral part of this thesis. Well-known sociologists and psychologists, and paradigmatic works about the masses are compared in an impressionistic manner. The chapters are arranged by general themes and patterns, which turn out to be impacted by language and national borders. Moreover, differences and similarities between individuals are discussed, as well as historical developments. In the conclusion the connection between key concepts and discipline formation is discussed. The continuity and discontinuity of mass conceptions is another issue for the conclusion, as well as the circulation of ideas from the local to the more-than-local. In the epilogue, the reception history of mass theories after World War II and the contemporary conceptualization of the masses are reflected upon.

A contested concept

In first instance, ‘mass’ seems to imply a concept in the natural sciences, physics in particular. Though the physicists’ meaning of mass is far from the object of this thesis, it has something in common with the meaning of mass in the social sciences. Mass always implies a size or heaviness: mass is about a quantity of something. The quantity is what makes a mass a mass, whilst the ascribed characteristics of masses vary. Moreover, the mass is a carrier of energy. Scientists (natural and social) have tried to establish laws about the behavior of masses. As a result of historical developments scientists started to ask questions about the behavior and energy of masses. The first important question is: how are the masses behaving (in changing circumstances)? Can we predict or manipulate that behavior? And finally, why do we want to predict or manipulate the behavior of the

masses? Answers to these questions changed over time, and differed per discipline and individual scientist.

The concepts ‘mass’, ‘masses’, ‘crowd’, ‘herd’, and ‘mob’ are related – but also distinguishable – concepts, charged with political, cultural, social, and scientific meaning. The Greek ‘demos’ and the Latin ‘populi’ and ‘res publica’ are somewhat related to masses and were used by political thinkers throughout European history. Plato envisages the demos as irrational and ignorant, ready to be stirred by demagogues, while Livy understands the Roman mob and its agitators as the enemy within.⁴ The use and meaning of the concept masses was extended from approximately the middle of the eighteenth century. An important theoretical shift took place in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the masses (or the crowd) became central to social theories.⁵ New theories showed some similarities with older theories, but were written in a time when the masses became a permanent political force and it became clear that new doctrines of democracy and Marxism were not about to go away.⁶ More than ever, elites felt the need to define themselves in opposition to the masses.

In Koselleck’s well-known *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* the concept “Masse” is discussed in combination with “Volk” and “Nation”.⁷ The ambivalent meaning of the “masses” is emphasized: on the one hand it implies an active subject, on the other hand a passive, easy to manipulate object of propaganda. Pessimism about the masses characterized the work of reactionaries, while the masses were opposed to the reprehensible bourgeois world by both communists and fascists.⁸ Carl E. Schorske also emphasizes the role of the masses in the emerging “politics in a new key” in late nineteenth century Vienna.⁹ J.W. Burrow explains how the masses threatened intellectuals not only in politics, but were also seen as a danger to social order and cultural achievements.¹⁰ Susan Buck-Morss argues, by focusing on modern cinema, that mass culture had a positive connotation

⁴ J. S. McClelland, *The crowd and the mob. From Plato to Canetti* (London etc. 1989) 1.

⁵ McClelland *The crowd and the mob* 3.

⁶ Idem 6.

⁷ Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politischen-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland. Band 7* (Suttgart 1992) 381.

⁸ Brunner etc., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* 418.

⁹ Carl E. Schorske., *Fin-de-siecle Vienna. Politics and culture* (New York 1980 [first published: 1961]).

¹⁰ J.W. Burrow, *The crisis of reason. European thought, 1848-1914* (New Haven and London 2000) xi-xii.

in both the United States and the Soviet Union. In Europe on the other hand, an antithesis existed between “masses” - a visual phenomenon – and “culture” – a literal phenomenon.¹¹

Jaap van Ginneken focuses less on the political meaning of mass movements, but discusses “Mass movements in Darwinist, Freudian and Marxist perspective”.¹² He explains the international character of scientific mass theories by pointing out scholarly contacts and influences. Van Ginneken also concludes that mass theories were nowhere institutionalized as an academic specialty, which “seems closely related to the nature of the subject itself”, because of its “fleeting and capricious nature”.¹³ Though the elusive character of the subject is undeniable, I want to claim that ideological and institutional arguments too, were important factors in the pseudo-scientific status and character of most mass theories. Also it can be argued that some mass theories were actually institutionalized. In that respect specific questions can be asked, for example; why was Tarde’s social psychology defeated by Durkheim’s sociology; why was Freud’s individual psychoanalysis so much more appreciated than his “Massenpsychologie”; what was the impact of mass conceptions on the social psychology of the Chicago School; why were some Marxist histories of the masses accepted in history disciplines; how did cultural critique of mass society gain influence; and how to explain the success of empirical research of mass behaviour (statistics based on all kinds of surveys)?

After World War II the concept ‘masses’ became burdened on many more levels. Indeed, the supposed connection with communism and fascism – or at least the supposed incommensurability with liberalism – to a great deal determined the reception history of mass theories. After all, Mussolini, Hitler, and Lenin were admirers of Le Bon’s crowd psychology. The atrocities of Auschwitz discredited the masses (but not necessarily mass theories) on a whole new level. A separation was implemented between the ‘real’ historical masses and the mass theories of the past. Both have determined the reception history of mass conceptions after World War II. Historians like Schorske and Stuart Hughes wanted to deal with intellectual tenants that were connected to the rise of fascism. Elias Canetti’s *Crowds and Power (Masse und Macht 1960)* was an attempt to deal with Nazi terror and genocide in a theoretical manner. In the post-World War II decades attempts like these

¹¹ Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and catastrophe. The passing of mass utopia in East and West* (Cambridge and London 2002) 148.

¹² Van Ginneken, *Mass movements*.

¹³ Idem 48.

were not uncommon. Fascism, communism, and “totalitarian democracy”¹⁴ were associated with reactionary mass theories, but also with a ‘real’ threat of the masses. Another post-World War II approach came from Postmodernists, New Left, and social historians who attempted to rehabilitate the masses. The endeavour of historians like E.P. Thompson and Natalie Davis to attribute the masses with “some moral certainty and communal sense of legitimacy” in the 1970s can be interpreted as a counter reaction to the reactionary theories that had emphasized the irrationality of the masses. These social historians favoured the masses and discredited reactionary mass theorists. Inevitably, these various approaches have influenced my point of departure. Through the views of post-World War II authors I look at mass conceptions, while I try – of course – to keep a certain distance and do justice to the pre-war intellectual climate. Just as the concepts ‘*Volk*’ and ‘nation’, the ‘mass’ remains an essential concept to track the intellectual developments between 1890 and 1939.

Discipline formation and conceptual history

Discipline formation in the humanities and social sciences on a large scale started around 1870.¹⁵ Between 1890 and 1939 – the period of investigation - the social sciences and humanities started to demarcate their subject-fields and methodologies. Sharp borderlines between disciplines were often still absent; it was a constitutive period in which those disciplines formed their identities. This offers the opportunity to analyze the context in which new knowledge claims were defended and debated. As explained before, this is done by the example of mass conceptualizations. In this section I will discuss successively: first, problems of disciplinarity and discipline formation and second, the methods of conceptual history. In the following (and last) section I will discuss the connection between key concepts and circulating knowledge.

Disciplinarity went hand in hand with a process of specialization. In the view of academic elites, the modern specialized scientist contrasted with the traditional omniscient intellectual. According to Weber; “Behind all the present discussions of the foundations of

¹⁴ E.g. Jacob Leib Talmon, *The origins of totalitarian democracy* (London 1952).

¹⁵ For example: Julie Thompson Klein, *Humanities, culture and interdisciplinarity* (Albany 2005) 33. Dorothy Ross, “Changing contours of the social science disciplines” 208. The exact dating of discipline formation in the humanities and social sciences is a subject of debate.

the educational system, the struggle of the “specialist type of man” against the older type of “cultivated man” is hidden at some decisive point... This fight intrudes into all intimate cultural questions”.¹⁶ Advocates of specialization stood in strained relations to proponents of general or synthesized knowledge, a tension that would continue to exist throughout the twentieth century.¹⁷ According to Julie Thompson Klein, discipline formation and interdisciplinarity are two sides of the same coin: “even though interdisciplinarity has a philosophical grounding in ancient ideas, it arose as a response to a new and pathological condition. The challenges of the modern world and the proliferation of specialization required alternatives”.¹⁸ Since disciplines are based on conventions and practice, she concludes that disciplinarity (and interdisciplinarity) “has no inherent meaning”.¹⁹ Nonetheless, discipline formation was a powerful historical process still effective today: in this sense it is an appropriate and interesting object for the historian of science.

Among historians of science, discipline formation is regarded a complicated subject. Disciplines are no longer regarded as ‘natural kinds’ - the logical outcome of a long historical process.²⁰ There are many uncertainties about discipline formation, both with regard to the development of the natural sciences and the social and human sciences. These questions can be roughly divided in two types: 1. internal-theoretical questions about the intellectual (or cognitive) aspects of science; 2. external-social questions about the social and authoritative aspects of science. Some sort of revival of the ‘internalist versus externalist’ debate or ‘essentialist versus constructivist’ - which seemed outmoded for a long time - is taken place in the history of science again. The simple negation of these oppositions – as became common since the late 1970s – is harmful for the history of discipline formation, because it usually ends with a one-sided picture. Though I realize that the internal – external debate seemed exhausted, the result of negation was an excessive victory of externalism in the last decennia, under the guise of ‘culturalism’. For this reason, it is useful to repeat some of the arguments of the debate, and see if the old oppositions can enlighten new issues. Of course, arguments have been refined, and the most appealing ideas

¹⁶ Fritz K. Ringer *The decline of the German mandarins. The German academic community, 1890-1933* (Cambridge 1990 [originally published: Cambridge 1969]) 179.

¹⁷ Klein, *Humanities, culture and interdisciplinarity* 33.

¹⁸ Idem 33.

¹⁹ Idem 63.

²⁰ Daan Wegener, “Discipline vorming in the bètawetenschappen: een vooronderzoek”, Descartes Colloquium (April 2010) 1.

about discipline formation try to overcome the older oppositions. The common idea nowadays is that discipline formation was a process determined by interplay between intellect and society. But how does this interplay work? And can we give historical proof for this?

The first type of argument – internal-theoretical – is dedicated to the object and methodology of a scientific discipline. These types of arguments can be found in (old-fashioned) intellectual history and are sensitive to an inevitable part of the history of science. Core concepts in the vocabulary can provide the ties and unity of a discipline – even if the meaning of those concepts changes slightly over time. Rein de Wilde for example, argues that a shared vocabulary can be of the utmost importance in early discipline formation: the identity of early American sociology was established by one shared vocabulary. German Weimar sociology on the other hand, was not characterized by a shared vocabulary at all, but acquired its identity by a shared orientation on culture-politics.²¹ From De Wilde’s comparison it becomes clear that a discipline is not necessarily identified by a shared subject or methodology: sometimes a shared social goal is enough. Social legitimation is a factor of discipline identity and legitimation too.

The impact of social factors is connected to the second type of arguments – the external-social. The importance of social factors is demonstrated by many historians of science. Political legitimation is just one external factor; other factors can be the role of disciplines in education, the identification of scientists with a discipline, local or national contexts of disciplines, or scientific disciplines as (anthropological) practice. Bruno Latour’s investigation of the laboratory is probably the most well-known example of the anthropological gaze and constructivism. In *Laboratory life. The construction of scientific facts*, Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar describe how scientific statements are constructed in the laboratory: objectivity is created by the accumulation of references and figures, with a major role for language and persuasion.²²

In the past decades “the discourse of ‘internalism’ and ‘externalism’ seems to have passed from the commonplace to the gauche”.²³ But, as I argued above, a one-sided focus

²¹ Rein de Wilde, *Discipline en legende. De identiteit van de sociologie in Duitsland en de Verenigde Staten 1870-1930* (1992) 128.

²² Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory life. The construction of scientific facts* (Princeton 1986) 82-86.

²³ Steven Shapin, “Discipline and bounding: the history and sociology of science as seen through the externalism-internalism debate” *History of science* 30 (1992) 333.

on either internal or external factors negates the interesting interplay between science and society. A clear distinction between cognitive exertions and social behavior can only be made by historians afterwards.²⁴ That is why the external, ‘conspiracy-like’, histories of science can make the reader feel uncomfortable. For historical actors, cognitive and social activities usually formed a logical unity. From a present perspective it is interesting to expose how this unity was accomplished and made sense.

In recent years there have been attempts to overcome old oppositions. A well-known example is James A. Secord, who suggests an “understanding of science as a form of communication”. In his article “Knowledge in transit”, he claims that the central question for the historian of science is: “How and why does knowledge circulate?”²⁵ The methodology proposed by Secord – and this is true for most authors – is clarified with examples from the history of the natural sciences or medicine. Knowledge from the social sciences is largely neglected or disposed as intellectual history, though it is unclear how this distinction is justified. Strong separations between the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities are often not historically sensible. This is argued by Bart Karstens for example, who treats discipline formation as a process of ‘hybridization’: ideas from different directions are combined *and* external factors have an impact. He claims that research on discipline formation is necessarily research on the emergence of hybrid forms.²⁶

Though I do not think there is – or should be – a strong separation between the history of natural science and the history of the social sciences, in practice the two are often separated. The interplay of science and society is arguably stronger in the social sciences than in the natural sciences, as the social disciplines retain a relative lack of theoretical coherence and are more bound by social legitimacy.²⁷ The history of the social sciences is at the same time more and less advanced than the history of the natural sciences. It is less advanced in the respect that it was only slowly accepted in the history of science field.²⁸ For a long time, history of science meant history of natural science, with physics as the model discipline. The implicit hierarchy of the sciences is a reason for this lack of attention,

²⁴ De Wilde, *Discipline en legende* 70.

²⁵ James A. Secord, “Knowledge in transit”, *Isis* vol. 95 (2004) 655.

²⁶ Bart Karstens, *Die 'Boppsche Wetenschap'? Een onderzoek naar de institutionalisering van de historisch-vergelijkende taalstudie als aparte wetenschappelijke discipline*. (Master thesis, Utrecht 2009) 87.

²⁷ Wegener “Discipline vorming in the bètawetenschappen” 10.

²⁸ Theodore M. Porter and Dorothy Ross, “Introduction” in: Theodore M. Porter and Dorothy Ross (eds.), *The Cambridge history of science. Vol. 7: The modern social sciences* (New York 2003) 6.

whilst problems of demarcation – and even the name ‘social sciences’ – seem to have complicated matters further.²⁹ The different meanings of science and *Wissenschaft* is one of these complications; another complicating factor is the position of disciplines like history, sociology, psychology, and linguistics in either the ‘social sciences’, ‘behavioral sciences’, ‘human sciences’ or ‘humanities’.³⁰ In another respect, the history of the social sciences was more advanced than the history of the natural sciences: the interplay between social science and society was acknowledged much earlier. Comte’s ideal of positivistic social science was very soon criticized as unfeasible.³¹ Because of their marginality, social scientists strongly tried to emphasize the scientific character of their disciplines, but socially and politically charged claims were recognized and criticized much earlier and more fiercely than claims of natural scientists.³²

Traditional disciplinary history often has a finalistic character. De Wilde criticizes the “jigsaw-model” (disciplines have their own natural objects) and the “pigeonhole-model” (disciplines are determined by its problems) since both models take the identity of a discipline for granted.³³ The identity of a discipline is determined by its history, not by the kinds of objects or types of problems.³⁴ The identity and continuity of a discipline must be investigated, because processes of legitimation should not be taken for granted. When addressing these issues of discipline formation, conceptual history can be an advantageous method.

Disciplines do not have a static core methodology or object; disciplines neither hold a continuous social legitimacy. Disciplines are characterized by flexibility and a lack of rules.³⁵ Disciplines are productive, but also – necessarily - restrictive. Disciplines are open to historical change, but continuity is very important too: what does it mean that sociology and psychology exist for more than a century now? Robert C. Bannister distinguishes intellectual continuity and institutional continuity: “In Europe, classical sociology, despite its intellectual brilliance, gained little institutional permanence and left

²⁹ Porter and Ross “Introduction” 1.

³⁰ The position of these disciplines varies per country. Gert-Jan Johannes, “De ‘nationale filologieën’ als voorbeeld van disciplinevorming in de geesteswetenschappen. Descartes colloquium (April 2010) 4.

³¹ Ross and Porter, Introduction 4.

³² Idem 5.

³³ De Wilde, *Discipline en legende* 9-10.

³⁴ Idem 12.

³⁵ Wegener, “Discipline vorming” 28.

little immediate legacy. In the United States, the institutional success of prewar sociology, despite its intellectual shortcomings, provided a basis for sustained development and also, ironically, for the revival of the European classical tradition”.³⁶

Even if scientific disciplines do not have a continuous essence, conceptual history shows a degree of continuity. Concepts are perfect case studies to show both continuity and discontinuity.³⁷ The meaning of science, or maybe even its transcendence, can be pointed out by continuity. If radical paradigm shifts determine the history of science, meaning that one set of truths is irreconcilable with another set of truths while we have no means to determine if there is an ultimate (transcendental) truth, than science is totally relative. There are good arguments to claim this, but unfortunately relativism seems a dead-end road for historians: it would imply that we are unable to really understand ideas or communicate with thinkers from the past. If one cannot accept total relativism and does not want to ignore its sensible arguments, than historical continuity might provide a way out. The human enterprise for knowledge takes its meaning from historical continuity: by focusing on a key concept like the masses we can still communicate with past scientists and philosophers.

Conceptual history is closely related to twentieth’ century concerns with the role of language in constructing knowledge. In the *History of concepts: comparative perspectives*, diverse traditions – German, Anglophone and Dutch - of conceptual history are discussed. Perhaps the most well-known conceptual project is Otto Brunner’s, Werner Conze’s, and Reinhart Koselleck’s *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*. In the introduction to this work, Koselleck argues that *Begriffsgeschichte* is necessarily *Sozialgeschichte*.³⁸ Koselleck claims that society and language are “part of the metahistorical givens without which history (*Geschichte, Historie*) is inconceivable”.³⁹ Moreover, eighteenth’ and nineteenth’ century social history – the transition to *Neuzeit* - constitutes the heart of the series of books.

³⁶ Robert C. Bannister, “Sociology” in: Porter and Ross (eds.) *The Cambridge history of science. Vol. 7: The modern social sciences* (Cambridge etc. 2003) 337.

³⁷ A concept (language) has more continuity than a specific theory. Scientists over time communicate with each other by means of continuous concepts. Similarity is larger and change is slower than is often assumed by historians of science.

³⁸ Reinhart Koselleck, “Einleitung”, in: Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Kosselleck, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historische Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland. Band I. A-D.* (Stuttgart 1972) xx.

³⁹ Iain Hampsher-Monk, Karin Tilmans, and Frank de Vree, “A comparative perspective on conceptual history – an introduction” in: Hampsher-Monk, Iain, Karin Tilmans, and Frank van Vree (eds.), *History of concepts*.

Anglophone conceptual history on the other hand, is settled in the linguistic character of Anglophone philosophy.⁴⁰ Its most eminent representatives are Quentin Skinner and J.G.A. Pocock, political theorists who wanted to recover the historical dimension of ideas and concepts. For Koselleck conceptual history is about “a tension between concept and materiality”, while the Anglophone tradition is based in the political discourse as a “*constitutive of political reality*, and not a factor in or relative to a reality existing independently of it”.⁴¹ Another difference is the German emphasis on structure, while Skinner and Pocock understand conceptual change as a process of human agency.⁴²

Although concepts are always shaped in social context, history of concepts does not necessarily limit itself to social history. History of science would benefit from conceptual history too. Concepts imply cognitive constructions: essential for the history of science. Recent debates by historians of science are characterized by a desire to re-invent “big pictures” (after the successful, but apparently exhausted, tradition of “microhistory”). James A. Secord for example, proposes a method of “Knowledge in transit”, Ludmilla Jordanova a comparative history of concepts, while John V. Pickstone proposes a return to the “intellectual” aspect of science, and Steven Shapin criticizes the “hyperprofessionalism” in the history of science.⁴³ Hence, the larger historical scope of conceptual history - with the possibility of comparison⁴⁴ - can be valuable for the history of science.

Bernhard F. Scholz discusses the use of conceptual history in “reconstructing the terminology of an academic discipline”.⁴⁵ He uses the term “strand of conversation” to differentiate between languages of divergent disciplines, like the highly formalized

Comparative perspectives (Amsterdam 1998) 4.

⁴⁰ Iain Hampsher-Monk, “Speech acts, languages or conceptual history?” in: Hampsher-Monk, Iain, Karin Tilmans, and Frank van Vree (eds.), *History of concepts. Comparative perspectives* (Amsterdam 1998) 40.

⁴¹ Hampsher-Monk, “Speech acts, languages or conceptual history?” 48

⁴² Idem 49.

⁴³ Ludmilla Jordanova, “Gender and the historiography of science”, *The British journal for the history of science* vol. 26 (1993) 471; John V. Pickstone, “Ways of knowing: towards a historical sociology of science, technology and medicine”, *The British journal for the history of science* vol. 26 (1993) 435; Steven Shapin, “Hyperprofessionalism and the crisis of readership in the history of science”, *Focus: The generalist vision in the history of science, Isis* vol. 96 (2005) 239.

⁴⁴ For example: E.O.G. Haitzma Mulier and W.R.E. Velema (eds.), *Vrijheid. Een geschiedenis van de vijftiende tot de twintigste eeuw* (Amsterdam 1999).

⁴⁵ Scholz, “Conceptual history in context: reconstructing the terminology of an academic discipline” in: Hampsher-Monk, Iain, Karin Tilmans, and Frank van Vree (eds.), *History of concepts. Comparative perspectives* (Amsterdam 1998) 87.

language of mathematics and physics, and the strictly defined concepts of law.⁴⁶ Sensible conceptual history depends on the choice of one or more strands of conversation.⁴⁷ One of these strands of conversation can be the scholarly “lifeworld” of the social sciences. This can be illuminated further by Terence Ball’s approach of “critical conceptual history”. He argues: “what distinguishes critical conceptual history from philology or etymology is its attention to the political contests and *arguments* in which concepts appear and are used to perform particular kinds of actions at particular times and at particular political sites”.⁴⁸ I think ‘scientific’ can be added to ‘political’ to clarify that science too, is about arguments within conceptual debates. The history of science is even more complicated because scientific and political arguments are hard to separate, as they are consciously or unconsciously intertwined. As the history of politics, it can be seen as a process of convincing others. For the historian of science, it is important to investigate why some arguments (on strict object-definition or methodology) became valid outside local contexts (e.g. a state or discipline). Or, in the case of the masses, it might be the other way around: why were some arguments valid outside disciplines, but disqualified once disciplines emerged? Failure, not success, is the ordinary fate of scientific theories and ideas.

