

trying to satisfy. During the last century and a half, some scientists studying cultural phenomena have broken away from this traditional pattern and begun to develop a theoretic knowledge independent of practical social purposes, expecting that eventually a new type of technologist will apply the results of their investigation to social practice. Those people who now demand that such scientists make themselves useful by having their knowledge serve social aims and ideals probably do not realize that they demand the perpetuation of that very pattern of "social scientist" which has hitherto prevented the development of a really useful social technology.

7. COMMON-SENSE KNOWLEDGE

While the knowledge of the technologist evolves out of the technical knowledge of occupational specialists, the knowledge of the scientist who deals with cultural phenomena originates in that set of nonspecialized information about language, religion, magic, economic processes, customs, mores, persons, and groups which individuals in a given society are supposed to possess in order to perform the roles of members in this society. Of course, not everybody is expected to have equal knowledge in this general and common field: the young presumably know less than the old; the knowledge of social leaders and rulers ought to be more extensive and comprehensive than that of ordinary members. But the most essential part of it, that which is regarded as indispensable to have collective life run its regular course, must be common to all; anybody whose information

does not include that minimum, unless a child or a stranger, is a fool, and in any case unfit to participate in collective life. Nor can there be disagreements as to its validity: anyone who doubts any part of it is mentally or morally deranged. This is *common-sense* knowledge which concerns the supposed foundations of the existing cultural order and as such is obviously certain. For every explicit or implicit generalization which it contains is connected with some rule of cultural conduct. A knowledge of vocabulary and grammar underlies the rules of verbal communication; popular religious and magical knowledge is bound up with rites and abstentions which every individual is expected to observe in the regular course of his life; a common-sense economic knowledge is implied in the regulation of the distribution and consumption of goods (as distinct from the specialized technical patterns of production); common-sense psychological and sociological knowledge underlies the norms involved in social relations, personal roles, and group organization. This connection may be clearly observed in proverbs, the "wisdom of nations."

So long as the cultural order has behind it the common authority of the groups composing a particular society, and particularly if this authority is supported by religious sanctions showing that it is a sacred order, the norms which it includes must be valid. Any individual deviation from them only strengthens their validity, for it is qualified as an offense against superindividual standards and its repression makes the society more conscious of the importance of those standards. And, therefore, the

deviation

generalizations connected with such norms *must be true*; in common-sense knowledge "exceptions confirm the rule," for they make it more manifest to common reflection.

Take, for instance, the age-old common-sense "truth" that women are inferior to men. This "truth" cannot be doubted in any society in which subordination of women to men is a normatively regulated part of the social order, for to doubt it would mean to question the validity of all the patterns of social relations between the sexes. Exceptions merely confirm it, for any relationship in which a man—say, a henpecked husband—is subordinated to a woman is regarded as abnormal. And such a generalization can easily coexist with another emphasizing the inborn inferiority of lower classes—say, the villains as compared with the nobles. For women of the higher class are simply not compared at all with men of the lower class. There is no social need for such a comparison, since men of the lower class are socially subordinated to men of the upper class; and if occasionally a noble woman rules over villains, she does so as the representative of some man, absent, dead, or immature.

These judgments of personal "superiority" or "inferiority" are evaluative. Judgments of value constitute the nucleus of all common-sense knowledge; for there is always a judgment of value directly implied by a rule of conduct. Descriptive and explanatory judgments have mostly an auxiliary significance. For instance, historical description shows the goodness and greatness of national heroes and rulers. Economic valuations implied by the

rules of prudence are supported by the description and explanation of economic facts. Psychological concepts commonly applied to human individuals are evaluative, positively or negatively, as "intelligent," "stupid," "wise," "foolish," "courageous," "cowardly," "persistent," "obstinate," "proud," "humble," "vain," "modest," and so on. Only in explaining why an individual "came to be that way" are nonevaluative statements used.