Key concepts and circulating knowledge

A concept such as ‘masses’ is suitable to investigate longitudinal processes in the history of science, because it serves as a constant in the midst of change, it has “more than a local significance”, and is “dense enough to carry varied, even contradictory concerns”.⁴⁹ An impressionistic comparison of mass conceptions can illuminate international relevance, variation, and contradiction. Moreover, conceptual history does not only demonstrate change, it leaves room for continuity too. The flexibility of this method contrasts with Kuhn’s idea about radical paradigm shifts. It shows that scientific change happens slower, and that incommensurability is not that drastic. It also contrasts with Foucault’s shifts of

⁴⁶ Scholz “Conceptual history in context” 88.

⁴⁷ Idem 87.

⁴⁸ Terence Ball, “Conceptual history and the history of political thought” in: Hampsher-Monk, Iain, Karin Tilmans, and Frank van Vree (eds.), *History of concepts. Comparative perspectives* (Amsterdam 1998) 82.

⁴⁹ Jordanova, “Gender and the historiography of science” 471.

episteme and changes of discourse. The conceptual history of the masses demonstrates that commensurability over time and between disciplines is much larger than Kuhn or Foucault assumed. It must be noted that Koselleck's conceptual project is, to a certain extent, consonant with Kuhn and Foucault, regarding the importance of language and the emphasis on one great historical shift – the 'Sattelzeit'. In my conceptual history of the masses the notion of one great historical shift is disregarded. Instead I focus on the meaning and use of one concept, specific historical contexts, and the dissemination of knowledge in a temporal framework that is historically defined as 'modernity' of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Conceptual debates in science are determined both by 'scientific/cognitive' and 'ideological' arguments.⁵⁰ This can have important results in the formation of disciplines: which arguments are adapted and translated from one discipline to the other, and which arguments are rejected – and does this happen on scientific or ideological grounds? In short: how is knowledge translated from one (sub-)discipline to the other? Lynn Hunt for example claims that historians' hostility to psychological theories of mass behavior (in the past) not only stemmed from "justifiable concerns about anachronism", but also from "their political objection to the conclusions of the field known as crowd psychology".⁵¹ Also due to a combination of scientific and ideological arguments was the marginal position of "Crowd psychology" - or "Völkerpsychologie" – fields that never became an institutionalized part of academic social science.

Another aspect of discipline formation is the role scientists have ascribed to themselves, in this case usually referred to as 'intellectuals'. The aforementioned tension between the specialized scientist and the intellectual who exceeds disciplines was an issue for the new social disciplines. In the conceptual history of the masses, the role of intellectuals is of extraordinary importance since intellectuals (or more general: opinion leaders) have often opposed themselves to masses. Repeatedly the identity of the masses is set in opposition to that of intellectuals, as being irrational, lazy, and barbarian as opposed

⁵⁰ Some historians of science have rejected the distinction between pure scientific and ideological arguments. Although the distinction is complicated, I think that – at least for practical historical research - it is still valid, because it helps to differentiate between arguments relating to knowledge claims.

⁵¹ In other words: historians' objection against universal human nature. Historians' repudiation of Freud's civilization thesis is exemplary. Lynn Hunt, "Psychology; psychoanalysis, and historical thought" in: Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Crawford Maza, *A Companion to Western Historical Thought* (Malden etc. 2002) 343-344.

to reasonable, critical, and civilized. There is no evading the impression that the masses posed challenges to the role of scientists, science, and rationality in modernity. Tarde for example, wonders “What will preserve the intellectual and artistic summits of humanity from democratic leveling”?⁵² Furthermore, with the (new) importance of the mass theories, social scientists confirmed their own importance as experts. Yet expert knowledge stood in a tensed relation with the omniscient intellectual (characterized by a critical attitude), an attitude well expressed by José Ortega y Gasset as the “barbarism of specialization”.⁵³

Looking at discipline formation from the angle of conceptual history gives the opportunity to show a relationship between change (in meaning and use) of a broad concept, and specialized knowledge of the new disciplines. Without this intellectual movement, discipline formations (or new interdisciplinary fields) are hard to imagine. The relationship between key concepts and discipline formation can be summarized by the following hypothesis: urgent contemporary concepts lead to debates about new and correct knowledge and then results in the formation of disciplines, with their own (divergent and specialized) interpretations of the concept. These two processes can meet somewhere: historical developments might diminish the urgency of the concept, while at the same time scientific disciplines deal with increasingly established concepts and specific methods - where there is no more room for contemporaneous, ideological, or vague concepts like the masses. This meeting point can be investigated with the methods of conceptual history and the circulation of knowledge. The nature and role of a concept can shed new light on the borders of object-definition as well as on new theories or methodologies. When concepts change again, new debates arise, and new (inter)disciplinary fields are established.

The emergence of the social sciences signified a breaking point in the perception of society. But the continuity with predecessors (other disciplines and popular knowledge) is demonstrated by the vocabulary of early sociologists and psychologists. Concepts and metaphors did not change overnight. In the next chapters mass conceptions are discussed in social, cultural, and political contexts. Rather than sharp disciplinary boundaries three large currents of mass conceptualizations form the structure: in chapter II (Laws of Deviant Behavior) a positivistic, law-like approach, with reactionary tendencies; in chapter III

⁵² Gabriel Tarde, “The public and the crowd” in: Gabriel Tarde, *On communication and social influence* (Selected papers, edited by Terry N. Clark) (Chicago and London 1969) 294.

⁵³ My own translation, from a Dutch edition. José Ortega y Gasset, *Opstand der horden* (Den Haag 1966 [originally published: 1930]) 154-156.

(History and Romanticism) a historicizing, romanticising approach, with conservative tendencies; in chapter IV (Evolution and Unity) an evolutionary, pragmatic approach, with liberal tendencies. The result of this context and theme approach is that the chapters are partly determined national borders: chapter II contains mainly French and Italian thinkers, chapter III mainly German (and Italian) thinkers, and chapter IV mainly British and American thinkers. Of course there are exceptions - and the interchange of ideas between thinkers of different nationalities is noticeable. Specific themes are discussed in separate sections, added with a critical reflection on the original ideas and later interpretations.

The themes discussed in the sub-sections are in a particular way related to the conceptualization of the masses. Other concepts and problems were part of (or formed the foundation of) mass conceptions. The first chapter for example starts with the theme 'pathology and criminals', which was a theme that formed the foundation of early French and Italian mass conceptualization. Another example is the theme 'instincts', which was seen as an important part of understanding the masses. In general, all the themes of the sub-sections were discussed in mutual relation by thinkers between 1890 and 1939: they took part in a general intellectual discourse in which the masses were conceptualized in terms of these issues. The continuity and discontinuity of these themes is important: what were the differences and similarities between the thinkers and what changed in the course of the period?

Even though the formation of the social sciences happened simultaneously with the highpoint of mass theories, mass conceptions were not fundamentally different in sociology or psychology. It turns out that political and intellectual fears were more important than scientific or disciplinary arguments. Social scientific thinkers between 1890 and 1939 were troubled by the problems of modernity, but knowledge about the masses was claimed from all kinds of directions – competition was the logical result. Mass conceptions were as much part of a public as a scientific debate. Ideological and political positions were very important – sometimes sold under the guise of scientific arguments. It was an issue for the old omniscient intellectual rather than for the specialized scientist. But - and that is the interesting meeting point - many of the thinkers wanted to be a bit of both: they were struggling to balance between the old intellectual and new scientist. The circulation of knowledge is demonstrated by the international debate on the concept – and unexpected

similarities between thinkers from different countries and different specialties. Mass conceptions were examples of knowledge traveling in and between the general and the specialized and the local and the more-than-local.

According to post-World War II disciplinary standards, the thinkers between 1890 and the 1930s were social philosophers or social moralists rather than truly scientific sociologists or psychologists. Especially their mass conceptions could not measure up to later scientific standards. A disciplinary comparison is therefore unfeasible: the mass conceptions of the social thinkers can hardly be positioned in either sociology or psychology.⁵⁴ In some cases the disciplines were not institutionalized, in other cases scientists were operating on the borderline of various disciplines - according to modern standards. But that does not necessarily imply that the general concept had no impact at all: the mass was one of the main concepts in the general vocabulary of social scientists between 1890 and 1939. Key concepts, themes, and vocabulary are necessary for the early legitimating of new disciplines. A general vocabulary is necessary because 1. it shows the urgency of the object 2. it provides the means of communication crucial in legitimating new knowledge claims 3. it legitimates the solutions recommended by the new disciplines. In this early phase, there was no strong separation between intellectual knowledge and specialized knowledge. In this way, mass conceptions are illustrating for three developments: the rise of the social sciences, the boundary work of sociology and psychology, and the rise of social psychology.

Mitchell G. Ash claims that historical research can show how “parallel or shared vocabularies may become sites of interaction between psychology and other disciplines”.⁵⁵ He gives two examples: “homo oeconomicus” (psychology, law, economics) and “memory” (history and psychology). Historical research can also show the parallel vocabulary of academic and everyday psychology. Two examples are: “intelligence” and “character”.⁵⁶ The concept ‘masses’ was an example of both kinds of interactions. The

⁵⁴ Unlike I had initially thought. The original idea was to connect conceptual history to discipline formation by a comparison of sociological and psychological mass conceptions. This comparison proved to be impossible because 1. a separation between thinkers from the two disciplines was impossible to make 2. especially a key concept like the masses transcended disciplinary boundaries and issues.

⁵⁵ Mitchell G. Ash, “Psychological thought and practice: Historical and interdisciplinary perspectives” in: Ash and Sturm (eds), *Psychology’s Territories. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives from Different Disciplines* (Mahwah and London 2007) 9.

⁵⁶ Ash, “Psychological thought and practice” 10.

conceptualization of the masses shows that one shared vocabulary can become a site of new sciences, differentiating over time.

Sociology and psychology emerged in a historical context in which both the individual and society were ‘discovered’ as objects of scientific investigation. Interest in society and individual developed simultaneously as two sides of the same set of problems. This is why sociology and psychology became scientific disciplines around the same time: one could not have developed without the other. Many scholars have investigated mass psychology, but the impact of mass conceptions in sociology is not a separate theme. A reason might be that mass conceptualization was more accepted in sociology, while an outsider in psychology (hence the discerning term mass psychology). But treating sociological and psychological mass conceptions side by side shows that the roots of the disciplines have more in common than is shown in traditional disciplinary histories.

Thinkers who considered themselves sociologist or psychologist (or were later considered either one), but also philosopher, historian, anthropologist, or criminologist, conceptualized the masses and show many similarities of thought. Mass conceptions became more problematic at the same time sociology and psychology became more institutionalized. When disciplinary borders tightened, the need for interdisciplinarity grew when dealing with a general concept like the masses. The ‘hybrid form’ that was proposed as a solution was social psychology (later a field within the established disciplines of sociology and psychology). It is no surprise therefore, that social psychology (and social psychological currents of thought) became more popular once disciplines became more established in the course of the period: the interwar period saw an increase of new approaches.

Ideas on individualization and collectivization were two sides of the same coin. The self-consciousness of the individual and the consciousness of collectives were explained simultaneously and with the same concepts. Ideas on individual rights and duties developed together with ideas on collective rights and duties. The same accounts for research on the inner-self and behavior of individuals and the inner-life and behavior of collectives. Discipline formation in sociology and psychology was intertwined with these issues and the boundaries between them. Mass conceptualizations demonstrate this dual aspect: both scientists that were later considered sociologists and psychologists dealt with the field of

tension between individual and masses. So the concept masses – the similar theme - existed before the disciplines, but later formed an obstacle to the formation of the disciplines. Mass conceptions did not fit the disciplinary moulds – and its importance decreased. If that happened because of the vagueness or uselessness of the concept or was due to other factors, is discussed in the conclusion.

I. Sociology and Psychology in Historical Context

“All modern developments seemed to strive in the same direction: the decline of Idealism and the entry of “the masses” into higher education, positivism and the threat to academic standards, realism in foreign policy and realism as an intellectual and literary orientation, popular materialism and scientific materialism.”⁵⁷

Industrialization, urbanization, and democratization were the major changes characterizing the nineteenth century. These changes were often considered revolutionary, both in contemporary and later discourse. The importance of the ‘democratic revolution’ is emphasized by Robert Nisbet: a new mass base of revolutionary power emerged. Political legitimacy could only be obtained with support of the mass of people: “It was the invocation of “the people” that made Revolutionary armies the first mass armies in Europe’s history, and it was the same invocation that justified extension and penetration of governmental power beyond anything known since the age of Diocletian in ancient Rome.”⁵⁸ Simultaneously, an interest in political elites commenced; by Nisbet described as “the discovery of elites”.⁵⁹

Political fears and political theories developed hand in hand. Many authors have observed a ‘revolt against liberalism’ by the end of the nineteenth century, fuelled by an inability of liberal politics to deal with problems of modern society. Liberals seemed incapable – and sometimes unwilling - to fulfill their promises. Schorske claims that the liberal program in Austria “devised against the upper class occasioned the explosion of the lower”.⁶⁰ Liberals had released a power but were unable to control it, with several “anti-liberal mass movements” as result.⁶¹ A new species of politicians in Vienna – “politics in a new key” – were able to merge contradictions; that is, contradictions from the viewpoint of

⁵⁷ Ringer, *The decline of the mandarins* 269.

⁵⁸ Robert Nisbet A., *The sociological tradition* (New York 1966) 109.

⁵⁹ Nisbet, *The sociological tradition* 116. Analogous C. J. Friedrich argues that nineteenth century doctrines of elites and superior individuals – from Nietzsche, to Pareto, to Weber - were “all offspring of a society containing as yet many feudal remnants” in: T.B. Bottomore, *Elites and society* (Harmondsworth etc. 1973 [first published: 1964]) 15.

⁶⁰ Schorske, *Fin-de-siecle Vienna* 117.

⁶¹ Idem 118.

liberals. Nostalgic and revolutionary tendencies were combined and “tended to blur the conventional lines of distinction between left and right, since the common enemy was the liberal conception of the free market and its manifest consequences”.⁶² To attract the masses politicians made clever new combinations: they were at the same time economically backward and forward, social conservative and progressive. And support of the masses was the most important aspect of new politics, which was, ironically, a result of liberal supported democratization. The three “political artists” Schorske portrays - Schönerer, Lueger, and Herzl - “grasped a social-psychological reality which the liberal could not see”.⁶³ A comparison of Schönerer and Lueger yield the conclusion that “both developed the techniques of extra-parliamentary politics, the politics of the rowdy and the mob”.⁶⁴

The importance of the masses is beyond questioning for Schorske, but it is not always clear what he means by it: is it the ‘people’ or ‘Volk’; or does he mean the ‘rowdy’ or the ‘mob’? Very diverse historical actors took part in the same discourse. Herzl for example; “Like other Austrian intellectual liberals whose faith in the unenlightened electorate was never strong” “began to see “the people” as “the mass””.⁶⁵ Famously, Wagner positioned “the *Volk* against the mass”, which had an impact on Herzl and “so many of his generation”.⁶⁶ Schorske’s analysis is significant precisely because he points out the similarity between Schönerer and Lueger on the one hand – crooks of history – and Herzl on the other hand, who employed many of the same ideas and methods but was judged very differently in the light of later historical occurrences.

“The strange death of liberal Europe” by the end of the nineteenth century happened simultaneously with an important intellectual shift.⁶⁷ Liberal social scientists tried to come up with answers to Marxist critiques and conservative critiques, but were deprived of their earlier confidence. The connection between social and intellectual developments is, albeit carefully, described by many authors. Well-known events that had an impact on intellectuals were the Dreyfus affair, the attainment of power of Karl Lueger’s mass party, and anarchist bombings. Before World War I parliamentary government and

⁶² J.W. Burrow *The crisis of reason. European thought, 1848-1914* (New Haven and London 2000) 116.

⁶³ Schorske, *Fin-de-siecle Vienna* 120.

⁶⁴ *Idem* 133.

⁶⁵ *Idem* 155-156.

⁶⁶ *Idem* 163.

⁶⁷ Alex Callinicos, *Social Theory. A historical introduction. Second ed.* (Cambridge and Malden 2009) 179.

liberalism were under attack everywhere in Europe, in particular liberal ideas about individual freedom and social order. The horrors of the War and the fragile political situation afterwards sharpened pessimism. The survival of European culture seemed at stake. In this context, many conservatives extended their critique to new artistic schools, which were considered representatives of the “massified, urban world”.⁶⁸ Theories of “elitism” depicted the masses as a real threat to liberty and culture. Of course, some of the more progressive or Marxist intellectuals considered the elites as the biggest threat to liberty and culture.⁶⁹ National Socialism later depicted intellectualism and cosmopolitanism as the biggest threat to German culture (e.g. *Entartete Kunst*). In the United States the masses were not seen as a threat to culture as they were not directly opposed to that culture.

But mainstream scientists and intellectuals in Europe – as part of the elite – were conservative. Fritz K. Ringer refers to the German philosopher Eduard von Hartmann to clarify the opinion of conservative and pessimistic Germans.⁷⁰ According to Hartmann, the German masses threatened all elites (of birth, money, and education) with their demands of equality and anarchy.⁷¹ Ceasarist demagogy was considered a menacing problem of modern democracy. But the main danger of the masses - the “herd” - was their will to destroy the “culture-bearing minority” and the “culture-serving restraints and inequalities of a natural social organization”.⁷² Implicitly many intellectuals accepted this negative view of the masses. According to Ringer, the “orthodox mandarins” of Germany – in fact the majority of professors – “approved the traditional stratification of German society, tolerated the illiberal aspects of the existing political regime, and shared in the fear and hostility with which the ruling classes met the Social Democratic movement”.⁷³ Only a small minority of the German academic community was able to achieve a more balanced view of the problems of modern times. The so-called “modernists” understood that mere condemnation of modernity was “both irresponsible and pointless”, and knew that “only a partial

⁶⁸ Callinicos, *Social Theory* 181.

⁶⁹ Peter Bachrach, *The theory of democratic elitism. A critique* (Boston 1967) 26-32.

⁷⁰ Ringer, *The decline of the German mandarins* 128-129 (Hartmann, *Tagesfragen*, Leipzig 1896)

⁷¹ Idem 129.

⁷² Idem 129. Ringer also writes that German scholars and scientists had “the unconscious arrogance of men who had until recently been thoroughly accustomed to setting the cultural standards of their nation. They behaved as if “the masses” were truly preventing them from privately listening to Haydn”, 267.

⁷³ Idem 129.

accommodation to modern needs and conditions would enable the mandarins and their values to retain a certain influence even in the twentieth century".⁷⁴

H. Stuart Hughes provides a ranking of intellectuals on largely the same basis: the truly great thinkers were able to understand and accept the dilemmas of modernity, whilst not relapsing into extreme reactionary or revolutionary ideas.⁷⁵ Extreme positions on the Left and Right are judged more alike than middle range positions, an argument confirmed, for instance, by intellectuals shifting from Marxism to fascism.⁷⁶ The fin-de-siècle paradox of joint optimism and pessimism is well-known and this paradox was, among other things, expressed in the paradox about the masses: fear and hope alternated. Some scientists, often reactionary, represented the pessimistic tendency; others, often Marxist, represented the optimistic tendency; while some of the most famous or 'classic' scientists dealt with both aspects. Max Weber in particular is credited for a position of transcendence, by accepting and understanding modern reality and still keeping faith in parliamentary politics.⁷⁷

One of the main dilemmas for modern thinkers was how to study society and individuals in it. The thoughts of modern social scientists were shaped by this problem, with very different outcomes, but most were aware of the problematic character of their subject. Individuals were often described and analyzed in group context, while society was often described and analyzed in groups. Even a thinker explicitly concerned with the individual, like Freud, based his theory of the human psyche on the relationships with family members: the Oedipus complex was the central logic in his work. For thinkers like Pareto and Mosca, societies should be studied as the result of group relations: the position of elites and non-elites was of decisive importance. Even Durkheim eventually concluded that society only existed in the mind of individuals.⁷⁸ Weber for his part described extraordinary charismatic individuals in relation to the normal, rational development of society.

⁷⁴ Ringer, *The decline of the German mandarins* 130.

⁷⁵ Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and society*.

⁷⁶ For example: Robert Michels. See chapters below.

⁷⁷ By authors like Hughes, Ringer, and Callinicos.

⁷⁸ Hughes, *Consciousness and society* 285.

The dilemma of individual and society – of part and whole – affected discipline formation of early psychology and sociology.⁷⁹ The distinction between psychology and sociology was not as self-evident as seemed at first sight. Psychologists were searching for laws about the human psyche (also in groups), which implies an anti-individual aspect. Theories of mass psychology often described the law-like behavior of all masses. Sociologists on the other hand, often differentiated between different kinds of masses, ascribing “individual” characteristics to these masses.⁸⁰ Mass psychology is logically differentiated from “normal” psychology; something changes in the individual human mind when it merges into a mass. The behavior of masses (and individuals in it) is simply judged abnormal to provide a separation with normal behavior.⁸¹ This is why ‘mass psychology’ becomes a discerning term. The same does not account for ‘mass sociology’. Since ‘normal’ sociology is about groups of people in society, there is no need for a specific ‘mass sociology’. The ‘mass’ in sociology can imply all kinds of groups, and is closely related to concepts such as class, nation, or ‘Volk’, but it largely negates psychological characteristics of groups. Not surprising, the conceptualization of the masses resulted in the emergence of ‘social psychology’: an effort to combine the psychological and the sociological.

Before World War I, the research subject of experimental psychology was the individual.⁸² During the interwar period research on individuals declined, while the research on groups increased.⁸³ The claim that psychological characteristics could also be applied to groups and collectives became more accepted. These kinds of knowledge claims depended on the successful advancement of statistics – for example of crime, suicide, and poverty.⁸⁴ This is a similarity between mainstream (institutionalized) psychology and mass psychology. Similar to sociologists who discovered the psyche, some currents in

⁷⁹ David Riesman writes on the social and the individual: “The assumption that a social character exists has always been a more or less invisible premise of ordinary parlance and is becoming today a more or less visible premise of the social sciences”. Riesman, with Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney, *The lonely crowd* (New Haven 1969 [first published 1950]) 4.

⁸⁰ Paul Reiwald, *De Geest der Massa* 21-22.

⁸¹ According to C. Boef, *Van massapsychologie tot collectief gedrag. De ontwikkeling van een paradigma* (Dissertation, Leiden 1984) 21; See also: Van Ginneken, *Crowds, psychology, and politics* 5.

⁸² Kurt Danziger, *Constructing the subject. Historical origins of psychological research* (Cambridge 1990) 70.

⁸³ Danziger, *Constructing the subject* 74, 82.

Danziger demonstrates this change with a quantitative investigation of articles in psychology journals.

⁸⁴ Idem 75.

psychology drew closer to social aspects of human behavior. Social psychology was a rising interdisciplinary field in the interwar period.

Scientists were part of the modern elite and many believed they had a special task to fulfill coherent with their ideas about ‘omniscient intellectuals’: “In all modern nations, some men of letters have reacted against democratic mass civilization, and they have done so as intellectuals, not as defenders of the landed aristocracy or of the entrepreneurial elite”.⁸⁵ The most well-known notion about intellectuals in society is probably Karl Mannheim’s. He characterized the unattached (*freischwebend*) intellectual as “less clearly identified with one class than those who participate more directly in the economic process”.⁸⁶ The “unattached-ness” of the intellectual puts him in a position “above” society; he can see “opposing tendencies” and diversity in “*Weltanschauung*”. The “social sensibility” of the greatest intellectuals means that they alone can really understand “whole” society.⁸⁷ Considering the public role of intellectuals in the early twentieth century, only the role of skepticism “held any creative possibilities”.⁸⁸ Hence, *freischwebend* did not necessarily mean a withdrawal from the world (as it had done in earlier ages), but only implied “better understanding”, which makes the distinction with the “engaged” position blurry.

The distinction between positions “above interests” as opposed to “active involvement” with a specific political or economic group, seems old-fashioned today. Any intellectual position above interests seems impossible (which becomes all the more obvious when discussing theories about the masses) while the influence of class interests on the non-*freischwebende* is sometimes exaggerated. But in the early twentieth century many intellectuals expressed a specific intellectual responsibility. The role they pictured for themselves was especially noticeable in their mass conceptions, in which they diagnosed, set themselves up as experts, and provided solutions. Movements to promote the education of the masses were supported, for example, by Durkheim in the French Third Republic, by Dewey in the United States, and by interwar sociologists in Germany.

⁸⁵ Ringer, *The decline of the German mandarins* 2.

I have shortly mentioned the distinction of ‘scientist’ and ‘intellectual’ and will elaborate this further in the conclusion. Note that ‘intellectual’ is a contested concept too.

⁸⁶ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and utopia. An introduction to the sociology of knowledge* (San Diego etc. 1936) 155.

⁸⁷ Mannheim, *Ideology and utopia* 157.

⁸⁸ Hughes, *Consciousness and society* 425.

While the belief in the omniscient intellectual remained strong, psychology and sociology became increasingly specialized disciplines. The new social sciences tried to achieve legitimation by borrowing scientific authority from biology (evolutionary biology), philosophy (moral philosophy, neo-Kantian revival, pragmatism), history (historicism), and economics.⁸⁹ Sociology and psychology also had to legitimate their position against popular knowledge. Sociology competed with literature, social criticism, and journalism; psychology competed with clerical, spiritualistic, and commonsense knowledge.⁹⁰ The mass – so obviously related to social issues, political positions, and common sense experience – was an especially suitable object of popular knowledge. An image of the masses was created in novels by some of the most famous European writers during the nineteenth century. Later the movies were added. The new sciences of sociology and psychology adopted many of the features of mass behavior from popular knowledge.

The impact of novels and movies on early sociology and psychology is left aside here. We will focus on some basic ideas of the two disciplines and give a brief impression of thinkers who were considered predecessors. Robert Nisbet analyzes nineteenth century sociology as a cluster of ‘unit ideas’, namely: community, authority, status, sacred, alienation.⁹¹ Ideas do not beget ideas, but must be seen as responses to crises or challenges of the era.⁹² Political currents had an impact on sociology, though many of classic sociologists – like Simmel, Weber, and Durkheim – cannot be positioned either in liberalism, conservatism, or radicalism. While no absolute conservatives, “it is possible to see deep currents of conservatism in the writings of all three men”.⁹³ These early sociologists had to deal with the dilemmas of modernity and were facing great difficulties: “The paradox of sociology (...) lies in the fact that although it falls, in objectives and in the political and scientific values of its principal figures, in the mainstream of modernism, its essential concepts and its implicit perspectives place it much closer, generally speaking, to philosophical conservatism”.⁹⁴ Alienation, the totalitarian power in mass democracy, and cultural decay were normal and accepted objects for sociologists, but of no real interest to

⁸⁹ Ross, “Changing contours of the social science disciplines” 210.

⁹⁰ Idem 210.

⁹¹ Nisbet, *The sociological tradition* 6.

⁹² Idem 9.

⁹³ Idem 17.

⁹⁴ Idem 17.

“economists, political scientists, psychologists, and ethnologists in the age”.⁹⁵ Besides, sociology had a firm basis in morals (moral philosophy) and sociological texts had an artistic structure, says Nisbet.⁹⁶

Nisbet gives an interesting view on the distinction between sociology and psychology. If conventional psychology – or institutionalized psychology – falls in the mainstream of modernism, then mass psychology must be a (despised) outsider. Mass psychology after all, is also embedded in conservative concerns about alienation, mass democracy, and cultural decay. It implies that mass psychologists were outcast, whilst sociologists writing about the masses were accepted in the institutionalized discipline. The rise of social psychology can be considered an attempt to achieve respectability and legitimacy for the investigation of mass behavior.

Most social scientists between 1890 and 1939 were, in some way or another, affected by Marx. But his legacy was “both untidy and ambiguous” and there was a separation between his abstract scientific ideas and political ideology.⁹⁷ Nowadays Marx is considered among the ‘classics’ of modern sociology, positioned in the rational tradition of the Enlightenment, but sociologists at the turn of the century were more ambiguous about Marx’s heritage. Revolution, elites, and the proletariat form basic concepts of his work. Marx’s predictions about a future communist society were both frightening and intriguing. Social disintegration, a visible and important aspect in Marx’s work, was a main concern for sociologists. Probably more than anyone else, Marx can be considered a predecessor of sociological mass conceptualization.

Psychological mass conceptualization on the other hand has its roots in the close relationship between evolutionary biology, anthropology, and criminology at the early twentieth century.⁹⁸ Early psychology was intertwined with biology on several levels: ‘degeneration’ was one of the central concepts of the successful evolutionary psychology.⁹⁹ It was claimed that in human evolution reflexes and instincts were formed long before the rational and critical consciousness. This implied that the new rational consciousness was

⁹⁵ Nisbet, *The sociological tradition* 18.

⁹⁶ Idem 18.

⁹⁷ Hughes, *Consciousness and society* 67.

⁹⁸ Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 62.

⁹⁹ Burrow, *The crisis of reason* 97.

extremely vulnerable, especially under stress or pressure of imitation.¹⁰⁰ As species, brains were classified hierarchical: from men, to women, to savages, to hereditary criminals, to apes.¹⁰¹ By the common Lamarckian idea on evolution regression could be inherited – for example criminal behavior or other ‘lower’ factions of human behavior – implying that reproduction could cause degeneration. But psychologists did not only warn for the lower factions of human brain and behavior; they lacked confidence in the power of the will in general. French psychology in particular, was pathological: the insane were the main subjects of investigation.¹⁰² Furthermore, the famous hypnotic demonstrations by Charcot - as treatment for hysteria - must be mentioned. Taine, Le Bon, and Freud were among the many that attended. Concepts like degeneration, hysteria, and hypnosis were connected to the masses, and exerted a strong impact on later mass theories.¹⁰³

The emergence of sociology and psychology is positioned in the bourgeois and liberal world of the nineteenth century, with all its achievements and criticizers. Another important characteristic of this world was its complicated and paradoxical relation to the old Christian world. The social world could not merely be explained by the Bible (although religion in a wider sense was still very important). Unlike the old aristocracy and the poor, the new bourgeois class did not appear in the Bible and therefore lacked a certain legitimation of existence. Instead, the bourgeoisie created itself and affected the world like no other class before. This tension resulted in the main characteristic of the bourgeoisie: a great insecurity about itself.¹⁰⁴ Since the bourgeoisie had no fundament outside itself, the old Christian order was not adequate to explain the depths of their souls. The old Christian fear of sinfulness against God was replaced by a fear for the deeper and disturbing layers of the human psyche. The fear of one’s own nature was connected to the rise of psychology.¹⁰⁵ The dual essence of men, being Good and Evil at the same time, terrified and fascinated the bourgeois. That is why Ankersmit concludes that the ‘Book of the human psyche’ became

¹⁰⁰ Burrow, *The crisis of reason* 97.

¹⁰¹ Idem 97.

¹⁰² See for example: Robert A. Nye, *Crime, Madness, & Politics in modern France. The Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton 1984).

¹⁰³ Burrow, *The crisis of reason* 98.

¹⁰⁴ Ankersmit “De moord op de oervader. Freud en het onbehagen in de cultuur” in: Remieg Aerts and Klaas van Berkel, *De pijn van Prometheus. Essays over cultuurkritiek en cultuurpessimisme* (Groningen 1996) 147.

¹⁰⁵ Ankersmit, “De moord op de oervader” 150.

the new Bible.¹⁰⁶ Along the same lines it can be argued that sociology counterparted psychology in the new social scientific enterprise. Social relations too were terrifying and fascinating on a whole new level. One striking result was the “scientific analysis” of religion.

Elites were afraid of the ‘dark side’ of humans in general, but nowhere this dark side was more visible than in the masses. The destructive, irrational, imitating, and bestial character of the masses represented the greatest fear of elites. The ‘dark side’ of humans was usually situated in the unconsciousness and could be aroused by hypnotic suggestions, slogans or images.¹⁰⁷ Mass psychology emerged by the end of the nineteenth century, when the fear of the masses and revolutions had reached a tentative highpoint. This coincided with the ‘discovery’ of subjective values and irrationality in human behaviour. Scientists came to conclude that the decisions people made were seldom decisively determined by rationality.¹⁰⁸ This discovery was a major factor in theories about the masses, and also affected the suggested solutions for dealing with mass behavior. Relativism, scepticism, pessimism, anti-intellectualism, and ‘life-philosophies’ were amongst the theories and solutions.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Ankersmit, “De moord op de oervader” 148.

¹⁰⁷ Burrow, *The crisis of reason* 99.

¹⁰⁸ Hughes, *Consciousness and society* 16.

¹⁰⁹ Idem 17.

II. Laws of Deviant Behavior

“The true historical upheavals are not those which astonish us by their grandeur and violence. The only important changes whence the renewal of civilizations results, affect ideas, conceptions, and beliefs. The memorable events of history are the visible effects of the invisible changes of human thought.”¹¹⁰

Pathology and criminals

As the unknown peoples of the “two Indies” had dazzled European travelers centuries before, so did the masses dazzle thinkers on the brink of modernity. The masses of people around them became a new reality and at the same time they were made into a new reality in the course of the nineteenth century. The behavior of the masses was easily interpreted as deviant or strange behavior; as the behavior of unknown peoples of the East and West had also seen strange and barbarian. But deviant behavior of the masses next to themselves - people living so close by - was even harder and more crucial to explain. The ‘othering’ of the masses was one of the main features of early mass or crowd conceptions in France and Italy: ideas of pathology and criminology stood at the basis of mass conceptions. Together with the first rejections of biologicistic explanations new social scientific ideas emerged - in accordance with the positivistic ideas of law-like social behavior.

In the early 1890s there were “at least four interrelated Franco-Italian authors” who “suddenly published early monographs” about the masses.¹¹¹ According to Van Ginneken, this so-called ‘Latin School’ consists of Scipio Sighele, Henri Fournial, Gustave Le Bon, and Gabriel Tarde. Arguably, the historian Hippolyte Taine (1828 - 1893) can be seen as a precursor with his account of mass behavior during the French Revolution. In the *Origins of Contemporary France* (1876 - 1894) Taine negated the Republican heroism of the Revolution and instead put the violence of the mob and the Terror at the centre of his

¹¹⁰ Le Bon, *The crowd. A study of the popular mind* (Radford 2008 [originally published: 1895]) 8.

¹¹¹ Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 31.

story.¹¹² Earlier condemnation of the Revolution had been pre-dominantly Catholic, but Taine's work was "full-bloodedly positivist, wonderfully attuned to the spirit of the scientific age".¹¹³ Taine believed in progress attained by science, but dismissed progressive and democratic doctrines as mere illusions. The consciousness of the mob and the masses (the mob in dormant form) lacked any reason, and therefore stood in opposition to science.¹¹⁴ For Taine decline was a very real possibility, so elites had to protect intellectual and moral culture if progress was to be safeguarded.

The combination of pathology and criminality was very obvious in the work of the Italians Cesare Lombroso (1836 – 1909) and Scipio Sighele (1868 - 1913). Lombroso was a physician and criminologist who believed that crime is hereditary and that crowds are made up (or led) by inborn criminals.¹¹⁵ Sighele was a follower of Lombroso's school of 'criminal anthropology'. He wrote a book on *The criminal crowd (La Folla Delinquente)* in 1891, wherein he describes court cases of ordinary citizens committing crimes because they are in a mass situation. Sighele was a student of law when he wrote his monograph on the masses. From criminal anthropology and biology he extended his argument to other, social, factors: "twelve intelligent men who have good sense can make a stupid and absurd judgement. Hence an assembly of individuals can give a result opposed to that which each of them would have given on his own".¹¹⁶ So there is a critical difference between individuals and groups.¹¹⁷ Furthermore: "Instead of the slow and gradual dissolution, which can turn an honest man into an occasional criminal, and later even a habitual criminal, an instantaneous dissolution takes place in the crowd, instantly turning an honest man into a passionate criminal".¹¹⁸ Sighele gives three causes for this pathological situation: moral contagion, social imitation, and hypnotic suggestion.¹¹⁹

¹¹² McClelland, *The crowd and the mob* 9.

¹¹³ Idem 8.

¹¹⁴ Idem 10.

¹¹⁵ Gustav Jahoda, *A history of Social Psychology. From the eighteenth-century Enlightenment to the Second World War* (Cambridge 2007) 103.

¹¹⁶ Jahoda, *A history of Social Psychology* 104.

¹¹⁷ Sighele also discusses the difference between psychology and sociology. He claims that sociology is simply extended psychology: more complicated but reflecting the laws of human behavior. He quotes Tarde by claiming that sociology is "the telescope of psychology".

Scipio Sighele, *De menigte als misdadiger Een studie over collectieve psychologie* (vertaald door Anna Polak) (Amsterdam [second print] 1895 [first published 1891]) 20.

¹¹⁸ Sighele, *De menigte als misdadiger* 172. English translation: Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 34.

¹¹⁹ Sighele, *De Menigte als misdadiger* 51, 55, 58

The work of Sighele was largely positioned in contemporary French debates on the masses. An important aspect of this debate and a similarity between the Italian and French thinkers was the decreasing importance of biological factors in favor of psychological factors.¹²⁰ But it is noteworthy that these psychological factors were mostly pathological (mass behavior in terms of disease and contagion) and moral (masses as criminals). A French example of such a moral and pathological conception was made by Henri Fournial (1866 – 1932), who wrote the first French monograph about the masses.¹²¹ In *Psychology of the crowd (Psychologie des foules)*¹²² he described the mass as an organism with specific and new characteristics. Fournial summarizes his ideas about crowds in twelve points, amongst other things on the non-rational character of the crowd, the occasional criminal character of the crowd, imitation and moral contagion, hypnotism, and – last but not least – the danger that a “human beast” emerges from the crowd.¹²³

The most influential work on the masses was Gustave Le Bon’s (1841 - 1931) *The crowd. A study of the popular mind (Psychologie des foules 1895)*. Le Bon’s work was heavily influenced by the works of Sighele, Fournial, and Tarde. Sighele’s accusation of plagiarism was most likely correct, but it did not prevent Le Bon from becoming the most famous writer.¹²⁴ The impact of pathological ideas is easily seen in the work of Le Bon, who had studied medicine and was interested in scientific debates on the influence of evolution theory on neurophysiology. He was fascinated by the idea that ‘higher’ layers of the brain could be ‘dissolved’ and replaced by the ‘lower’ layers.¹²⁵ Le Bon was also interested in the debates on hypnotic suggestion, and attended Chacot’s hypnotic presentations. He wrote a series of works, arguably all dealing with the masses: on the evolution of people, on the psychology of crowds, and on the psychology of sociology. Le

¹²⁰ Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 35.

¹²¹ Fournial was a trained physician who served in the French army and, exceptionally among our scientists, actually dealt with the masses during a riot in Morocco.

¹²² Full title: *Essai sur la psychologie des foules – Considérations medico-judiciaires sur les responsabilités collectives*

¹²³ Van Ginneken, *Crowds, Psychology, & Politics, 1871-1899* 117-118.

¹²⁴ Le Bon had many contacts among the republican elites of the Third Republic. His work was later admired by Mussolini and Hitler, Lenin was said to own a copy, just as Theodore Roosevelt and Charles de Gaulle. Le Bon was a conservative, or maybe even a reactionary, worried about socialist organization and strikes, and anarchist’s attacks.

Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 38-40, 43.

¹²⁵ Idem 40. Like Fournial.

Bon later published books on education and political psychology. He became a bestseller writer, with *The Crowd* as his central and most popular work.¹²⁶

At first sight the reactionary ideas of Fournial and Le Bon had not much in common with early French sociology, which had a moderately optimistic character. But an important similarity was the positivistic character: the aim to establish laws of behavior. The essential representative of the sociological school of thought and the ‘classic founder’ of the discipline was Emile Durkheim (1859 - 1917). He had in common with the crowd psychologists that he wanted to expel biology from social thought. Although Durkheim’s sociology had a moderately optimistic character, we also see the impact of the French pathological tradition in his work: “The principal purpose of any science of life, whether individual or social, is in the end to define and explain the normal state and distinguish it from the abnormal”.¹²⁷ So how does Durkheim distinguish the normal from the abnormal? In *The Elementary forms of the Religious life* (1912) he describes some abnormal and extraordinary situations – and establishes a connection with examples of mass behavior.

Durkheim analyzes the *sacred* as the basis of human society: the sacred and the social are two sides of the same coin.¹²⁸ It is because of the sacred (and thus the social) “that at every instant we are obliged to submit ourselves to rules of conduct and of thought which we have neither made nor desired, and which are sometimes even contrary to our most fundamental inclinations and instincts”.¹²⁹ Although external circumstances are of vital importance (relations with the group), some “current of energy” comes from within.¹³⁰ The sacred is an explanation for those extraordinary occasions when humans rise above the ordinary level. An example is the fourth of August 1789, more durable situations of this sort are the Crusades or the French Revolution:

“In the midst of an assembly animated by a common passion, we become susceptible of acts and sentiments of which we are incapable when reduced to our own forces; and when the

¹²⁶ Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 43.

¹²⁷ Durkheim, *The rules of sociological method* 104. For a discussion of pathology in France in general and the role of Durkheim in particular see: Robert A. Nye, *Crime, Madness, & Politics in modern France. The Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton 1984) 133-134.

¹²⁸ Robert Nisbet, “Introduction” in: Durkheim, *The elementary forms of the religious life* (Guildford 1982) v. Nisbet compares Durkheim’s ‘sacred’ with Weber’s ‘charisma’. Both were preoccupied by the role of religion in society.

¹²⁹ Emile Durkheim, *The elementary forms of the religious life* (London etc. 1976 [first published 1912]) 207.

¹³⁰ Durkheim, *The elementary forms of the religious life* 211.

assembly is dissolved and when, finding ourselves alone again, we fall back to our ordinary level, we are then able to measure the height to which we have been raised above ourselves”.¹³¹

A crowd situation can only occur when a group is homogenous and is necessarily temporary: “The violent passions which may have been released in the heart of a crowd fall away and are extinguished when this is dissolved, and men ask themselves with astonishment how they could ever have been so carried away from their normal character”.¹³² As many others, Durkheim emphasizes the role of symbols in society, causing the durability of a group – or even a crowd: “without symbols, social sentiments could have only a precarious existence”.¹³³ So crowd behavior is a temporary but not a unknown form of social behavior, which can evolve in more durable forms of collective consciousness.

For Durkheim mass behavior can also be positive: the sacred or social instigates people to rise above the normal level and act contrary to their normal instincts. Mass behavior is equated with social behavior – and in this sense can be a positive force. For Sighele, Fournial, and Le Bon mass behavior is never a positive force exactly because the individual is considered the normal state - and the individual suppression of instincts (the rational, the higher layers of the brain) is a positive given. But the strong separation between the normal and abnormal holds up for the crowd psychologists as well as for Durkheim - who also acknowledges the “violent passions” of masses. Durkheim’s ideas demonstrate that mass conceptions could also be a part of an institutionalized science – which is partly in contradiction to the claim of Van Ginneken. Though Durkheim’s mass conception was not institutionalized as an academic specialty, certain resemblances with the work of thinkers like Le Bon is noticeable. Pathology, violence, and deviant behavior were very closely related to the mass conceptions of the Latin thinkers.

¹³¹ Durkheim, *The elementary forms of the religious life* 210.

¹³² Idem 231.

¹³³ Idem 231.

The power of collectives

Fournial emphasized the overwhelming power of the collective, which he described as a new kind of organism: “Under influences which we still know little of, something like a link between all the entities of a collectivity is created which unites them all, a kind of organization is formed in which each of the elements develops solidarity with the others: in that disparate assembly, a soul has arisen which guides this new organism”.¹³⁴ Le Bon too, puts emphasis on the power and behavior of collectives. In *The Crowd* the ‘group mind’ of crowds is characterized by irrationality, unconsciousness and childishness, summarized in the “Law of the Mental Unity of Crowds”.¹³⁵ With his positivistic claim of a behavioral law of the crowd, Le Bon extended this behavior, in principle, to any kind of group, even a jury, an army, or whole society.¹³⁶ Although some people – like workers, peasants or women - were more susceptible to join a crowd, the idea that every individual could be in this state of retrograde was very scary, and, even more important, the distinction between elites and masses was deprived of its naturalness.¹³⁷ The role of the modern crowds or masses was inextricably linked to new foundations and justifications of power: the masses seemed more dominant than ever. On the opening page of *The Crowd* Le Bon emphasized the importance of crowds in the modern world: “Organized crowds have always played an important part in the life of peoples, but this part has never been of such moment as at present. The substitution of the unconscious action of crowds for the conscious activity of individuals is one of the principle characteristics of the present age”.¹³⁸

So for Le Bon the power of collectives was never as large as in modernity, but he also argues that history is a succession of cyclical processes: an early period of unorganized masses, then the growth of a culturally divergent people led by elites, and finally a decline and return to the unorganized mass situation.¹³⁹ The danger of modernity is a return into the unorganized mass situation. So the reflex actions – or instincts – of a crowd were a threat to civilization: “the isolated individual possesses the capacity of dominating his reflex actions,

¹³⁴ Quote in: van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 36 (Fournial, *Psychologie des foules*)

¹³⁵ McClelland, *The crowd and the mob* 11.