Common-sense knowledge, like technical knowledge, is thus relative to practical interests. And yet there is a fundamental difference between them. The cultural order being inviolable, it does not provoke the same kind of problem of practical control as the natural order. The individual is presumably unable to change it and is not even supposed to want to change it; the only problems he is expected to face are those of his own personal adaptation to the order such as it is. This concerns not only the average member of such a stable society but also the ruler and master of men, lay or religious. He has to adapt himself to the existing systems of binding norms like everybody else; and it is his function to maintain those systems against all disturbances, whether from individual offenders, foreign aggressors, evil spirits, or natural forces. And every individual by the time he grows up and becomes adapted knows all he ought to know about the cultural order from his own personal experience, merely by participating in it. If by any chance he needs to learn something about facts which are unconnected with his own share in collective life and about which he consequently has no firsthand knowledge founded on personal

participation, all he needs to do is to ask somebody who possesses this knowledge.

The only way in which the common-sense knowledge of a society can ever become problematic is through collective opposition to the cultural order which this knowledge underlies. We say "collective opposition" because if only scattered individuals oppose it they are regarded by the society as abnormal and their opposition is viewed as criminal, sinful, or at best foolish. Nor can criticism of "our" cultural order coming from another society with a different culture raise doubts as to the validity of "our" standards; it only provokes the tendency to retaliate by criticizing whatever in that culture appears as negative when judged by "our" standards. Their language is unintelligible babble, their religion is unholy, their customs are ridiculous, their mores are wicked, their art is ugly, their wisdom is folly, and their social structure is chaos.

Opposition must develop inside a society to shake its belief in the manifest validity of its order and the self-evident truth of the common-sense knowledge that underlies it. Of course, opposition usually presupposes cultural contacts with the outside social world.⁶ New cultural patterns which the opponents tend to substitute for the old are seldom entirely original creations of

⁶ H. E. Barnes and H. Becker in their remarkable work *Social Thought from Lore to Science* (Boston, 1937-38), especially in the first volume, emphasize the cultural contacts between different societies which overcome their social and mental isolation, as the main factor of inner cultural conflicts and of critical reflection about the social order. This is the first consistent and inclusive historicosociological study of the genesis and evolution of social thought.

theirs: in most cases they originate in individual reproduction—with some new variations—of patterns which already exist in other societies. "Foreign" standards and norms of conduct may be imported by returning travelers, merchants, wanderers, immigrants; in literate societies they sometimes come by way of indirect communication through books and periodicals. Sometimes there has been an overlapping of groups bearing different cultures in consequence of invasion, gradual interpenetration on frontiers, or common participation in large groups drawing members from different societies, like an international church or class organization.

But in any case the acceptance of patterns from outside which conflict with the existing cultural order or (less frequently) of new patterns originally produced by members of the society do not give rise to collective opposition unless there is at least latent revolt more or less widely spread among a part of that society. It may be the revolt of youth⁷—a usual phenomenon in societies with certain types of education—or a class revolt, or a revolt of some group which is a part of the society but which does not quite fit into it functionally. However, the investigation of all these varied and complex processes would take us far beyond the scope of the present work.

When within a society have been formed two conflicting groups or parties, one of which tends to change the traditional cultural order (or any part of it) while the other tends to maintain it, thinking about the nature and foundations of this order, hitherto not only unnecessary

⁷ F. Znaniecki, *Social Actions* (New York, 1936), Chap. XIII, "Revolt."

but undesirable, becomes a duty of the adherents of both parties—let us call them “novationists” and “conservatives.” For knowledge can be a weapon in social struggle, although in the situation we are now discussing, when active social tendencies combating or supporting social rules precede and condition reflective thinking about the theoretic foundations of those rules, opposing parties cannot by intellectual arguments induce each other to change their tendencies. Yet such arguments have a double use.

First, they strengthen the conviction of the adherents of each party that their own tendencies are “right” and those of their opponents “wrong”; and such a conviction is a real social force. This is not so important for the supporters of the existing order, since they have on their side all the traditional standards of validity hitherto recognized in the given society and need no new arguments to convince them that they are right. The opponents of this order, on the contrary, must find some new standards of validity to believe in, for only then will their status in their own eyes be not that of mere rebels giving vent to their subjective dissatisfaction but that of fighters for an objectively valid “cause.” Therefore we find critical reflection about the nature and foundations of the cultural order originating and developing primarily among novationists, while conservatives are less “intellectual” and rationalize their defense of the traditional order mainly in reaction to arguments of their opponents. This does not apply to “reactionaries,” like Joseph de Maistre, who

wish the return of a cultural order that has already lost its old claim to social validity.