¹³⁶ Idem 11.

¹³⁷ Idem 11.

¹³⁸ Le Bon, *The crowd. A study of the popular mind* (Radford 2008 [originally published: 1895]) 5.

¹³⁹ Laeyendecker, *Orde, verandering, ongelijkheid* 257.

while a crowd is devoid of this capacity”.¹⁴⁰ Obviously, Le Bon appreciates the rational and independent individual far more than the unconscious and dependent mass. But ironically Le Bon does not have much faith in leaders either, which he considers demagogues who also lack rational qualities: leaders of the crowd are often the most deranged persons.¹⁴¹ The pessimistic conclusion is that modern democracy constitutes the framework wherein regression (or degeneration) is institutionalized.¹⁴²

In agreement with Fournial and Le Bon, Gabriel Tarde (1843 – 1904) emphasizes the power of collectives in modern society.¹⁴³ He was one of the first to propose social psychology as a discipline to deal with collectives. For Tarde the distinction between “ordinary psychology and social psychology” is that the latter is “*inter-spiritual*”; meaning it should focus on “the mutual relations between minds”.¹⁴⁴ Tarde acknowledged the power of collectives, but made a distinction between crowds and publics: “I therefore cannot agree with that vigorous writer, Dr. Le Bon, that our era is the “era of the crowds”. It is the era of the public or of publics, and that is an entirely different thing...”.¹⁴⁵ Similar to Sighele and Fournial, Tarde was interested in law and criminality. He published a book on the “laws of imitation” (*Les lois de l’imitation*, 1890), after which he published *The Public and the Crowd* in 1901.¹⁴⁶

According to Tarde a public was to be comprehended as a spiritual collectivity. Compared to the crowd, the public is of longer standing, less depended upon circumstances, and international (the crowd can never be international).¹⁴⁷ People need physical closeness to be a crowd, which means it is of a lower, more animal, status. People do not need physical closeness to be a public, but form a unity “in their simultaneous conviction or passion and in their awareness of sharing at the same time an idea or a wish

¹⁴⁰ Le Bon, *The crowd* 23.

¹⁴¹ Burrow, *The crisis of reason* 99.

¹⁴² Idem 99.

¹⁴³ Tarde had read Sighele and Fournail and was acquainted with Le Bon, but his work had a distinctive character. He was one of the first to propose a ‘social psychology’, in opposition to contemporaries René Worms – who claimed a biologicistic sociology – and Durkheim – who made claims for a sociologicistic sociology. He was considered an important French sociologist, but Durkheim had more power in the republican system and eventually ousted Tarde. Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 45. Reiwald, *De Geest der Massa* 82.

¹⁴⁴ Quote in: Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 44 (from *L’opinion et la foule* 5)

¹⁴⁵ Tarde, “The public and the crowd” in: Tarde, *On communication and social influence* (Selected papers, edited by Terry N. Clark) (Chicago and London 1969) 281.

¹⁴⁶ part of *L’opinion et la foule*. Here, I mainly use one part: “Le public et la foule” (The public and the crowd).

¹⁴⁷ Reiwald, *De Geest der Massa* 87.

with a great number of other men”.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, the crowd is a historical phenomenon, while the public is a new kind of crowd: the most important social group of the future. Tarde claims that crowds function different from publics and that only publics play a key role in modern democratic debate.¹⁴⁹

The line of thought emphasizing the power of collectives was perhaps most famously represented by Durkheim. Durkheim’s sociology was founded upon the idea of ‘social facts’: the collective has an authoritative and coercive impact on the individual: “The independence, the relative externality of social facts in relation to individuals” is at the basis of his thought.¹⁵⁰ These facts cannot exist without individuals but at the same time exist outside the individual.¹⁵¹ Sociologists must study society as a whole, which implies more than its separate parts: “We must, then, explain phenomena that are the product of the whole by the characteristic properties of the whole, the complex by the complex, social facts by society”.

Durkheim equates social facts with collective representations.¹⁵² Collective representations – like religion, morality, and law – are not caused by characteristics of the social structure, but share one and the same social nature. Sociology deals with the whole, psychology with the individual, hence Durkheim claims – with deceiving clarity - “Collective psychology is sociology, quite simply”.¹⁵³ In the end, sociology is more important than psychology because collective representations are more powerful than individuals:

“In the life of the human race, it is the collectivity which maintains ideas and representations, and all collective representations are by virtue of their origin invested with a prestige which means that they have the power to *impose themselves*. They have a greater psychological energy than representations emanating from the individual. That is why they settle with such force in our consciousness. That is where the very strength of truth lies.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁸ Tarde, “The public and the crowd” 278.

¹⁴⁹ Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 45.

¹⁵⁰ Emile Durkheim, *Sociology and philosophy* (London 1953 [separate articles originally published between 1898 and 1911]) 25.

¹⁵¹ L. Laeyendecker *Orde, verandering, ongelijkheid. Een inleiding tot de geschiedenis van de sociologie* (Meppel 1981) 265-266.

¹⁵² Callinicos, *Social theory* 135.

¹⁵³ Durkheim, *Sociology and philosophy* 35.

¹⁵⁴ Callinicos, *Social theory* 145 (Durkheim, *Pragmatism and sociology*).

The French tradition of positivism and laws of behavior was closely related to the idea of the power of collectives. Le Bon produced his so-called 'law' of behavior and related it to a scheme in which history was determined by the cycles of collectives. No further differentiation was made by Le Bon. Different is Tarde, who wanted to divide the collective and give more specified definitions for each part, but in common with Le Bon he used psychological concepts to do so. For Tarde, the distinction between "ordinary psychology and social psychology" is that the latter is "*inter-spiritual*"; meaning it should focus on "the mutual relations between minds".¹⁵⁵ Durkheim's social facts on the other hand, do not emanate from the individual, but from outside: he claimed for a sociological understanding of the collective.

Social integration

Durkheim stood in the French *moraliste* tradition and was mainly interested in moral regulation and social integration.¹⁵⁶ Social integration was one of the main themes of early French sociology and was closely related to the problem of the individual in modern society. The question was how solidarity among individuals was possible in modern mass society. Durkheim discerns two types of social solidarity: Mechanical and Organic. Contrary to the common use, Durkheim associated Mechanical solidarity with pre-modern societies and Organic solidarity with modern societies.¹⁵⁷ In the first case the social pressure to conformity is rigid and automatic, while in the second case it is flexible.¹⁵⁸ He sees the history of society as a process from "an original undifferentiated social mass" differentiating into individuals.¹⁵⁹ Hence, the individual is a (recent) social phenomenon.

In *Division of Labour* (1893) Durkheim analyzes modern society on the basis of labor differentiation and wonders; "How does it come about that the individual, whilst

¹⁵⁵ Quote in: Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 44 (from L'opinion et la foule 5).

Tarde asserted relative little influence in France, but his work was adopted by well-known psychologists and sociologists abroad, for instance by McDougall and Ross, but also by Park and other members of the Chicago School. Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 46.

¹⁵⁶ Callinicos, *Social theory* 125-126.

¹⁵⁷ Contrary to, for example, Tönnies use of the words *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*.

¹⁵⁸ Burrow, *The crisis of reason* 76.

¹⁵⁹ Idem 76.

becoming more autonomous, depends more closely on society?”.¹⁶⁰ Durkheim explains this by the transition from a society with Mechanical solidarity to a society with Organic solidarity. In modern society (with Organic solidarity) there is more room for individuality (and disintegration), while the division of labor preserves the collectivity of society (and integration). Conflicts and progress alternate, but in the end society works self-preserving: “A break in the equilibrium of the social mass gives rise to conflicts that can only be resolved by a more developed form of the division of labour; this is the driving force for progress”.¹⁶¹

As a result of ongoing differentiation and the division of labor, the autonomous individual “becomes acknowledged and even respected”.¹⁶² This respect for individuality – a respect granted to every member of society in principle - is the modern type of ‘collective consciousness’ (*conscience collective*): the moral consensus of society. The Rights of Man are therefore the logical and inevitable result of modernity in Durkheim’s theory of social change.¹⁶³ The downside of individuality is the modern “flee-floating individual, rootless and unattached”; a condition Durkheim called ‘anomie’.¹⁶⁴ A solution for ‘anomie’ could be found in modern guilds: since society was differentiated on the basis of professional groups, these groups might provide new forms of social association. So Durkheim emphasizes the division of society in groups and sees the social masses as ever more differentiating in modern times. This can result in conflicts caused by unattached-ness, yet society is self-regulating and characterized by an ever evolving collective conscience.¹⁶⁵

Tarde was also very interested in the modern forms of social integration, though he added psychological concepts to his ideas of integration and the masses. Tarde distinguishes between crowds connected by hate – which are temporary and limited – and crowds connected by love (*foules d’amour*). This latter kind of crowd contributes to associations and integration.¹⁶⁶ Tarde is not that interested in what society is, but in what holds society together, which is the desire to live together (*sociabilité*). Sociability

¹⁶⁰ Callinicos, *Social theory* 127 (Durkheim, *Division of Labour*)

¹⁶¹ Idem 134 (Durkheim, *Division of Labour*).

¹⁶² Burrow, *The crisis of reason* 77.

¹⁶³ Idem 77.

¹⁶⁴ Idem 122.

¹⁶⁵ Emile Durkheim, *The rules of sociological method* (London 1982 [first published 1895]) 101.

¹⁶⁶ Reiwald, *De Geest der Massa* 87.

corresponds with the desire to imitate (imitativité).¹⁶⁷ The continuity of society is for a large part secured by imitation: “everywhere and at all times the distinctive characteristic of a thought, a wish, a social action, is to be created in the image and likeness of the thoughts, wishes, and actions of others”.¹⁶⁸ The social condition of modern man is like a hypnotic or dream-condition. This hypnotic situation implies that suggestive ideas are regarded as one’s own ideas. Modern European society is characterized by a total hypnosis: everyone is under hypnosis since the class of hypnotists (like past prophets) has disappeared. All societies are founded upon psychological imitation and force, in particular represented by the relation between the father and the son.¹⁶⁹

The power of leaders rests upon their hypnotic qualities, which gives them a natural authority. Tarde believed that society was divided in a small, creative elite and a broad mass restricted to imitation.¹⁷⁰ He connects the general ‘mass situation’ of society with the actual movements of the masses: the process of urbanization for example is based upon a hypnotic spell and ever increasing imitation. Urbanization cannot be explained by mere economic factors: the fascination for Paris is suggestive and compelling - the psychological process behind urbanization is crucial for Tarde.¹⁷¹ In modern society the psychological process of imitation is extended by new means of communication. The public, which is different from the crowd, comes into being with the advent of “printing, the railroad, and the telegraph – combined to create the formidable power of the press”.¹⁷² Like the crowd, the public cannot exist without leadership. But, as we have seen in the case of Paris, a ‘leader’ can also mean a distant and abstract idea. Anti-Semitism and socialism are two other examples of abstract ideas, whilst newspapers can be considered the material carriers of hypnotic ideas.¹⁷³

The role of elites – and ‘elite-ideas’ - in social integration is a crucial aspect of Vilfredo Pareto’s (1848 - 1923) mass conceptualization. Pareto’s ideas on social integration are based on the ‘circulation of elites’. In the course of history elites are always replaced by

¹⁶⁷ Reiwald, *De Geest der Massa* 83.

¹⁶⁸ Tarde, “Sociology, social psychology, and sociologism” in: Tarde, *On communication and social influence* (Selected papers, edited by Terry N. Clark) (Chicago and London 1969) 114.

¹⁶⁹ Reiwald, *De Geest der Massa* 84.

¹⁷⁰ Wolf Lepenies, *Between literature and science: the rise of sociology* (Cambridge etc. 1992 [originally published: 1985]) 55.

¹⁷¹ Reiwald, *De Geest der Massa* 86.

¹⁷² Tarde, “The public and the crowd” 281.

¹⁷³ Idem 282.

other elites. This circulation is usually gradual and individual, but sometimes the ruling elites are totally replaced. If the circulation of individuals stagnates, society is in danger: “The accumulation of superior elements in the lower classes and, conversely, of inferior elements in the upper classes, is a potent cause of disturbance in the social equilibrium”.¹⁷⁴ When elites incorporate too much decadent elements, while the lower strata develop more superior elements, the elites lose power. The result is a new governing class, made up of “families rising from the lower classes”.¹⁷⁵ Historical circumstances and changes of interest can also result in the emergence of whole new elites; an example is the trade union elite in England.¹⁷⁶ Pareto suggests that elites have a better chance of survival when they are relatively open to individuals from lower strata of society.¹⁷⁷ The most extreme consequence of a lack of circulation is revolution, but even then “individuals of the lower strata are generally led by individuals from the upper strata”.¹⁷⁸

For many thinkers social integration in modern society was closely related to mass conceptualizations. On the one hand social integration seemed in danger in modern mass society (e.g. by violent mass behavior and protest), on the other hand the masses (or public) represented a new form of social integration (e.g. the role of leading ideas that unified the masses). Noticeable are the larger – often international - lines of thought. Durkheim’s division of Mechanic and Organic solidarity is analogue to Tönnies division of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* – as are both their views on worker’s associations.¹⁷⁹ In later chapters we will also see that Tarde’s idea on imitation and force in relation and the father and the son is somewhat similar to Freud’s ideas – as are Tarde’s thoughts on the ‘hypnotic quality’ of leaders similar to Weber’s charisma and his ideas on communication similar to Park’s. Pareto’s emphasis on the role of elites was a general intellectual theme, but specifically conceptualized in mass theories by Michels and Ortega y Gasset.

¹⁷⁴ Vilfredo Pareto, *Sociological Writings* (Selected and introduced by S.E. Finer. Translated by Derick Mirfin) (Oxford 1976) 250.

¹⁷⁵ Pareto, *Sociological Writings* 249.

¹⁷⁶ Bottomore, *Elites and society* 50.

¹⁷⁷ Idem 52.

¹⁷⁸ Pareto, *Sociological Writings* 250.

¹⁷⁹ Tönnies ideas are discussed in the next chapter.

Elites

The main issue in the work of Robert Michels (1876 - 1936) is role of elites and leaders in modern society. Michels was attracted to socialism and had personally experienced the practices of socialist parties and trade unions in Germany, France, and Italy.¹⁸⁰ Through socialism, from which he turned away in disillusion, he became interested in sociology. Michels argues that all masses have a need for leaders, often combined with intense devotion: “Die Massen besitzen einen tiefen Drang zu persönlicher Verehrung. Sie bedürfen in ihrem primitiven Idealismus weltlicher Götter, denen sie mit desto blinderer Liebe anhängen, je schärfer das rauhe Leben sie anpackt”.¹⁸¹ As other scholars, Michels noticed a similarity between religious movements and political mass movements. He also describes how the idolizing of leaders has a counterweight in the idolizing of the masses: Marxist intellectuals project a heroic image upon the unknown masses.¹⁸²

When a mass loses its leader the result is panic and disintegration. This is true for masses on the streets, but also for permanent mass organizations.¹⁸³ Even highly organized masses, like mass parties, are characterized by a desire for authority. Michels claims that Germans in particular – because of a historical heritage and psychological character - have a desire for authority, obedience, and discipline.¹⁸⁴ It was not uncommon to ascribe national (or ‘racial’) characteristics to the masses.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, masses only act after commands from leaders; hence most mass action misses all spontaneity.

The role of leaders is a crucial theme for Michels: he emphasizes the Caesarist elements of leadership and the oligarchic tendencies of parties. Like Pareto, he argues that elites have always merged with other (new) elites.¹⁸⁶ One of Michels’ main points is that his elite theory also applies to (supposedly democratic) socialist parties. Socialist leaders from the working class have again and again merged into the elites, which proved a successful strategy to undermine revolutionary forces (in particular in England and the

¹⁸⁰ Michels is regularly considered one of the most cosmopolitan thinkers of the early twentieth century, with a German father and French mother, living in Italy for a large part of his life.

Hughes, *Consciousness and society* 251; Burrow, *The crisis of reason* 143.

¹⁸¹ Robert Michels, *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie. Untersuchungen über die oligarchischen Tendenzen des Gruppenlebens* (Leipzig 1925) 77.

¹⁸² Reiwald, *De Geest der Massa* 202.

¹⁸³ Idem 203.

¹⁸⁴ Idem 199.

¹⁸⁵ See Le Bon, Trotter etc.

¹⁸⁶ Similar to Pareto’s view of a circulation of elites.

United States). Moreover, most influential socialist leaders came from the intellectual bourgeoisie, which seems a confirmation of Michel's thesis that lower class action can only take place with the help of the upper class: "Kein Wort in den sozialistischen Programmen der verschiedenen Länder, an welchen nicht eine ganze Reihe von Gelehrten gearbeitet hätte".¹⁸⁷ Noticeably, leadership also implied intellectual leadership (Gelehrten).

Both Michels and Pareto were very critical about modern concepts like 'democracy', 'humanitarianism', and 'progress'. As other social theorists of the age they separate liberalism from democracy, claiming the latter is both a myth and the path to tyranny.¹⁸⁸ Like Michels, Pareto claims that in every society, there is and must be a ruling minority and a strong separation between rulers and ruled; modern democratic societies are no different in that respect. The concept 'political elite' has a double meaning for Pareto: he considered it as a key concept for the new social sciences, but it was also used as a critique on democracy in general and socialism in particular.¹⁸⁹ The danger of mass democracy and the impossibility of direct mass rule are also issues for thinkers like Weber and Ortega y Gasset.

The role of the elite and intellectuals in particular, was perhaps the main driving force for the Spaniard José Ortega y Gasset (1883 - 1955), who was later interpreted as both a socialist and a reactionary.¹⁹⁰ In the 1930s he became very famous with his book *The revolt of the masses* (*La rebelión de las masas* 1929), which was translated into more than a dozen languages.¹⁹¹ The interpretation and valuation of his work varied, whilst his public silence during the Spanish Civil War increased insecurity about his political position. In a contemporaneous review in *The American Journal of Sociology* it is claimed that the book

¹⁸⁷ Michels, *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens* 297.

¹⁸⁸ Bachrach, *The theory of democratic elitism* 11.

¹⁸⁹ Bottomore, *Elites and society* 15.

¹⁹⁰ Ortega y Gasset studied philosophy and attended some courses in psychology. He went to Germany in the early twentieth century, where he attended lectures of Simmel. He became professor of Metaphysics in Madrid in 1910. At first he supported the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (1923 - 1931), but after the universities were shut down in 1929, Ortega y Gasset turned to apparent opposition. In the same year the first part of *The revolt of the masses* was published. In a condition of ill-health and afraid for his life he fled to France in 1936. During the Civil War, albeit publicly silent, it is reasonably to assume he was hoping for a Nationalist victory. Andrew Dobson, *An introduction to the politics and philosophy of José Ortega y Gasset* (Cambridge etc. 1989) 12, 22-24, 31, 34-37.

¹⁹¹ Dobson, *The politics and philosophy of José Ortega y Gasset* 2. Here a Dutch translation is used (*De opstand der horden*, 1930).

“must be seen as a protest rather than as a scientific analysis”.¹⁹² According to Andrew Dobson, Ortega y Gasset cannot be labelled easily, but his political ideas come closest to “select-individual, meritocratic liberalism”.¹⁹³ During the crisis of liberalism – perhaps more severe in Spain than anywhere else – Ortega y Gasset conceptualized the masses and elites in a peculiar way.

Ortega y Gasset’s mass theory is positioned in a historical framework: not ratio, but history is what distinguishes humans from animals.¹⁹⁴ The masses are a modern phenomenon, but more important than its quantity, is the psychological condition of mass man: passivity and lack of insight characterize modern mass man.¹⁹⁵ Modern mass man is a particular type of person and character. There is an important difference between the “select mind” and “foolish mind” (the mass man). The first type of person recognizes its own shortcomings, whilst the second is convinced of his flawlessness. The select minds are capable of “the widest possible perspective”, which, if for practical reasons alone, are usually intellectuals: “in this way, a social feature is introduced into Ortega’s elite conception through the back door”.¹⁹⁶

Modernity is characterized by far reaching specialization, for example in the sciences. This gives new possibilities on many levels, Ortega y Gasset acknowledges. But the problem is that mass-man thinks he is knowledgeable on every level, and has the right to give his opinion about everything. This, of course, should be restricted to the intellectual elites, who are capable of looking to the future and always want to improve themselves. On the contrary, the masses only look to the past. When masses are no longer humble and obedient - or when elites do not carry out guidance and leadership - society will turn into chaos.¹⁹⁷ At the time of writing Ortega y Gasset thinks both progress and decline are possible.

European civilization is based upon liberal parliamentary government and technical knowledge, but these two pillars are under pressure of the masses (who are a product of

¹⁹² H. Cohen, “Book review: The revolt of the masses”, *The American Journal of Sociology* (vol. 39 September 1933) 263.

¹⁹³ Dobson, *The politics and philosophy of José Ortega y Gasset* 12. This particular kind of liberalism is also the reason why Ortega y Gasset has always been more popular in the United States than in Britain.

¹⁹⁴ José Ortega y Gasset, *Opstand der horden* (Den Haag 1966 [originally published: 1930]) 40.

¹⁹⁵ Ortega y Gasset, *Opstand der horden* 106.

¹⁹⁶ The idea of a ‘wide perspective’ is reminiscent of the German desire: intellectuals above class interests. Dobson, *The politics and philosophy of José Ortega y Gasset* 78-79.

¹⁹⁷ *Idem* 81.

civilization, but show no gratitude and fail to realize that civilization is not a natural given). Of course, liberalism and parliamentary rule are not flawless, but errors cannot be solved by removal of those institutes. That is why fascism and bolshevism are so dangerous. The “direct action” of fascism and bolshevism is the result of mass-man trying to impose his will.¹⁹⁸ The irrational force of the masses can be stirred up by appeals to the past instead of the future. Finally, Ortega y Gasset also points to the danger of nationalism, and claims that the unification of Europe is the only viable plan for the future.¹⁹⁹

The relation between the masses and elites – as they were logically opposed – played a crucial role in mass conceptualizations. According to Pareto, Michels, and Ortega y Gasset elites were always and will always be indispensable. Necessarily this also accounts for non-elites – which are equated with the masses. But these abstracts concepts merely divided society in two groups, whose existence is explained by the existence of the other. The hollowness of the concepts is only exceeded when particular examples of changes of power are discussed, but then these examples also reveal their political and ideological goals. With their emphasis on elite leadership they tried to save (or invent) their importance and quality as intellectual leaders. Of course, other thinkers of the age can be critiqued for doing the same: ideas of elite leadership were often linked to political doctrines – even by thinkers who had a little more faith in the masses (e.g. some American thinkers). So interestingly, similar conceptualizations of intellectuals were found in various political camps. The most striking examples were the intellectuals who shifted from one political extreme to the other, while their ideas on intellectual responsibility remained unchanged.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Ortega y Gasset, *Opstand der horden* 115, 134.

¹⁹⁹ *Idem* 232.

²⁰⁰ For example: Michels’ turn from socialism to fascism. Another example is the less famous Belgium sociologist Hendrik de Man (1885 - 1953). De Man was a Belgium socialist who developed a revisionist theory of socialism, while he turned to authoritarian democracy in the 1930s and eventually collaborated with the Nazi’s during the occupation of Belgium. He used his ideas of intellectual leadership from socialist to fascist politics.

III. History and Romanticism

“There was a time when the only topic of social investigation was the historical fate or the practical politics of particular groups. During the last decades, however, *sociation*, or the life of groups as units, has become such a topic. Attention thus was attracted by what is common to *all* groups inasmuch as they are societies. This presently led to the examination of a closely related problem – of the characteristics which distinguish social from individual life.”²⁰¹

Modernity and history

Social thought in Germany was closely related to the historicism of the nineteenth century: the issues of modernity were understood in terms of historical development. Modern German sociology was characterized by pessimism toward modern social conditions: mainly the negative results of capitalism and the relations between men.²⁰² Sociologists like Tönnies, Simmel, and Weber were critical about modernity, but: “They preferred analysis to hypocrisy and destructive despair: they became scientific”.²⁰³ This attitude distinguished modern sociologists from both Marxist and Romantic predecessors, as well as from reactionary critics of modernity. But when looking at mass conceptions of these so-called scientific sociologists the impact of historicism and romanticism was still manifest – and their critiques of modernity were admittedly not reactionary, but had strong conservative tendencies.

²⁰¹ Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (translated, edited, and with an introduction by Kurt H. Wolff) (New York and London 1950) 26.

²⁰² Ringer, *The decline of the German mandarins* 162-163.

²⁰³ Idem 163.

Perhaps the first modern German sociologist was Ferdinand Tönnies (1855 - 1936).²⁰⁴ His book *Community and Society (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft)* of 1887 was paradigmatic for later German sociologists.²⁰⁵ The difference between society and community is based on two different qualities of will: natural will (*Wesenwille*) and rational will (*Kürwille*). Natural will entails man's will in accordance with his personality or nature – which is not confined to the purely instinctual and irrational. The rational will means a calculated act: it presupposes a rational distinction between means and end.²⁰⁶ A community is characterized by a unity of natural will (of all members), whilst a society is characterized by the effort to achieve some unity of the rational will. Society is characterized by egoism, competition, acquisition, and instrumental rationality.²⁰⁷ Moreover, Tönnies described all kinds of 'communal' entities (families, friendship, clans, villages) and 'societal' entities (businesses, interest groups).²⁰⁸ Historical developments indisputably led to a gradual replacement of communal entities by societal entities. Yet Tönnies "resisted the obvious temptation to speak of them [community and society] as an historical sequence".²⁰⁹ He did not exclude the possibility of a revival of communal values altogether, but remained realistic: "Tönnies never abandoned his conviction that the whole course of modern culture was profoundly tragic", but unlike some of his reactionary interpreters, "he resisted the temptation to escape from pessimism into what seemed to him obscurantist illusion".²¹⁰

The main focus of Tönnies work was the source of social cohesion.²¹¹ He discusses the role of the elites in the formation of the modern public opinion ("Power and Value of Public Opinion"). Tönnies considers the public opinion a "spiritual force" that can impact

²⁰⁴ Tönnies founded the German Society for Sociology (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie*) in 1909. He was one of the main sociologists of his time. Nevertheless, as a result of his presumed socialist sympathies, he only received an official teaching assignment in sociology in 1920, at the age of 65.

Ringer, *The decline of the German mandarins* 164, 168.

²⁰⁵ In the preface of *Community and Society* Tönnies writes: "All social forms are artifacts of psychic substance, and their sociological conceptualization, therefore, must be a psychological conceptualization at the same time." Ferdinand Tönnies, *On Sociology: pure, applied, and empirical* (Selected writings. Edited and with an introduction by Werner J. Cahnman and Rudolf Heberle) (Chicago and London 1971) 35.

²⁰⁶ Michels, *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens* 164-165.

²⁰⁷ Burrow, *The crisis of reason* 119.

²⁰⁸ Ringer, *The decline of the German mandarins* 166.

²⁰⁹ Burrow, *The crisis of reason* 118.

²¹⁰ Ringer, *The decline of the German mandarins* 168.

²¹¹ Idem 169.

political matters, one example is the case of the Dreyfus affair.²¹² The public opinion is determined by people participating in the matter: the public opinion on a political matter can only be determined by people actually participating in political life. That is why the elites are of decisive importance: “Very generally, one can say that public opinion is the opinion of the educated classes as against the great mass of people. However, the more the masses move upward and the more they participate in the advance of education and political consciousness, the more will they make their voices count in the formation of public opinion”.²¹³ Again the role of intellectuals in shaping the public opinion is connected to the conceptualization of the masses.

Like most leading German sociologists, Tönnies respected Marx but could not agree with the absolute laws of historical materialism. The problems of modern capitalism – most of all “the alienation of men” – were put in a larger cultural framework. Unlike one might expect from the antithesis between community and society, Tönnies suggested that worker’s associations (generally regarded as one of the flaws of modern society, at least by more conservative thinkers) were “the most promising elements of community in modern social life”.²¹⁴ As noted before, the promise of worker’s associations was also noted by Durkheim, but a crucial difference was the anti-materialism in Tönnies understanding of worker’s associations.

Another German sociologist who claimed that the masses were a symptom of modernity was Georg Simmel (1858 - 1918). In *The Social and the Individual Level (An example of General Sociology)* Simmel claims “The Individual’s Superiority over the Mass”. The mass is “a new phenomenon made up, not of the total of individualities of its members, but only of those fragments of each of them in which he coincides with all others. These fragments, therefore, can be nothing but the lowest and most primitive”.²¹⁵ The features of the modern mass state are therefore a “sociological tragedy”.²¹⁶ Moreover, the mass is characterized by homogeneity, simplicity, radicalism, and a lack consciousness. The masses act upon feelings and mutual stimuli, especially when people in the mass are

²¹² Tönnies, *Sociological Writings* 263.

²¹³ Idem 264.

²¹⁴ Ringer, *The decline of the German mandarins* 171. Similar to Durkheim, as discussed in the previous chapter.

²¹⁵ Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* 33.

²¹⁶ Idem 32.

together in physical proximity. The “ethically valuable aspect” of mass excitement is “a noble enthusiasm and an unlimited readiness to sacrifice” which is good, but “does not eliminate its distorted character and its irresponsibility”.²¹⁷ Like an individual has a higher and lower element, so is society made up of higher and lower elements. Although “the level of a society is very *close* to that of its lowest components” a general rise of society is possible by means of individuals willing to “descend far enough toward the social level to be prepared for the fight against the social level – which is always a fight *for* it”.²¹⁸ So modern mass society is a tragedy, but the higher elements of society – probably the responsible intellectuals – can turn the tide. As so many other social thinkers of the era, Simmel diagnoses and prescribes: intellectuals pose themselves as experts of modern problems and as the solution for those problems.

As Tönnies and Simmel, Max Weber (1864 - 1920) was also preoccupied with modernity in a historical perspective – in particular large historical processes. Weber was fascinated by rationalization, which he saw as an ongoing historical process: “The conditions of administration of mass structure are radically different from those obtaining in small associations resting upon neighborly or personal relationships”.²¹⁹ The impact of Tönnies ideas on Community and Society are hard to miss here. Weber argued that in politics, rationalization meant in bureaucratization; in economy it meant capitalism. Both bureaucratization and capitalism are inescapable forms of (modern) domination, yet, paradoxically, it also provides some escape. Capitalism preserves some dynamism and individuality: “the much reviled “anarchy” of production and the equally reviled “subjectivism”... alone can take the individual out of the broad mass and throw him back on himself”.²²⁰ The possibilities and limits of modernity were (implicitly) compared to those of pre-modern times: ‘tradition’ was one of the key concepts for German thinkers.

Tradition was important for social thinkers in other countries too; one noticeable example is the American Robert E. Park (1864 – 1944). Park went to Germany where he attended lectures by Simmel and wrote his doctoral dissertation under Windelband’s

²¹⁷ Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* 36.

²¹⁸ *Idem* 37, 39.

²¹⁹ Weber, *Max Weber on Law in Economy and Society* 334.

²²⁰ Callinicos, *Social Theory* 172 (Russian Revolution).

supervision, titled *The Crowd and the Public (Masse und Publikum)*.²²¹ Park's ideas (and scholarly travels) are illustrating examples of circulating knowledge. The main idea Park developed in Germany was that collective behaviour results in social and cultural change (first disintegration and then reintegration). In this work - influenced by, amongst others, the works of Le Bon, Tarde, and Simmel - Park distinguishes crowds and publics from other groups in society. While groups are based on tradition, crowds and publics do not have a past or a future. However, the crowd and the public can be formed out of 'traditional' groups and can also form new groups: "the crowd and the public reveal the processes through which new groups are formed, although they are not yet conscious of themselves as groups".²²² There is a gap between the normal, stable order and moments of collective behaviour. The crowd and the public are the two basic categories of collective behaviour causing social change. Both are determined by internal dynamics and differ from traditional groups as: "No regulations, conscious control, or self-consciousness exists".²²³

A more dramatic view on history and tradition was given by Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939), who argued that a pre-historical watershed determined the course of all later cultures. According to Freud history is determined by the relation between masses and leaders, starting with the murder of the primal father by his sons. After their act of Thanatos (death instinct), the sons felt remorse: this marked the beginning of the power of the Ego-ideal (to suppress the Id). In *Civilization and its discontents (Das Unbehagen in der Kultur 1930)*, Freud explains how the ever-increasing feeling of remorse, as a consequence of the ambivalence between Eros (love instinct) and Thanatos, is an inevitable consequence of civilization. The suppression of aggression, necessary to unify of the family first and the masses later, can only work by means of remorse. Remorse should therefore be seen as "das wichtigste Problem der Kulturentwicklung", and as "der Preis für den Kulturfortschritt".²²⁴ Hence, feelings of remorse increase at the expense of happiness,

²²¹ In the English translation *Masse* is translated as 'crowd', another example of the complications of translation.

²²² Robert E. Park, *The crowd and the public and other essays* (Chicago and London 1972[originally published: *Masse und Publikum*, 1904) 78.

²²³ Idem 80.

²²⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Abriss der Psychoanalyse das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (Frankfurt and Hamburg 1955 [originally published: Vienna 1930]) 176.

which causes the feelings of discontents in every civilization. Periodical removals of prohibitions, like carnivals, are used to release some of these tensions.²²⁵

For Freud cultural developments are determined by the relation between individual and community: “Diese Ersetzung der Macht des einzelnen durch die der Gemeinschaft ist der entscheidende kulturelle Schritt”.²²⁶ Before culture existed (that is: before the murder of the primal father), the individual was unrestricted in pursuing immediate instinct satisfaction. The beginning of civilization converges with the beginning of the legal order - which has no ethical implication for Freud - and originally favours one group of the population. But the usual historical development is towards of justice for all. Of course, to obtain justice for all, every individual has to sacrifice a part of his instincts.²²⁷

The experience of discontent is the result of sacrificed instincts; an inherent part of culture. Contrary to many other thinkers, culture *itself* is a source of pessimism for Freud.²²⁸ And culture means a collective: from small tribal communities to mass society. People will always be inclined to defend their individual freedom against the will of the mass: ‘disintegration’ of society can be the result.²²⁹ Hence, the struggles of humanity are largely based on the difficulty to fulfil one task, to achieve a: “beglückenden Ausgleich zwischen diesen individuellen und den kulturellen Massenansprüchen”.²³⁰ The faith of humanity depends on the question whether this compromise is attainable in a future culture, or if the conflict between mass and individual is irreconcilable.²³¹

Tönnies, Weber, Simmel, and Freud argued that the masses played an ever increasing role in modernity, but were unsure about the consequences for the individual: was a compromise possible? The general tendency of their work might be pessimistic, but they allowed for a careful optimism regarding the possibilities of the individual. Freud was the only one who claimed that not just modernity, but all cultures were characterized by the conflict between collective and individual. Similar to the German sociologists, Park emphasized the importance of tradition, but he saw less of a contradiction between tradition and the masses. Park was not very positive about the character of the masses either, but he

²²⁵ Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 99.

²²⁶ Freud, *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* 130.

²²⁷ Idem 130.

²²⁸ Ankersmit, “De moord op de oervader” 151.

²²⁹ Sulloway, *Freud, biologist of the mind* 412.

²³⁰ Freud, *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* 131.

²³¹ Idem 131.

was optimistic on the course of modernity and claimed that changes were temporary and society always returned to stability and integration.

Mass democracy

The impact of the masses was especially obvious – and frightening – in modern mass democracy. The changing style of politics was a main concern for Weber, who wrote about political authority and legitimacy in terms of “charisma” and “legal domination”. There is a contrast between charismatic authority of a leader and the authority of traditional and legal domination.²³² Charismatic leadership is not based on inheritance or office, but on “the mysterious aura of authority” of a leader, appealing to followers.²³³ In the course of history, all charismatic leadership is eventually transformed into traditional or legal domination, while new charismatic leaders can provide some renovation or new vitality. Every community – from the household to the political party – is based upon physical violence and subject to change: “the monopolization of legitimate violence by the political-territorial association and its rational consociation into an institutional order is nothing primordial, but a product of evolution”.²³⁴ Charisma is the “specifically creative revolutionary force in history” as it can disrupt rational rule and tradition, and overturn “all notions of sanctity”.²³⁵ Charisma can be considered a “spiritual energy” - akin to Tönnies natural will – which justifies obedience and renewal. Moreover, charisma creates social cohesion and vitality, which is lacking, to a large degree, in modernity.²³⁶

Like Tönnies and Simmel, Weber realized that modern politics and modern economy were not going away, and consequently argued for parliamentary rule with a role for the masses:

“There are only two choices: either the mass of citizens is left without rights in a bureaucratic ‘authoritarian’ state which has only the appearance of parliamentary rule, and in which the citizens are ‘administered’ like a herd of cattle; or the citizens are integrated

²³² Callinicos, *Social Theory* 167.

²³³ Burrow, *The crisis of reason* 145.

²³⁴ Max Weber, *Max Weber on Law in Economy and Society* (edited by Max Rheinstein) (New York 1970) 342.

²³⁵ Callinicos 167 (Economy and Society)

²³⁶ Ringer, *The decline of the German mandarins* 177.

into the states as ‘co-rulers’. *A nation of masters (Herrenvolk)* – and only such a nation can and may engage in ‘world politics’ – has no choice in this matter.”²³⁷

Weber argues for states with free political institutions and international autonomy, but did not mean a direct rule of the masses. Politics is always determined by leaders: “that means, the superior political manoevrability of small leading groups. In mass states, this caesarist element is ineradicable”.²³⁸ In modern democracy the charismatic and legal are integrated; so democracy is the rationalized form of charismatic domination.²³⁹ Therefore, popular support is of the utmost importance in modern mass politics. A political leader must use the press to gain “the trust and the faith of the masses in him and his power with the means of mass demagogy”.²⁴⁰ One form of charismatic authority is a “plebiscitary leader democracy” (*Führer-Demokratie*), where people have only a passive role.²⁴¹

There is a tension between the “formalism, and the rule-bound, detached objectivity” of bureaucracy and the “democratic ethos”.²⁴² That is why Weber argues that the “rational course of justice and administration is interfered with not only by every form of “popular justice,” which is little concerned with rational norms and reasons, but also by every type of intensive influencing of the course of administration by “public opinion,” that is, in a mass democracy, that communal activity which is born of irrational “feelings” and which is normally instigated or guided by party leaders or the press”.²⁴³ The interferences of the masses can be “as disturbing as, or, under circumstances, even more disturbing than, those of the star chamber practices of an “absolute” monarch”.²⁴⁴

So Weber was very critical about the irrational feelings that are at the basis of the public opinion and its impact on modern mass democracy. As noted before, Michel was very critical about modern mass democracy too. Like Weber, Michels criticizes its paradox: democracy necessarily has Caesarist and de-democratizing aspects. In his most famous book *A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (*Zur*

²³⁷ Callinicos, *Social Theory* 175 (Political Writings)

²³⁸ Idem 175 (Economy and Society)

²³⁹ Idem 176.

²⁴⁰ Idem 176. (Economy and Society)

²⁴¹ Idem 177.

²⁴² Weber, *Max Weber on Law in Economy and Society* 355.

²⁴³ Idem 356.

²⁴⁴ Idem 356.

Soziologie des Parteiwesens 1911²⁴⁵), Michels discusses modern political parties; the German Socialist Party in particular. He claims that the Socialist Party, in contradiction to its revolutionary claims, is just as self-serving and inward-looking as all other political parties.²⁴⁶ The result is a pathological situation, with a lack of energy, leadership, and creative action, which resulted in Michels' yearning for leadership, as it did for many of his generation.²⁴⁷ Michels concludes that direct rule of the masses is simply unfeasible. An original leader might be a servant of the masses; yet the development of political parties always results in the cultivation of leaders and elites. This development is proved by the de-democratization of socialistic parties (but the same process is taking place in every organization), where less and less decisions are made on the basis of elections.²⁴⁸ Moreover, some elements of Caesarism are indispensable in modern politics, as is the development of a strong bureaucracy.

Both Weber and Michels see an opposition between bureaucratic mass democracy and creative (or charismatic) leadership. But this opposition is not as sharp as seems at first sight: it is a paradox. Weber claims that democracy is the rationalized form of charismatic domination – where charismatic leaders actually play a big role. Michels claims that modern democratic parties show a lack of leadership and creative action, but also demonstrates a process of de-democratization and cultivation of elites: so in the end political parties in a democracy are actually preserving leadership and the power of elites. Unlike Weber and Michels, Le Bon for example did not see any possibilities for leadership in a democratic system. Le Bon also wrote on modern democracy as an institutionalized form of mass behaviour, but he claimed that this necessarily meant degeneration and regression.

²⁴⁵ Full title: *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie. Untersuchungen über die oligarchischen Tendenzen des Gruppenlebens*

²⁴⁶ Burrow, *The crisis of reason* 144.

²⁴⁷ Idem 144.

²⁴⁸ Robert Michels, *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie. Untersuchungen über die oligarchischen Tendenzen des Gruppenlebens* (Leipzig 1925) 37.

Instincts

Ideas on instincts, drives, impulses, the unconsciousness, and the irrational were closely related to mass conceptions. The most famous conceptualization of instincts was of course made by Freud, but he operated in a general vocabulary. Before Freud used the concept 'Unconscious', it was already an established term. Le Bon for example, wrote: "the truth established by modern psychology, that unconscious phenomena play an altogether preponderating part not only in organic life, but also in the operations of intelligence".²⁴⁹ Unlike many predecessors and contemporaries, Freud did not treat the unconscious as a heritable, national, racial, or collective category. His conceptualization of the unconscious is more individualistic and dynamic.²⁵⁰ Freud's ideas about the unconscious and the human psyche, even though at times ridiculed, have had an enormous impact. In the interwar period Freud related his ideas on individual instincts to collective behavior and society. Freud's growing interest in society after World War I is accounted for by the destruction and moral shock of the trench war, the collapse of the political system of Austria-Hungary, and the rising anti-Semitism.²⁵¹ The aforementioned *Civilization and its discontents* is one example of a work on collective behavior and society, another famous work is *Group psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse 1921)*.

Freud wrote *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse* as a critique of Le Bon, but also discussed ideas by Tarde, Trotter, and McDougall.²⁵² Like Trotter and McDougall, Freud was interested in how the individual psyche was connected to social behavior, with the role of the leader as the central problem. Freud acknowledged the complications of a sharp distinction between the individual and the mass: "Der Gegensatz von Individual- und Sozial- oder Massenpsychologie, der uns auf den ersten Blick als sehr bedeutsam erscheinen mag, verliert bei eingehender Betrachtung sehr viel von seiner Schärfe".²⁵³ In individualistic psychiatric treatment, relations with other people and society are of great importance too. After all, Freud's own psychoanalysis, with the Oedipus complex as central point, is completely based on (family) relationships.

²⁴⁹ Le Bon, *The Crowd* 18.

²⁵⁰ Burrow, *The crisis of reason* 165-166.

²⁵¹ Hughes, *Consciousness and society* 136.

²⁵² For Trotter and McDougall see next chapter.

²⁵³ Sigmund Freud, *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse* (Hamburg 2010 [originally published: 1925]) 6.

Freud's understanding of mass behavior in *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse* was based upon a revision of Freud's earlier ideas.²⁵⁴ The first major change was a new basic instinct next to Eros: a death instinct of destructiveness and aggressiveness, or 'Thanatos'. The second major change was a new psychic agency next to the Ego and the Id: the Ego-ideal (or Super-Ego).²⁵⁵ In an unorganized mass situation, the combined instincts of Eros and Thanatos resulted in an orgy of sex and violence; whilst in an organized mass situation the Ego-ideal caused identification with an idealized leader and 'law and order'. Freud still wanted to explain the organized mass in the light of his earlier theory: the cohesion of the mass was a form of sublimated sexual feelings (Eros). Identification with others in the mass was the result of "the common idealization of an exemplary person".²⁵⁶

The psychology behind leadership and collective behavior were also studied by Pareto. His 'circulation of elites' theory was based on psychological sentiments. Pareto wanted to define the human impulses that formed the basis of leadership, which he called 'residues'.²⁵⁷ Residues are non-logical motivations where all human action stems from.²⁵⁸ He distinguished between 'residues' (the illogical, unvarying or only changing very slowly) and the 'derivations' (the logical, historically varying explanations of residues).²⁵⁹ The non-logical (or non-rational) residues are subdivided in six categories. Pareto's residues were the illogical impulses that were at the root of all mass leadership in history. Historical variation is limited since only the rational explanations for leadership change.

Human action might appear logical by a process summarized by Pareto's term 'derivations': the temporary and rational explanation for the residues. Changes in the psychological characteristics of the elites and the masses cause circulation, which is legitimated by new forms of derivations. When he considers the circulation of elites, Pareto focuses on two types of elites: 'speculators' and 'rentiers', a distinction close to

²⁵⁴ *Massenpsychologie* was translated as *Group psychology and the analysis of the ego*. The German word 'Massen' had an obvious reactionary undertone, not grasped by the English word 'group' in the translation. Van Ginneken 77-79.

²⁵⁵ Sulloway, *Freud, biologist of the mind* 374-375.

²⁵⁶ Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 96.

²⁵⁷ Hughes, *Consciousness and society* 257.

²⁵⁸ Callinicos, *Social theory* 180.

²⁵⁹ Pareto, *Sociological Writings* 215-218.

Machiavelli's foxes and lions.²⁶⁰ To prove his types, Pareto simply takes historical examples of declining elites and declares that there was a slight change in residues.²⁶¹

Similar to Freud, Pareto ascribes a great role to unchanging instincts or sentiments and emphasizes the importance of leaders, yet Pareto's argument remains far more abstract. The combination of instincts and leadership was also crucial for thinkers of the so-called Frankfurt School. The Frankfurt School consisted mainly of German (mostly Jewish) scholars with Marxist leaning and is perhaps the most famous social intellectual movement of the interwar period. Their academic enterprise was called, in their own terms, "Critical Theory".²⁶² The 'Institute for Social Research' was founded at Frankfurt University in 1923, mainly as a reaction to the Russian Revolution and the failure of revolutions in Europe.²⁶³ The Institute maintained contact with the 'Marx Engels Institute' in Moscow, but its members became skeptical about Russian Marxism after 1927.²⁶⁴

Max Horkheimer (1895 - 1973) became director of the Institute in 1930.²⁶⁵ Under his control, the main research focus became the "cultural superstructure" of society. The orthodox Marxist idea that the cultural superstructure of society was a mere reflection of the economic superstructure was rejected.²⁶⁶ The 'irrational' preferences of the working class were now investigated; for example by Erich Fromm in a huge empirical research project.²⁶⁷ Several scholars of the Frankfurt School attempted to incorporate Marx and Freud in social theory.²⁶⁸ Horkheimer edited a study about education, personality, and mentality in 1933: *Studies on Authority and the Family (Studien über Autorität und Familie)*. It consisted of separate parts and articles, with contributions by Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, and many others.²⁶⁹

Erich Fromm (1900 – 1980) wrote a theoretical part about social psychology in the volume, where he discusses Freud's *Group psychology (Massenpsychologie)* and then

²⁶⁰ Bottomore, *Elites and society* 51.

²⁶¹ Idem 52.

²⁶² Callinicos, *Social theory* 247.

²⁶³ Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 118.

²⁶⁴ After the accession of power by Stalin and the expulsion of Trotsky. Van Ginneken 119.

²⁶⁵ Callinicos, *Social theory* 246.

²⁶⁶ Similar to Tönnies rejection of absolute historical materialism.

²⁶⁷ Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 119.

²⁶⁸ Callinicos, *Social theory* 247. The combination of Marx and Freud shows similarities with Wilhelm Reich's work, who published in the Institute's journal in the early 1930s.

²⁶⁹ For example: Karl A. Wittfogel, Ernst Manheim, Harald Mankiewicz, Paul Honigsheim. Max Horkheimer (ed) *Studien über Autorität und Familie* (Paris 1936) xiii-xv.

connects it with economic relations in modern bourgeois society. He claims that the Super-Ego is the internalization of authority, whilst the Super-Ego projects his own characteristics (morality, wisdom, strength) upon the representatives of authority (leaders). The repression of instincts – the rationale of the Super-Ego – depends on wealth and class forces, and on the condition of the production process. Authority is not only a psychic but also a social force, since the “Masse” of people is economic dependent upon some sort of economic authority.²⁷⁰ So authority has a negative and a positive function: it supports suppression of the instincts; it also stimulates certain behavior and serves as model or ideal.²⁷¹

The economic relations crucial in Fromm’s work represented larger currents of thought of the Frankfurt School and were – among other things – an attempt to explain the popularity of fascism. Another example was the work of Wilhelm Reich (1897 - 1957)²⁷², who published *The Mass Psychology of Fascism (Die Massenpsychologie des Faschismus)* in 1933. Reich wanted to integrate Marxist and Freudian thought, claiming that Marxists should pay more attention to unconscious motivation, whilst Freudians should pay more attention to cultural analyses in terms of social classes.²⁷³ Sexual and psychological issues were interrelated with the distribution of wealth and capitalist relations. Communists should better understand sexual issues: “we must politicize the issue, and transform the secret or open sexual rebellion of the youth into revolutionary struggle against the capitalist social order”.²⁷⁴

Reich recognized that fascism was not a small elitist movement, but was supported by broad masses of people.²⁷⁵ Even more so, fascism was literally “ein Problem der Massen” and not “ein Problem der Person Hitlers oder der Politik der

²⁷⁰ Erich Fromm, “Sozialpsychologischer Teil” in: Max Horkheimer (ed) *Studien über Autorität und Familie* (Paris 1936) 133.

²⁷¹ Fromm, “Sozialpsychologischer Teil” 108.

²⁷² Wilhelm Reich can be considered a member of the Frankfurt School. Reich studied medicine and psychiatry in Vienna in the early 1920s, where he met Freud. He became a member of the Psychoanalytical Society in 1922, but “soon came to occupy a rather eccentric position at its fringe”. Step by step Reich estranged from the movement between 1927 and 1934, ending with his expulsion. Van Ginneken mentions three important differences in therapeutic practice between Reich and mainstream psychoanalysis: 1. Reich worked in a policlinic for poor patients; 2. he explored negative transference during therapy and questioned the standard cool and distant approach; 3. he rebelled against the diminishing position of sexuality in psychoanalysis and wrote a book on *The function of orgasm*. These practices signified his estrangement from conventional bourgeois society, which was reinforced by his political activities.

Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 103-104.

²⁷³ Idem 105.

²⁷⁴ Quote in: Van Ginneken 107 (from: *Geschlechtsreife, Enthaltsamkeit und Ehemoral*, Baxandall & Olmann).

²⁷⁵ Reich, *Die Massenpsychologie des Faschismus* 52-57.

nationalsozialistischen Partei”.²⁷⁶ Reich argued that fascism originally has its basis in the “petty bourgeoisie”: “Vom Standpunkt seiner sozialen Basis gesehen, war der Nationalsozialismus ursprünglich eine kleinbürgerliche Bewegung”.²⁷⁷ Family relations are of key importance to understand fascist support.²⁷⁸ The combination of sexual repression, bigotry, and authoritarian education (especially manifest in the middle class) could result in an anxious attempt to safeguard petty morality when people felt threatened by social degradation.²⁷⁹ The fear for pleasure is channelled by ideas about honour and duty; uniforms and drills represented virility; whilst violence and terror were used to counteract resentment and frustration.²⁸⁰ Moreover, a troubled relationship with the father was expressed by admiration for the leader (*Führer-Prinzip*). The more dependent the “mass-individual” has become “desto starker prägt sich die Identifizierung mit dem Führer aus, desto mehr verkleidet sich das kindliche Anlehnungsbedürfnis in die Form des Sich-mit-dem-Führer-eins-Fühlens”.²⁸¹

Symbolism was very important for the actual success of National Socialism. Nazi rituals and artefacts symbolized sexual and death instincts. Race theory and anti-Semitism are based upon ideas of sexuality: Reich quotes Hitler’s “Bastardierung des europäischen Kontinents”. Reich also argues that the swastika has a sexual meaning and was a powerful propaganda symbol: “Die Wirkung des Hakenkreuzes auf das unbewußte Gefühlsleben ist natürlich nicht Ursache, sondern bloß mächtiges Hilfsmittel des Erfolges der faschistischen Massenpropaganda”.²⁸² Again, the role of symbols to seduce or hypnotise the masses is presented as one of the main dangers in mass society.

Freud, Pareto, Fromm, and Reich agreed that the masses were attracted to leaders and that instincts had something to do with this. Fromm and Reich combined conceptions of psychological instincts with economic relations to explain the success of leadership - and the success of fascist leadership in particular. Another overarching theme is (again) the idea of the intellectual: they consider themselves as experts because only they truly understand

²⁷⁶ Reich, *Die Massenpsychologie des Faschismus* 103.

²⁷⁷ Idem 57.

²⁷⁸ “In der massenindividuellen Struktur des Kleinbürgers fallen nationale und familiäre Bindung zusammen” Reich, *Die Massenpsychologie des Faschismus* 75.

²⁷⁹ Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 112.

²⁸⁰ Idem 112.

²⁸¹ Reich, *Die Massenpsychologie des Faschismus* 75.

²⁸² Idem 106.

and see through – and then connect their political solutions to the diagnosis. Next to the conceptualization of psychological instincts, the issues of authority and subordination were also conceptualized in a more sociological manner – although the distinction between sociology and psychology was hard to make.

Authority and subordination

Simmel was one of many who devoted some thought to the division between sociology and psychology. He claimed that sociologists use the same empirical materials studied by historians, economists, and psychologists, but with a distinctive conceptual framework based on social interaction.²⁸³ Simmel wrote an essay on social psychology in 1908, wherein he disregards the trend to ascribe a single will or psyche to a collectivity.²⁸⁴ He discusses mass meetings; how individuals disappear in a crowd; and the utility of statistical and typological generalizations. In the end, he is convinced that “interpersonal influences” and actual relationships between men yield most knowledge about society. Society is considered “as an aggregate of interactions, not as a sum of individuals”, but this aggregate is dynamic rather than wholistic.²⁸⁵ Hence, Simmel does not make a sharp distinction between individual psychology and social psychology; he merely wanted to claim that sociology is about social interaction and could make use of all kinds of psychology. In fact, Simmel did not make use of any contemporary psychological discoveries and neither performed any empirical studies. Like Tönnies’ his sociology was mainly theoretical.²⁸⁶

One insightful study is Simmel’s analysis of superordination and subordination, where he emphasized the “impersonal character of mass rule”.²⁸⁷ Here it becomes obvious that the distinction between sociological and psychological arguments was indeed vague. Simmel described intellectual leadership and the subordination to ““an “ideal” authority, an “objective” principle, a religious belief, or a law”, binding rulers and ruled.²⁸⁸

²⁸³ Fromm, “Sozialpsychologischer Teil 172.

²⁸⁴ Ringer, *The decline of the German mandarins* 172 (Georg Simmel, “über das Wesen der Sozial-Psychologie”, Archiv 26, 1908)

²⁸⁵ Ringer, *The decline of the German mandarins* 173.

²⁸⁶ Idem 173.

²⁸⁷ Idem 175.

²⁸⁸ Idem 175. (Similar to Freud and Tarde.)

Sociopolitical cohesion is accomplished when every member of society is committed to society, but respective contributions to society are necessarily unequal (the leader commits most of his personality). This commitment to society did not have to mean a total identification. Simmel acknowledges that modern man is characterized by commitments to many groups and did not plea for renewed forms of old communal groups. Hence modern man – and modern society in general – is at the same freer and rationalized; and less personally and “atomized”.²⁸⁹ Simmel’s ideas on subordination and leadership matched contemporaneous concerns about the changing style of politics.

Horkheimer was also interested in the modern form of politics – and in particular in the role of authority and subordination in modern democracies. In the volume *Studies on Authority and the Family*, the relationships between spheres of culture are investigated, with authority as the overarching and decisive factor of modernity. Horkheimer considers the family as the first and most important source of authority. Authority in the family and in society is usually very stable, but there are also opportunities for change.²⁹⁰ Unlike Simmel, Horkheimer argues that authority in the family and authority in society are based upon the same principles. While Simmel claims that modern man is more free and rational, Horkheimer claims that modern man is still subject to the unchanged principles of authority.

For Horkheimer authority implies superiority and subordination. The superior and subordinate persons can have interests that are separate and distinct (e.g. slaveholder and slave) or identical and harmonious (e.g. teacher and pupil).²⁹¹ Sadistic, masochistic, and sado-masochistic tendencies - explained by psychology - can also be traced in social relations. Leaders can be hated, but also loved and admired as superior beings, which is the rationale of inequality. When it comes to social change, two phenomena can be distinguished: first, one authority is replaced by another authority; second, a revolt against every kind of authority takes place.²⁹² In a democratic society the mass of people feels that it is possible, in principle, to belong to the ruling authorities. But in reality, authority in a democratic society is based upon the same principles as in an authoritarian society:

²⁸⁹ Ringer 175-176.

²⁹⁰ Max Horkheimer, “Allgemeiner Teil” in: Max Horkheimer (ed) *Studien über Autorität und Familie* (Paris 1936) 61-63.

²⁹¹ Horkheimer, “Allgemeiner Teil” 111.

²⁹² Fromm, “Sozialpsychologischer Teil” 131.

“Auch unter der demokratischen Autoritätsstruktur, die nicht nur die Herrschaftsverhältnisse weitgehend verschleiert hat, sondern auch jenes rastlose Streben und jene Arbeitsamkeit bei den grossen Massen gefördert hat, die für die aufsteigende bürgerliche Wirtschaft so wesentlich waren, bleibt doch der gleiche Zug bestehen, den wir für die extreme autoritäre Struktur beschrieben haben, nämlich die passive fatalistische Anerkennung der höheren Macht.”²⁹³

So power and authority are disguised (veiled) in democracies, but the (psychological) recognition of a ‘higher power’ has an unchanging foundation. In that respect authoritarian and democratic societies do not differ, only the explanation of power relation changes. Power in democracy is not promoted by the idea of a predestined leader, but by ideas of “economic necessities” or the “nature of humans”.²⁹⁴ The “large masses” (*grossen Massen*) are more than ever under the spell of ceaseless ambitions and a drive to work, essential for bourgeois economy.

The differences between Simmel and Horkheimer are analogue to larger changes in the thought of social thinkers. Where Simmel had some faith in the free and rationalized individuality in modernity, the Frankfurt thinkers were more pessimistic - even though their political views can be considered progressive. The psychological idea of universal human nature and the idea of a ‘veiled’ reality were at the basis of their pessimism. World War I was a breaking point in mass conceptualization: the war had brought about a new reality that needed new explanations. Political and social problems came to the fore with an intensity unknown to the pre-World War I intellectuals. It was as if university professors had to descend the cultural ladder into the depths of society after their civilization was so easily destroyed. It makes sense that the impact was largest in countries that had suffered most, namely Germany and Austria. Freud’s post-World War I pessimism is well-known, while interwar thinkers like Horkheimer, Fromm, and Reich were confused by the rise of fascism. One of the solutions was to abandon theoretical debate and focus on numbers, which became increasingly popular up to World War II. Statistics and opinion polling more and more replaced projects of grand mass conceptualization.

²⁹³ Fromm, “Sozialpsychologischer Teil” 134.

²⁹⁴ Idem 134.

Most Frankfurters fled abroad after the Nazi's assumed power. The Institute was moved to Paris and later to New York. The international revival of sociology after World War II was heavily shaped by German émigrés in the United States, such as the members of the Frankfurt School.²⁹⁵ The idea of the 'authoritarian personality' had a big impact on post-World War II sociology and was connected to the search for explanations of mass murder and genocide during the war.

²⁹⁵ Bannister "Sociology" 348.

IV. Evolution and Unity

“And there is the imitative tendency which shows itself in large masses of men, and produces panics, and orgies, and frenzies of violence, and which only the rarest individuals can actively withstand. This sort of imitativeness is possessed by man in common with other gregarious animals, and is an instinct in the fullest sense of the term, being a, blind impulse to act as soon as a certain perception occurs.”²⁹⁶

The social character of man

The social sciences in Great Britain were more than anywhere else shaped by evolutionary theories. Herbert Spencer (1820 – 1903) for example, applied evolution theory to his ‘principles’ of biology, psychology, sociology, and ethics.²⁹⁷ The social and moral instincts of man were among the key issues of anthropology, psychology, and sociology in the late nineteenth century.²⁹⁸ In this context, the masses were conceptualized by the terms ‘gregarious instinct’ and ‘herd instinct’. These evolutionary instincts were to be found in some species of animals, among others in mankind. Despite the connection to animal behavior, the gregarious instinct was usually considered a positive basis of social behavior for British and American thinkers. It had a more positive connotation than the explanations of collective behavior on the continent. Of course collective behavior was partly determined by struggle, but it also had the promise of evolutionary improvement and the highest of human’s achievements.

Wilfred Trotter (1872 – 1939) was a physician and surgeon in London, with a teaching position at the University College.²⁹⁹ Trotter developed ideas about the herd

²⁹⁶ William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) 408.

²⁹⁷ Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 59.

²⁹⁸ *Idem* 60.

²⁹⁹ Trotter’s brother in law and one of his closest friends was Ernest Jones, who would later become the chief Anglo-Saxon spokesman for Freud. Trotter and Jones (1879 - 1958) were the only British persons present at the First International Psycho-Analytical Congress in Salzburg. In the years before Freud’s publication of *Totem and Taboo* (*Totem und Tabu* 1913), Freud corresponded with Jones about the herd instinct. Trotter and Jones

instinct in the early twentieth century, presenting his ideas on one of the first meetings of the British Sociological Society.³⁰⁰ He claims that sociology “is obviously but another name for psychology in the widest sense” because sociology “can include all phenomena of the mind without the exception even of the most complex, and is essentially practical in a fuller sense than any orthodox psychology”.³⁰¹ That complexity is caused by the social character of men: his herd instinct.³⁰² In 1916 Trotter published *Instincts of the herd in Peace and War* wherein he discusses authors like Spencer, James, Pearson, Ward, and Le Bon.³⁰³ Trotter favoured introspective interpretations in psychology, comparative studies of animals, and direct observation of uniformities in human conduct. Crowd psychologists like Le Bon had looked at the herd instinct (or gregariousness) only in crowd situations. But “the failure to investigate as the more essential question the effects of gregariousness in the mind of the normal individual man, the theoretical side of crowd psychology has remained incomplete and relatively sterile”.³⁰⁴ An important difference with the French crowd psychologists is that Trotter’s herd instinct is always present, in every individual.

One of Trotter’s main arguments is that the herd is characterized by homogeneity, secured by sensitive behavior and identification. The opinion of the herd is very convincing for an individual, even more so than personal experience; hence the slow development of science. New ideas always meet with opposition, only to be conquered with the support of others. This is why society is not totally homogenous and change is possible: “Each of us in his opinions and his conduct, in matters of dress, amusement, religion, and politics, is compelled to obtain the support of a class, of a herd within the herd”.³⁰⁵

The ‘gregarious instinct’ of humans is psychologically conflicting with the ‘selfish instincts’. Trotter paid some attention to the contradictions and conflicts in civilization, but before World War I he mainly emphasized the pro-social character of man and the humanitarian possibilities in society. During World War I he wrote the last parts of

were interested in the biological and psychological principles of human life, even planning a book on ‘the maladies of civilization’.

Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 65, 69.

³⁰⁰ Idem 65.

³⁰¹ Wilfred Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War. 1916-1919* (London 1953 [separately published parts since 1908] 1.

³⁰² Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* 6.

³⁰³ The book is made up of some of his earlier work, like “Herd instinct and its bearing on the Psychology of Civilized Man” from 1908 and “Speculations upon the human mind in 1915”.

³⁰⁴ Trotter, *Instincts of the herd in Peace and War* 13.

³⁰⁵ Idem 18.

Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War, wherein intolerance, passions, susceptibility to leadership, and a different mode of consciousness of the herd are highlighted. Here Trotter analyses social instincts in different nations, claiming that the English can be compared to bees, whilst the Germans can be compared to wolves. Although Trotter was not alone in introducing nationalistic prejudice into scientific theory, these conceptions have discredited his work for later generations.³⁰⁶

One of the founders of scientific psychology in Britain was William McDougall (1871 - 1938), who wrote books on instinct and psychology, and social instinct and social psychology.³⁰⁷ He published *An introduction to Social Psychology* in 1908, wherein he discusses the instinct of gregariousness and ‘pseudo-instincts’ like suggestion, sympathy, and imitation. In 1920 he published a sequel: *The Group Mind*.³⁰⁸ The difference between regressive and unorganized crowds and constructive and organized groups is the starting point of *The Group mind*. The central paradox of the book is: “Participation in group life degrades the individual, assimilating his mental processes to those of the crowd, whose brutality, inconstancy, and unreasoning impulsiveness have been the theme of many writers; yet only by participation in group life does man become fully man, only so does he rise above the level of the savage”.³⁰⁹

McDougall takes the primitive mass as starting point, from where he develops ideas about increasingly organized masses. He strongly emphasizes the difference between the unorganized and organized masses; the latter form the foundation of all human communities.³¹⁰ Like other mass theorists, McDougall notices the loss of individuality in the crowd, but he also argues how this loss can be experienced as very positive. He emphasizes that the individuality of modern man causes a certain form of isolation and misery. The bonds within a crowd depend on the homogeneity of its members. McDougall, as many others, mentions the role of instincts and suggestibility in the formation of a

³⁰⁶ Ginneken, *Mass movements* 68-69.

³⁰⁷ During World War I he served as a medical officer. Later in his career he left for the United States, where he was a professor of psychology at Harvard.

Van Van Ginneken, *Mass movements* 72.

³⁰⁸ Full title: *The Group Mind. A sketch of the principles of collective psychology with some attempt to apply them to the interpretation of national life and character*.

³⁰⁹ William McDougall, *The Group Mind. A sketch of the principles of collective psychology with some attempt to apply them to the interpretation of national life and character* (2nd edition, 1927 [first published: 1920]) 20.

³¹⁰ McDougall, *The Group Mind* 48-49.

unified crowd.³¹¹ But unlike the Latin mass psychologists, he claims that people in a crowd are more inclined to act upon noble feelings or moral indignation, than upon cruelty or revenge. This happens because of the suppression of these negative feelings: the shame towards others prevents acting upon them.³¹² So similar to Freud, McDougall claims that a combination of noble feelings and shame are crucial for the unification of collectives.

McDougall is not too pessimistic about modern masses. Nonetheless, he points to the low intelligence of ordinary masses and their perceptiveness to suggestibility. The actions of an ordinary mass are animal-like instead of the result of a 'group mind'. A higher organized mass on the other hand (like an army or even a society) does have a group mind, attained by: historical continuity, a common goal, a common enemy (or: relations with other groups), a body of traditions, and an established organisation.³¹³ Crowd behavior cannot be regarded volitional, because it is purely the result of primary instincts. The behavior of organized groups is higher on the evolutionary ladder, but not necessarily volitional: "The capacity for collective life of an organised group whose organisation is imposed upon it and wholly maintained by an external authority is but little superior to that of a crowd".³¹⁴ Moreover, there are two extreme types of collectives: a group "that owes its creation and its continued existence to the collective idea", which is highest "from the psychological standpoint" against the lowest type of "a fortuitously gathered crowd that owes its existence to accidents of time and place and has the barest minimum of group self-consciousness".³¹⁵ Truly collective volition is paired with feelings of devotion and a rise of the intellectual and moral level of the group.

The social character of man was also emphasized by William James (1842 - 1910). According to James it is instinctually stimulating for humans to participate in collective life, which is advantageous in "facilitating prompt and vigorous collective action". "Sociability and Shyness" are other key instincts of humans and other "gregarious animals" that determine group behavior.³¹⁶ Yet these social instincts are only the starting point of

³¹¹ McDougall, *The Group Mind* 24-25.

³¹² Idem 40.

³¹³ Idem 49-50.

³¹⁴ Idem 50.

³¹⁵ Idem 63.

³¹⁶ James, *The Principles of Psychology* 430-432. James explains that "As a gregarious animal, man is excited both by the absence and by the presence of his kind". He also refers to Darwin's discussion of self-consciousness and stage fright.

crowd behavior: “What particular things the crowd then shall do, depends for the most part on the initiative of individuals, fixed by imitation and habit, and continued by tradition”.³¹⁷ So the choices of individuals eventually determine crowd behavior. It is noteworthy that James emphasizes not just imitation, but also habit and tradition.

Similar to thinkers of the continent, instincts played an important role in the mass conceptions by Trotter, McDougall, and James. But an important difference is the more positive connotation of those instincts and more faith in the power of tradition. They believed in slow progress and the benefits of modernity. This contrasted with, for example, the reactionary ideas of Le Bon or the conservative ideas of German thinkers. The evolutionary ideas behind the social thought of Anglo-American thinkers meant that they considered instincts, collective behavior, and change as both positive and negative – with the underlying faith that evolution eventually meant progress. These ideas were connected to (mainly American) ideas on unity and pragmatism.

Unity and pragmatism

American social thought was for an important part shaped by ideas of unity and pragmatism. The most famous pragmatist was James, whose ideas became well-known in Europe in the first decades of the twentieth century.³¹⁸ James was an admirer of Darwin, but did not believe that evolution theory could provide absolute laws or teach us something about values, as he also admired Freud’s ideas “but hated seeing them treated as the exclusive truth”.³¹⁹ James alternately occupied positions in physiology, psychology, and philosophy.³²⁰ His work *Principles of Psychology* (1890) exerted a great influence on early American psychology.

³¹⁷ James, *The Principles of Psychology* 428.

³¹⁸ Hughes, *Consciousness and society* 112.

³¹⁹ James was a trained medical doctor and started his career as a physiology instructor at Harvard, where he opened, but never used, a laboratory for experimental psychology. He got most of his education in Europe. He was interested in spiritualism, as many others around that time, and in his work as a psychologist he performed hypnotism.

Louis Menand, *The metaphysical club* (New York 2003) 90,141.

³²⁰ Note that James taught courses in psychology to Boris Sidis, a Russian émigré and one of the main representatives of crowd psychology in the United States. James wrote the introduction to Sidis’ doctorate thesis *The Psychology of Suggestion* (1898).

James believed in human agency and free will and argues that all action, as it depends on choice, is moral action. He was critical about the functionalist school of Wundt and developed a philosophy of pragmatism and a psychology of the human mind framed in analogies and metaphors.³²¹ James' pragmatism implied that the human mind cannot act as a mirror or passive instrument; it is an actor and it constructs truth. Along the same lines, James explains causation: we cannot know if causation really exists, but we believe in it because it is advantageous to believe in causation.³²² James formulated pragmatism as a defense of religious beliefs in "an excessively scientific and materialistic age".³²³ Belief in God has a mere pragmatic foundation: "if the hypothesis of God works satisfactory in the widest sense of the word, it is true".³²⁴ The practice of religion is basically a social reality and in this manner can be studied in a scientific way.³²⁵ The same applies to human instincts, for example 'play', which is useful because it is a way of learning for children (and young animals). But there is also another sort of play involving "higher aesthetic feelings":

I refer to that love of festivities, ceremonies, ordeals, etc., which seems to be universal in our species. The lowest savages have their dances, more or less formally conducted. The various religions have their solemn rites and exercises, and civic and military power symbolize their grandeur by processions and celebrations of divers sorts. We have our operas and parties and masquerades. An element common to all these ceremonial games, as they may be called, is the excitement of concerted action as one of an organized crowd. The same acts, performed with a crowd, seem to mean vastly more than when performed alone.³²⁶

So the common element of human society is the 'ceremonial game': a combination of collective action and tradition. The pragmatic benefits of these ceremonial games must also be investigated in pragmatic way - social reality has many dimensions. James claimed

³²¹ David E. Leary, "William James and the art of human understanding" in: Wade E. Pickren and Donald A. Dewsbury (eds.) *Evolving Perspectives on the History of Psychology* (Washington 2002) 110.

³²² Menand, *The metaphysical club* 358.

³²³ Idem 353.

³²⁴ Idem 355-356.

³²⁵ Hughes, *Consciousness and society* 285.

³²⁶ William James, *The Principles of Psychology* ("Chapter 24 Instinct") 428. (<http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/James/Principles/index.htm>)

that reality was “distributive”, which means that each thing relates to other things, but loosely and provisionally; not logical or absolute.³²⁷ The writing of a book, for example, has a material dimension and a psychological dimension: “Everything is many directional, many dimensional, in its external relations”.³²⁸ This idea of philosophical pluralism partly inspired the American idea of political pluralism. Questions on ethnicity, race, and religion were urgent for American social scientists, especially after the big waves of immigration from non-Western European countries in the early twentieth century.³²⁹ The combination of pragmatism and pluralism is also a key factor in the work of John Dewey (1859 - 1952).

Dewey arrived at the University of Chicago, where he became chairman of the philosophy department at the age of 35.³³⁰ Dewey admired James’ *The Principles of Psychology* and the two got in contact in the first decade of the twentieth century. By that time, James was also impressed by Dewey’s school of “New Thought” in Chicago.³³¹ According to Dewey, social psychology must take habit and custom as starting point and investigate “how different customs, established interacting arrangements, form and nurture different minds”.³³²

Dewey believes that individuals are inextricably bound to society, which is a unified whole: “the non-social individual is an abstraction arrived at by imagining what man would be if all his human qualities were taken away. Society, as a real whole, is the normal order, and the mass as an aggregate of isolated units is the fiction”.³³³ This ‘unity’ is a basic feature of Dewey’s thinking; he too opposes the functionalism (e.g. by Wundt) in which actions are subdivided in sensation, idea, and action – an empirical succession of happenings. So he rejects the supposed succession of first stimulus and then response, of first individuals and then society, of first knowing and then doing. His pragmatism meant that the one does not exist without the other; the distinctions are just practical.³³⁴

Along the same lines Dewey rejects the attempts of mass psychology: “the facts which are now usually assembled under the conceptions of collective minds, group-minds,

³²⁷ Menand, *The metaphysical club* 377-378.

³²⁸ Idem 378.

³²⁹ Idem 381-382.

³³⁰ Chicago was a hotspot of sociology and a place with a history of social tensions and early welfare.

³³¹ Menand, *The metaphysical club* 360.

³³² John Dewey, *Human nature and conduct. An introduction to social psychology* (New York 1922) 63.

³³³ Menand, *The metaphysical club* 305.

³³⁴ Idem 330.

national-minds, crowd-minds etc. etc.,” must not be thought of as minds preceding action.³³⁵ If customs or habits are under pressure - during a transitional period “where habits afford no ballast” - then there is room for the “introduction of many novel stimuli”.³³⁶ In these kinds of situations “great waves of emotion easily sweep through the masses. Sometimes they are waves of enthusiasm for the new; sometimes of violent reaction against it – both equally indiscriminating. The war [World War I] has left behind it a somewhat similar situation in western countries”.³³⁷

Leaders of an organization (for Dewey organization means “interaction having settled in habits”) sometimes deliberately disturb the ordinary customs and habits to create these sorts of powerful emotions.³³⁸ This is a procedure used in political campaigns to start a war, and can be considered a crowd or mob situation. But in an ordinary democracy, habit and custom are always predominant and decisive. On these grounds Dewey denounces the “assimilation like that of Le Bon of the psychology of democracy to the psychology of a crowd in overriding individual judgments” because it “shows lack of psychological insight”.³³⁹ Noticeable Dewey does not deny the existence of crowd or mass situations. Dewey’s and James’ explanation and description of a crowd situation actually shows many similarities with mass conceptions on the continent; they only state that these mass situations are exceptional, and they have more faith in the individual and democracy.

Public opinion and communication

American sociology at the turn of the century was characterized by a social-biological or social-evolutionary vocabulary.³⁴⁰ The ‘buzz word’ of early sociologists was ‘social forces’, a broad concept which could imply biological characteristics, psychological characteristics, cultural phenomena, and societal developments.³⁴¹ Despite the growing distance between the life sciences and the social sciences, the model of biological evolution

³³⁵ Dewey, *Human nature and conduct* 60.

³³⁶ Idem 61.

³³⁷ Idem 61.

³³⁸ Idem 60.

³³⁹ Idem 61.

³⁴⁰ De Wilde, *Discipline en legende* 63.

³⁴¹ Idem 64.

remained to affect ideas about social evolution.³⁴² De Wilde characterizes the vocabulary of these early American sociologists as “progressive-evolutionary”: they believed in coherent progress of society and progress of the rational ‘social spirit’.³⁴³ The most well-known example of early American sociology was the so-called Chicago School.

The urban environment of Chicago and the cooperation of sociologists with the many active organizations for political and social reform formed the background of the Chicago School.³⁴⁴ Among the predecessors of the Chicago School were Albion Small, George Herbert Mead, and Charles Henderson, who founded the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1896. It was the first sociological journal in the United States and also the official journal of the *American Sociological Society* from 1905 to 1927. In the view of these men, sociology had to be an engaged discipline, with emphasis on action instead of speculation.³⁴⁵ Chicago sociology was not yet the institutionalized and ‘scientific’ discipline it would become in the 1920s; for the time being it was positioned in a tradition of religious vocation.³⁴⁶

As many early American sociologists, Albion Small (1854 – 1926) was a trained theologian.³⁴⁷ In the work of Small, society and the changes in society were considered as a ‘whole’: the development of the individual could not be different from the development of society – neither could intellect develop separate from instincts.³⁴⁸ Furthermore, Small wanted sociology to be an impartial science; above scientific specialties and above political organizations.³⁴⁹ American sociologists did believe in a special task for elites (usually education), but unlike the European counterparts of elite-theories, they lacked anti-

³⁴² De Wilde, *Discipline en legende* 65.

³⁴³ Idem 67.

³⁴⁴ Idem 77 (For example: the famous Hull House, founded by Jane Adams, a settlement house with women social investigators)

³⁴⁵ Menand, *The metaphysical club* 305.

³⁴⁶ Andrew Abbott, *Department and discipline. Chicago sociology at one hundred* (Chicago and London 1999) 102-103.

³⁴⁷ Small is usually considered as one of the founders of American sociology. From 1892 until his death in 1926 he was director of the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago. It is no understatement that Small had a large impact on early American sociology. The institutionalization of academic sociology was achieved by Small by a successful strategy of demarcation: both from ‘amateurs’ (like welfare workers, journalists, and socialists); from other disciplines (like history, economy, psychology, ethnology, and political science); and from its predecessors (like Herbert Spencer).

De Wilde, *Discipline en legende* 60-61.

³⁴⁸ Idem 68.

³⁴⁹ Idem 79.

democratic tendencies.³⁵⁰ The more egalitarian tendency of American sociology is demonstrated by a change in concepts: the ‘social spirit’ became ‘public opinion’ in the American vocabulary, which referred to the opinion of the collective, not only to the authoritative opinion of the elites. Moreover, ‘public opinion’ became a positive concept by its link to the older term ‘spirit’.³⁵¹ Small believed that the public opinion could be formed by the education and upbringing of the collective, which would result in progress and the survival of a harmonious community.³⁵²

Small emphasizes “the promotion of the general welfare” and the special role of sociologists to lead the community.³⁵³ He is looking for a universal ethical standard, which only sociologists, with their emphasis on the whole ‘social process’ can achieve. His goals form a unity with his theory. According to Small his ethical standard is not normative but descriptive: sociology merely exposes the universal goal of striving for “larger aggregations and juster proportions” of health, wealth, community, knowledge, beauty, and law.³⁵⁴

The Chicago School was most successful in the period 1915-1935³⁵⁵, and its main research subjects were social psychology (the individual and group mind), social organization (urban issues in Chicago), and ecology (space and social structure).³⁵⁶ Robert E. Park formed, together with Ernest Burgess, the core of the Chicago School and together they published the famous textbook *An introduction to the Science of Society* (1921). Park was educated in literature, history, philosophy, and psychology, amongst others by Dewey and James. As mentioned earlier, Park went to Germany where he wrote his dissertation.³⁵⁷ Tarde’s ideas on public opinion and communication (the creative elite compared to the imitating mass) also had an impact on the thought of Chicago sociologists like Park. The study of collective behavior was named and introduced in the United States by Park.³⁵⁸ He

³⁵⁰ De Wilde, *Discipline en legende* 68.

³⁵¹ Idem 68.

³⁵² Idem 69.

³⁵³ Albion W. Small, “The era of sociology” *American journal of sociology* vol. 1 (July 1895) 14.

³⁵⁴ De Wilde, *Discipline en legende* 74.

³⁵⁵ The position of the Chicago School diminished in the course of the 1930s as a result of the stop of Rockefeller funding, whilst the Depression and the wide-ranging crisis made the Chicago research less relevant and European pessimistic sociology more appealing. Bannister, “Sociology” 345.

³⁵⁶ Abbott, *Department and discipline* 6-7.

³⁵⁷ See chapter III.

Henry Elsner Jr., “Introduction” in: Robert E. Park, *The crowd and the public and other essays* (Chicago and London 1972[originally published: *Masse und Publikum*, 1904) viii.

³⁵⁸ Elsner “Introduction” x.

arrived in Chicago in 1913 and was interested in the sociological study of the problems of the modern city, which he thought representative for broader social changes.³⁵⁹ Human associations – for example in the city – were based upon Park’s ideas about ecology: cities can be divided in “natural” areas. Social interaction is determined by competition, conflict, accommodation, and assimilation.³⁶⁰ Communication is important to preserve the order of society, but can also result in conflict.³⁶¹ Like Tarde, Park connects communication and the public opinion to the distinction between the mass and the public.

For Park the difference between the mass and the public is that the mass has one common drive and is influenced heavily by suggestibility and imitation: no individuality can exist in the crowd. The public on the other hand is characterized by individual impulses and interests.³⁶² One only needs the ability to feel and empathize (a psychological process the individual is unaware of) to enter a crowd; while one needs the ability to think and reason to enter a public. The public is always critical; if it stops being critical it becomes a crowd.³⁶³ So the public consists of “individuals with different opinions”, while the crowd “submits to the influence of a collective drive which it obeys without criticism”.³⁶⁴ Hence, “the decisive difference between crowd and public must be emphasized: in the crowd, both the theoretical and the practical norm are implicit in the collective impulse, while in the public – precisely because the individuals have different opinions – the two norms diverge”.³⁶⁵ According to Park, the distinction between the irrational crowd and the rational public “cannot be viewed as a value difference”.³⁶⁶ This is a little hard to believe after the negative description of the crowd, but at least Park tries to make this point and acknowledges the impact of values. European mass theorists usually did not feel the need to make this point.

³⁵⁹ Bannister, “Sociology” 344.

³⁶⁰ Idem 344.

³⁶¹ Laeyendecker, *Orde, verandering, ongelijkheid* 343.

³⁶² Park, *The crowd and the Public* 50.

³⁶³ Idem 80.

³⁶⁴ Idem 80.

³⁶⁵ Idem 81.

³⁶⁶ Idem 81.

Intellectuals and scientists

The ‘othering’ of the masses was not only related to the distinction between elite and mass, but also to the distinction between savages and cultured - or to the distinction between nations. In the interwar period categories of nationality, ethnicity, and religion became more prominent in social thought. As mentioned before, Trotter included nationalist categories in his work on the herd instinct after World War I. Moreover, McDougall connects the development of the collective mind of groups to “national minds” and to the distinction between primitive and civilized nations. McDougall devotes a chapter to the role of communication in modern nations and writes, very similar to Tarde, that “only through an immense development of the means of communication, especially the printing press, the railway and the telegraph, that the modern Nation-State has become possible, and has become the dominant type of political organism”.³⁶⁷ So it was acknowledged that modern communication shaped possibilities to sell the ideas related to these large categories: nationalism is but one example, other examples (mentioned by various thinkers) are socialism, fascism, and anti-Semitism.

So what was the role and responsibility of intellectuals in a modern world where ideas transported by means of mass communication seemed so easily to carry away the masses? It was uncertain how the ideal of the omniscient intellectual above profane interests could be upheld, while it was also uncertain how the specialized scientists could have an impact beyond his specialized and restricted parts of knowledge.

Dewey had specific views about scientists in the modern world: they had a responsibility to educate the public. Scientists face a dilemma: on the one hand their work demands distance from public affairs, on the other hand scientist are a part of the social world “a world that is being made over by the fruits of his labors”.³⁶⁸ Scientists are taught to seclude themselves from the world and necessarily focus on specialized questions, yet “with every increase of specialization, remoteness from common and public affairs also increases”.³⁶⁹ Furthermore, scientific language is incomprehensible for “the mass of men” who have no scientific training. In short: “The scientist may be aloof in his work and

³⁶⁷ McDougall, *The Group Mind* 131.

³⁶⁸ John Dewey, “The supreme intellectual obligation”, *Science* vol. 79 (1934) 241.

³⁶⁹ Dewey, “The supreme intellectual obligation” 241.

language, but the results of his work pervade and permeate, they determine, every aspect of social life.”³⁷⁰

Science does not only influence material culture – as anthropologists call it – but also “affect institutions and great modes of interest and activity”.³⁷¹ But science has transformed life to such large degree, that it has resulted in “social problems of such vastness and complexity that the human mind stands bewildered”.³⁷² One example of the social impact of science is modern warfare (and weapons); another example is economic plenty, ease and security, while want, insecurity and suffering continue to exist. This paradox is created because legal and political institutions are lagging behind science. This is where the “supreme intellectual obligation” comes in: “The wounds made by applications of science can be healed only by a further extension of applications of knowledge and intelligence”.³⁷³ Dewey argues against reactionaries who want to go backward, but also against those who were merely “putting a gloss of humanistic culture over the brute realities of the situation”.³⁷⁴

The “supreme intellectual obligation” means a progressive kind of education. Dewey argues for a “scientific attitude” amongst a larger share of people. Science is not just about gathering information, but of getting acquainted with the methodology of science. Dewey claims that even social, religious and political beliefs should be subjected to scientific inquiry. This scientific attitude can be already formed in early childhood; hence more attention should be given to elementary education. He claims: “There was never a time in the history of the world in which power to think with respect to conduct of social life and the remaking of traditional institutions is as important as it is to-day in our own country”.³⁷⁵ There is so much (and new) knowledge available, but the problem is that this knowledge is “laid away in cold storage for safe-keeping” and that the public is not yet used to see the necessity of that knowledge.³⁷⁶ The separation of the intellectual and scientist was not as sharp for Dewey as for most thinkers on the continent. He claims that

³⁷⁰ Dewey, “The supreme intellectual obligation” 241.

³⁷¹ Idem 241.

³⁷² Idem 241.

³⁷³ Idem 241.

³⁷⁴ Idem 241.

³⁷⁵ Idem 242.

³⁷⁶ Idem 242.

there is a unity of specialized knowledge and a general critical attitude: the public should be educated to attain both.

Mass conceptions on the continent were often related to labor issues and socialism. A labor issue that impacted Dewey's ideas about social relations and social psychology was the Pullman strike in 1894, a conflict between labor unions and railroads.³⁷⁷ Dewey was "no friend of industrial capitalism, but he was not under the illusion that it was about to go away".³⁷⁸ Like James, he opposed laissez-faire capitalism, but was also alien to "race-building and social engineering".³⁷⁹ Dewey admired Jane Addams, trained at the Rockford Seminary, for her welfare work (together with her friend Ellen Gates Starr founder of the Hull House) and her interpretation of the Pullman strike. Addams' interpretation came down to the idea that the antagonism between workers and businessmen was false; in reality both had the same interests.³⁸⁰ The idea of a unity of interests – and the accompanying false oppositions – is also of key importance to Dewey's thought. As James, Dewey also got involved in the debates on ethnicity after the major non-Western immigration and became a protagonist of 'Americanism' and modernity, meaning democracy and 'unforeclosed' possibilities.³⁸¹ It can be argued that the issues of ethnicity, race and citizenship, so typical for the United States, overshadowed the issues of the masses. The system of ethnical separation divided the lower classes and successfully diminished elites' fears of socialism.³⁸²

The opposition between the masses and the individual usually implied the opposition between the masses and the elites, or in more general terms between majority and minority. In continental mass theories 'minority' typically had a positive connotation, pictured as elitist protectors of culture.³⁸³ Also, the majority was often equated with the proletariat. In the United States there was no such obvious distinction between majority and

³⁷⁷ Menand, *The metaphysical club* 295.

³⁷⁸ Idem 373.

³⁷⁹ Idem 370.

³⁸⁰ Idem 314-315.

³⁸¹ Idem 401.

³⁸² Race and ethnicity not only overshadowed the masses, but in particular the "working masses". This issue can be linked to the lack of socialist parties and socialist success in the United States. In the United States the voting laws of 1896 excluded a large share of the new immigrants. The native-born American workers had no common interests in common with new workers from all over the world and wanted to preserve their own privileged position. This led to a loyalty to the Democratic or Republican Party, two non-workers parties, rather than to a loyalty to a workers party. See for example: David R. Roediger, *The wages of Whiteness. Race and the making of the American working class* (London and New York 2000).

³⁸³ Or sometimes (by socialists) with a negative connotation as the suppressors of democracy.

minority; in fact there was a social stratification based on ethnicity and religion. American society was made up of all kind of ethnic minorities while the overarching typical American culture (majority culture) was open to everyone (in principle).³⁸⁴ Ethnical separation combined with the idea of a unity of interests explains why mass culture (e.g. sports and movies) was appreciated. A simple dichotomy of mass vs. elite was just not that logical. Despite these differences, the separation of American and European thought should not be exaggerated.

The comparison of mass conceptualization in the United States and Europe is an interesting issue, since ‘American exceptionalism’ is a common theme among American historians. Although there are good arguments to claim some sort of unity of Western thought, most intellectual histories focus on European thought in the tradition of the Enlightenment, in practice often limited to continental thought. But mass conceptions – at first sight a representative of elitist continental thought - can show that similarities between the United States and Europe are often larger than expected, and that differences between European countries can be larger than between the United States and a specific European country. Besides, the perspective of these intellectual histories (as indicated earlier) was shaped by the mass murder of World War II. Especially German thinkers were judged in the light of these later happenings. But when focusing on a general intellectual concept like the masses, it turns out that – despite differences – American thinkers were preoccupied with similar issues and ascribed a similar role to the elites.

The sharp conflict in German thought between mass and individual, mass and culture, and mass and *Volk* was strange to American thought and society. Yet we have seen how German social thought had an impact in the United States because of travel and scholarly exchange. Park and James took courses at German universities, while Weber met James on a trip to the United States.³⁸⁵ The Frankfurt School gave an impetus to American

³⁸⁴ In the twentieth century a new culture of mass entertainment emerged. Commercialized culture in the form of amusement parks and professional sports, and later Ford cars, radios and movies, resulted in a unified and particular American culture. Shelton Stromquist “The United States of America” in: Marcel van der Linden and Jürgen Rojahn (eds.) *The formation of labour movements 1870 – 1914. An international perspective II* (Leiden 1990) 571.

³⁸⁵ Hughes, *Consciousness and society* 321. Weber was very interested in the Protestant sects in the United States.

Weber about Chicago: “All hell had broken loose in the “*stockyards*”: an unsuccessful strike, masses of Italians and Negroes as strikebreakers; daily shootings with dozens of dead on both sides; a streetcar was overturned and a dozen women were squashed because a “*non-union man*” had sat in it; dynamite threats against the

sociology in the 1930s and even more so after World War II. American sociologists and psychologists were impacted by continental ideas of traditional and modern society. Park's dissertation – titled *Masse und Publikum* – is an example of this impact. In this work Park distinguishes traditional groups from temporary masses and publics.³⁸⁶ Another example is the impact of Tarde's ideas on social psychology. Finally, the links between Freud, British thinkers, and American thinkers demonstrate that the United States was far from a separate intellectual world.

"Elevated Railway," and one of its cars was actually derailed and plunged into the river." (Italics in the original: words, phrases and sentences in English in the original) Weber also calls Jane Addams the "angel of Chicago".

Marianne Weber, *Max Weber: a biography* (New York 1975) 286, 287.

³⁸⁶ Park claims that unlike the public is critical (unlike the mass), but both public and mass lack any regulation, control, and consciousness.

Conclusion

“It is natural that a developing science leans on those already established, as for example sociology on biology. It is also natural that a growing science seeks to fly on its own wings and to establish its own separate domain. Sociology has arrived at this point: it seeks to be established *by itself* and *for itself*. This is a sort of egotism or scientific individualism – useful to some degree, like all animal or human egotism, but beyond a certain point harmful to the individual himself.”³⁸⁷

The chapters above were an attempt to provide a ‘big picture’ of mass conceptualization in relation to the history of the social sciences. Mass conceptualization between 1890 and 1939 included a wide range of concepts and issues that were interrelated in a way not directly visible for a twentieth-first century observer. Also not directly visible was the wide ranging impact of mass conceptualization transcending countries and disciplines. Arguments in conceptual debates were built around a combination of issues like degeneration, decline, instincts, irrationality, homogeneity, suggestibility, symbols, contagion, communication, isolation, modernism, tradition, authority, intellectuals, religion, labor, morals, elites, liberalism, and democracy. It was indeed the specific combination of issues and the resulting arguments that varied.

The conceptualization of the masses and the connection of a key concept with discipline formation are reflected upon in the following paragraphs. I will consider the continuity and discontinuity of mass conceptions and the ‘circulation of knowledge’. Some general conclusions on the role of key concepts in discipline formation are given. Furthermore, underlying issues are touched upon: the role of intellectuals and intellectual leadership, the impact of ideological and political arguments in science, and the difference between real and pseudo science.

The intellectual world of the early twentieth century has been a subject for many historians. I have taken a conceptual approach and have made a particular selection of thinkers to provide a broad perspective on mass conceptualization. It demonstrated that

³⁸⁷ Tarde, “Sociology, social psychology and sociologism” 112.

even scientists with a non-elitist approach – scientists usually not related to mass theories – were fascinated by and conceptualized in some way the behavior of the masses of which they did not consider themselves a part of. As mentioned before, the words mob, crowd, masses, ‘foules’, ‘Masse’, and herd can have slightly different meanings. Then there is the problem of (later) translations when comparing scientists writing in French, Italian, German, English, and Spanish. But to a large degree the thinkers from the previous chapters were writing about the same thing, which can be summarized by ‘conceptualizing the masses’. Continuous is the general opposition between masses and elites between 1890 and 1939. Related is the issue of the intellectual: thinkers saw themselves as experts who diagnosed the problems related to the masses; who could ‘see through’ the true conditions of modern society; and who provided the solutions (politically divergent, but with a similar role for themselves). This continuity of thought implied that a general debate (related to the masses) of all kinds of social thinkers was possible.

A key concept like the masses provided a platform of communication and circulating knowledge: despite many differences social thinkers from all over the world conceptualized the masses in relation to other issues of modernity. The most obvious examples of continuity in mass conceptions were the instinctual character of mass behavior and the susceptibility of the masses to certain means of communication. The intellectual debate was truly international: in their mass conceptions thinkers discussed similar themes and repeatedly referred to each other. The international character of mass conceptions necessarily resulted in contradictions and variation. The exact meaning of instincts in mass behavior was one example: were the masses behaving purely instinctual and animal-like, or was mass behavior characterized by a suppression of instincts? And what were the negative and positive results of instincts? Most thinkers tried to combine the oppositions and came up with paradoxical answers.

The discontinuity of mass conceptions (and related themes) was partly determined by context and partly determined by historical development; the principal breaking point being World War I. The themes in chapter II, III, and IV imply a certain impact of national context on the development of ideas: common experiences and common intellectual

traditions leading to common attitudes and opinions.³⁸⁸ French, German, and Anglo-American traditions - of positivism, historicism, and pragmatism - can be distinguished, though international similarities and exchange must be emphasized when looking at an overarching theme like the masses. Moreover, some mass conceptions are particular hard position. Michels and Pareto for example, showed similarities with both the French and German traditions. As the masses were considered a phenomenon of modernization, the experience of modernization in different countries had a certain impact. French modernization was evaluated as a process of revolutions and communes – combined with a fear for future revolutions. The role of the centralized Republican state – its responsibilities and its flaws - was another important issue. The German context was characterized by extreme modernization in a short period of time. Traditional culture and leadership - and the tension with the modern democratic state - were crucial issues. The Anglo-American context was characterized by more flexible political answers to modernization. Changes were considered evolutionary and a more positive view of modern society was upheld, though there was a fear of biological decline.³⁸⁹ In Italy and Spain the crisis of liberalism was perhaps most severe: the role of elites and intellectuals was very important in this context.

The themes discussed in each chapter reflected sociopolitical contexts and intellectual traditions, but also showed coherence: the themes ‘elites’, ‘authority and subordination’, and ‘intellectuals and scientists’ are analogue. The same accounts for themes like ‘the power of collectives’, ‘mass democracy’, and ‘unity and pragmatism’. The division of an international concept in certain themes is always (to a certain extent) artificial, but the connections between thinkers and the context have demonstrated the diverging character of vocabularies, while also pointing out the international similarities. Even more important, the thematic approach has demonstrated that a key concept can transcend disciplines. It showed the many similarities in the work of thinkers that were later considered either sociologist or psychologist.

³⁸⁸ Here some particular national characteristics are discussed. As the political, economic, and cultural contexts were not part of the main text, the national characteristics raised here provide only a first inclination.

³⁸⁹ For example: social hygienic and eugenics movements. Issues like urban degeneration and the welfare state were important, but the main arguments were biological rather than social.

As pointed out before, the conceptualization of the masses implied the conceptualization of intellectuals. Taking the masses as a starting point gives the opportunity to see more clearly the intellectual elitist tendencies in the work and views of social thinkers of the era. The opposition between the masses and elites – and the role of intellectuals - proved to be problematic. Leadership could imply power-political leadership (viewed both positive and negative), but also the leading role of ideas and symbols. Most thinkers saw a specific role for intellectuals as leaders of ideas, opinions, and symbols. But by conceptualizing the masses they (unwillingly) undermined their own position. It turned out that it was very difficult to establish a definition for the masses and even harder to link it to mass behavior. The connection between a category of humans (mass or elite) and particular behavior turned out to be untenable. To uphold their idea of an opposition between masses and intellectuals, the intellectuals were trapped in a swamp of contradictions and paradoxes. One solution was to abolish the opposition, but that did not seem a satisfying answer to modern conditions. Another solution was to categorize humans on other grounds, for example on the basis of religion or ethnicity as in the United States (with the same conceptualization problems). In Europe too other standards of categorization became more successful; the German opposition between *Masse* and *Volk* is just one example. Everywhere categories of nationality, religion and ethnicity became more important – with the same problem of particular behavior linked to categorization. Many scientists included nationalistic or racial arguments in their mass theories – especially after World War I. The political variants of this type of thought are infamous – and those political variants discredited the social thinkers for later interpreters. Yet we have seen that mass conceptions (sometimes connected to national or racial categories) were found among various positions of the political spectrum.

One result of these new categorizations was the abandonment of the idea of the cosmopolitan intellectual. ‘Masses’ and ‘elites’ had been relatively abstract and international concepts, while the new categories were positioned geographically, religiously, or biologically. It is no surprise then that the disappearance of the international intellectual who stood above profane interest (if a person like that had ever existed) was a theme for social thinkers. Mannheim’s argument of the last generation of the free-floating (*freischwebende*) intellectuals is in keeping with this idea. But instead of these ‘true

intellectuals' losing ground, I would argue that the masses became more intellectualized in the course of modernity. In the decades after World War II the masses were no longer just visible as soldiers, as laborers, or as voters; but also as students and scientists. Knowledge became available on a large scale. Perhaps all this happened not according to the traditional ideal of the omniscient and cosmopolitan intellectual, but in a specialized world of scientific disciplines the masses were increasingly educated. The result was that the opposition between intellectual and mass – and between intellectual and scientist - seemed no longer tenable.

Mass conceptions were, perhaps more than anything else, a sign of intellectuals' fear. Important is the role of political and ideological arguments in science: were mass conceptualizations only political tractates in disguise? And if ideological arguments have a demonstrable impact on science, what then are the differences between real and pseudo science? The ideological and political arguments used (implicit or explicit) in mass conceptualizations are significant. Mass conceptions were impacted by two opposing tendencies: the elitist fear to lose a privileged position or the rejection of those traditional privileges. The thinkers discussed in chapters II, III, and IV range from liberals, to socialists, to conservatives, to reactionaries. Politics exerted a certain impact, but mass theories were not restricted to one political side. The majority seems to have been distrustful of the masses, which is in keeping with their position as intellectual elite. The most illuminating examples are of course the thinkers (and politicians) who shifted from one extreme to the other – with unchanged ideas on their role as intellectuals.

The political positions of the scientists varied and this seems to have determined - at least to some extent - the reception of their work after World War II. The most reactionary and pessimistic thinkers were repudiated easiest, this happened for example to Le Bon and Michels. But the pessimistic tendencies (by post-World War II standards) in the works of the 'classics' should not be underestimated: mass behavior was generally considered a threat to tradition and the masses were ascribed a lack of consciousness – whatever that meant.³⁹⁰ Even progressive Americans like James and Dewey conceptualized the masses in this way. If we look from a distance to the similarities in mass conceptions, the judgment of historians like Schorske, Stuart Hughes, and Ringer was perhaps

³⁹⁰ Of course many also accepted the power of tradition and habit - even in modern mass society – but the decisive new object of investigation was the role of the masses in the modernization process.

exaggerated: the fear of certain intellectual positions leading to fascism and other intellectual positions leading to liberalism cannot always be maintained.³⁹¹ A comparison between continental and Anglo-American mass conceptions demonstrates more similarities than expected by these histories.

So are there any cognitive argument (in mass conceptions) to indicate value difference? To a certain extent there are - though never completely separated from ideology and political happenings. This cognitive distinction was not to be found in categorization (which everyone did, not only with the conceptualization of the masses, but also public, nation, religion, race etc.), but the role of the individual *despite* categorization. Some thinkers saw that the massive scale of modern society not only or necessarily implied the loss of individualism – the human scale – but also offered new opportunities of individualism. This acknowledgement seems to be far more in correspondence with social reality – or at least in correspondence with the social reality in those political systems worth defending. In general terms it were the thinkers who had denied the human scale and the opportunities for the individual, who were most fiercely judged because of the connection with the systems that had done the same: in Nazi Germany and Communist Russia individuality was denied under the claim of mass support.

Mass theories cannot be considered as mere ideology. The methodological problems of the social sciences also incited and determined mass conceptualizations. Ideas about collective and individual behavior – defining issues in sociology and psychology – were developed at least partly in the form of mass conceptualizations. Ideas on the institutes of modern society were also connected to mass behavior. Mass theories pointed out that the borders between individual and collective behavior were not easily established. Social psychology emerged as an attempt to include sociological and psychological explanations. Also, the limits and problems of categorization – one of the problems was the role of values – were significant cognitive aspects. Though categorization is always impacted by values, the acknowledgment of this impact at least challenges the absoluteness of categories. This acknowledgment is crucial in the social sciences, but it does not necessarily imply that the mass was useless as a concept. It seems too easy to come to this

³⁹¹ Ringer makes a clear connection: the orthodox mandarins were tempted to make a pact – implicit or explicit – with conservative forces in Germany under the banner of Idealism or cultural unity. Their aversion of modern interest- and class-politics could easily lead to the “pseudoidealistic world of anti-Semitism and aggressive nationalism.” Ringer, *The decline of the German mandarins* 135.

conclusion, as fundamental methodological issues of categorization concepts are an unpreventable aspect of social science.

Concepts are characterized by the relation between the linguistic and material world.³⁹² We can question the “reality” of a concept, especially a concept as vague and capricious as the masses, but we cannot do without concepts.³⁹³ In my opinion, the concept mass did not imply a natural essence, but neither a mere illusion. The behavior of people in masses was different from the behavior of individuals: this was both commonsense knowledge and a socio-political reality. But of course categories more specific than the masses were easier to investigate – and these categories became more successful with the advancement of statistics. The combination of concepts and statistics is very strong: arguments reinforce each other and categorization gets an objective appearance. Even if political implications of categories are debated, the social sciences have no other option than use some categorizing concepts. When social circumstances change, these concepts change too. The urgency of a concept like the masses is demonstrated by the contradictions and debates. It shows a time of heavy (re)conceptualization: knowledge was moving. The concept mass was probably always too large and ambiguous to result in scientific precision, but social thought stood only at the beginning of its scientific aspirations. In the socio-political context and intellectual context of the early twentieth century the concept masses made sense.

The concept mass lost its importance with the emergence of new, more specific categories and was also discredited on the basis of ideological and political arguments. It is hard to separate ideological and cognitive factors without falling into traps of presentism – but it is crucial when thinking about the relation between a key concept and discipline formation. Did mass conceptualizations play any role in discipline formation? Chapters II, III, and IV demonstrate the use and meaning of the concept was transcending disciplinary boundaries. It was an overarching intellectual theme that was conceptualized in relation to other social and scientific issues. When looking at the conceptualization of the masses, we can put question marks at the separate character of sociology and psychology between 1890 and 1939. Ideas from different directions (earlier disciplines and popular knowledge)

³⁹² At least in the German practice of conceptual history

³⁹³ This also accounts for the debate on the “reality” of categories like race and gender in the second half of the twentieth century.

determined not only mass conceptualization but also a general platform of intellectual debate.

Although there is much to say for Nisbet's argument that the 'unit ideas' of sociology were part of philosophical conservatism, it is doubtful whether he is right in saying that these conservative ideas were no issue for mainstream psychologists. The psychologists discussed in the previous chapter give another impression: they were definitely involved in conservative issues like the masses. Of course the examples do not represent the total discipline of psychology; the discussed thinkers may have been outsiders. This might be true to a certain extent, but it can hardly be argued that James, Feud and McDougall were outsiders. On the contrary they had a great impact on the development of psychology in their countries (and James and Freud international too). Furthermore, the fact that sociology and psychology were not clearly demarcated disciplines also raises doubt about Nisbet's claim of 'mainstream'.

Disciplinary developments can be considered as a process of hybridization - and mass conceptualization as one particular example of hybridization. In the early phase of a new discipline, conceptual debate provided a platform of communication, while the boundary work (related to the general debate) resulted in increasingly established disciplines. When sociology and psychology became more firmly institutionalized the general themes - like the masses - lost some of its importance. The point where urgent key concepts and specialized knowledge meet is historically interesting. It turned out to be impossible to provide a sensible conceptualization of the masses according to tightening disciplinary standards. The need for sub-disciplines like social psychology can be explained by these developments. In many respects this situation still exists today: general themes that seem important to contemporaries but do not fall into one established disciplines can result in general debate first, and then in sub-disciplines, interdisciplinary approaches, or even the rise of new disciplines. Eventually established disciplines can even disappear when they do not cope with new issues. If new urgent issues are ignored by established disciplines - and those disciplines are no longer capable to demonstrate their importance in other spheres - new disciplines will replace older ones. So the strength of a scientific discipline is partly determined by its role in general, public or intellectual debate: some connection to society at large is necessary to ensure the survival of a discipline.

A key concept can have a certain impact on emerging disciplines. New approaches and new disciplines are formed on small differences: the commensurability and continuity with older disciplines and popular knowledge is much larger (in the early phase) than is supposed by the idea of dramatic paradigm shifts. Moreover, if we look at the social sciences in particular the 'classics' are still inspiring to read for historians - as many methodological problems and objects of investigation are unchanged. The concept mass has lost its scientific importance, but the related methodological issues have not. Other categories are now important in the social sciences, but with very similar methodological problems. For historians the interplay between the continuity and discontinuity (of concepts and methods) is valuable to do justice to the historical context of ideas. Beyond ideology and political positions, methodological issues (and slightly changing concepts) also determine the history of science. This form of historical continuity betrays a presentist view, but (as argued before) this continuity might be the only way to give some sort of transcendental meaning to science. Crucial remains the combination of concepts, context, and disciplines.

Epilogue

When I started working on this thesis the Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant* published a series of seven articles on the masses. The basic assumption was that the masses were “still not lost”: in the twentieth-first century the modern mass-person was once again “breaking adrift”.³⁹⁴ In relation to newsworthy mass situations old mass theories were discussed (Canetti’s *Crowds and Power (Masse und Macht 1960)* and Ortega y Gasset’s *The revolt of the masses*). The panic of the masses during the 2010 Dutch commemoration of the victims of World War II – because of a supposed bomb threat - is but one example. Another form of contemporary mass behavior, it is argued, is the behavior of stock speculators: in accordance with Canetti’s definitions they behave first like festive masses – investing massively - and the next moment as escapist masses – selling all their stocks so that the markets collapse.³⁹⁵

In a wide sense the issues connected to mass conceptions are still agenda setting. The key concepts of modernity are still a subject of public debate and popular knowledge. The failures and achievements of modernity are often associated with the massive scale of society, perhaps even more so in this time of increasing globalization. Tönnies’ critique on modern economy characterized by egoism, competition, acquisition, and instrumental rationality, shows similarities with critiques after the recent crisis in the financial markets. Mass behavior and leadership are discussed in the media. Contemporary example are: theories of more responsible ‘new leadership’, global warming, mass tourism and the loss of authenticity, violent mass behavior of hooligans, massive support for Geert Wilders, and the necessity of a cultural, intellectual and political elite.³⁹⁶ The role of the media and the public opinion are related issues. Scientific disciplines are also dealing with collective behavior: the recent (regained) popularity of social psychology, behavioral studies, and communication studies are illustrating examples.

³⁹⁴ Anet Bleich, “Nog is de massa niet verloren. Niet iedere massa is bij voorbaat gevaarlijk”, *De Volkskrant* (15 May 2010). (“hoe de moderne massamens opnieuw op drift is geraakt”)

³⁹⁵ Pieter Klok, “Feesten, en dan wegwezen”, *De Volkskrant* (18 May 2010).

³⁹⁶ On the necessity of elites, socialist politician Jan Marijnissen is quoted.

See: a series of the Dutch documentary platform *Tegenlicht*; Merlijn Schoonenboom, “Bij Ludwig in de slaapkamer”, *De Volkskrant* (20 May 2010); Martin Sommer, “De weeskinderen van Wilders”, *De Volkskrant* (25 May 2010); Michiel de Hoog, “Hoe een coach waterbuffel wordt”, *De Volkskrant* (27 May 2010).

Many of the arguments that are used today have their origins in the end of the nineteenth century. The masses and the individual - the behavior and consciousness of collectives - are historical issues of continuing interest in the twenty-first century. Journalists and newspapers are still the carriers of intellectual debate, while the public is more and more involved in shaping the debate by means of the newest forms of communication. The history of mass conceptualization between 1890 and 1939 provides a point of view on the origins of a type of knowledge that is still in use today. Conceptual history turned out to be an inspiring approach to the history of science and disciplines. It provided me with the possibility to connect large currents of thought to specific ideas, while the demarcated concept helped to maintain a focus in the abundance of ideas.

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