The second advantage of knowledge as a social weapon is that it can be used to gain adherence or at least sympathetic neutrality on the part of people who are undecided or not directly interested in the struggle; and if the latter lasts long enough, knowledge may help “convert” the young. In either case, of course, appeal must be made ultimately to the active tendencies of the people whom one or the other party wishes to influence into taking its side; but knowledge may be an effective instrument in making this appeal.

However, this duty to think about the cultural order is dangerous from the point of view of both parties, for the opponents of the traditional order wish the thinking to undermine it intellectually by invalidating the “common-sense” knowledge which underlies it while the defenders wish the thinking to strengthen it intellectually by proving that knowledge to be essentially true. Now, ordinary people without special preparation cannot be trusted to perform this duty independently, for their untrained and undirected thinking may lead them astray: they are apt to commit silly “errors” of judgment which, instead of supporting their own side in the controversy, furnish arguments for the other side. Some intellectually superior and widely informed person must do the thinking for them, and their duty is then simply to imitate his thinking and assimilate its results as well as they can.

Ordinarily, it seems, such thinking for the rank and

file of novationists and conservatists is a part of the role of their social leaders. This phenomenon can still be observed in preliterate societies and peasant communities. But unless such a leader-thinker leaves a written record of his thinking, the memory of it does not survive him very long. History has preserved mainly the names of leader-thinkers who have left writings or to whom later writers have ascribed certain intellectual achievements. These range from legendary *héros civilisateurs* like Moses and Numa Pompilius, through such historical leaders as Hammurabbi, Amenophis IV, and Solon (whose written works are not quite authenticated), to men whose functions as both are certain, like Caesar and Calvin. Some leaders in modern societies still try to combine these functions—take Sun-Yat-Sen, Lenin, Trotsky, Mussolini, Hitler, and (on the other side) less famous persons like the conservative British statesmen.

Usually, however, in most complex societies, active social leaders lack the time, the will, or the ability to theorize for their followers about the cultural order. Somebody else from among the novationists or conservatives performs this function, being regarded as wiser than the others and being accepted by them as their guide in thinking about the social or—more generally—cultural problems which the actual conflict is raising. A distinct kind of social role develops which may be called by the old term “sage.”

The original status of the sage lies within his party, and his original function consists in rationalizing and justifying intellectually the collective tendencies of this

party. It is his duty to “prove” by “scientific” arguments that his party is right and its opponents are wrong. If a novationist, he has to prove, for example, that the traditional religious system, or the political structure, or the laws and customs, or family life, or the class hierarchy, or the organization of economic processes, or the art and literature of the past, or all of them together are partially or completely “bad” and ought to be reformed, if not abolished; and that the changes of those systems or the new systems which the novationist tends to introduce are good and ought to be accepted. Such was the function of the “Church fathers” in the first centuries of the Christian era, of the humanists from Petrarch to Erasmus (their innovations, though largely borrowed from ancient civilizations, were new with reference to the existing order), of the writers and preachers during the Protestant Reformation, of the French political scientists in the eighteenth century, of the socialist writers of the nineteenth. After a new order has been introduced, and while there is still some open or latent resistance to it on the part of the adherents of the old order, the task of the sage is to justify the innovations by “proving” the superiority of the new order over the old. In this sense, all students of culture and even some natural scientists have been compelled to perform roles of “sages” at the beginnings of the Bolshevik regime in Russia and the Nazi regime in Germany.

If the sage represents a conservative group, his duty is just the opposite. He has to show by “scientific” argument that existing cultural systems and traditionally es-

established patterns are positively valuable, that good necessarily results from their maintenance, whereas their overthrow or reform according to the novationists' plans would have evil consequences.

To perform his function a sage is supposed to possess encyclopedic knowledge of the entire past and present culture of his own society and as much knowledge of other cultures as can be used to prove his theses by analogy or contrast. For novatory currents are seldom limited to one field of culture, but directly or indirectly spread to various fields and conservative reaction interprets collective attacks on any set of traditional rules as threatening the whole established culture.

For instance, religious struggles between Christianity and Paganism and later between Catholicism and Protestantism involved customs and mores, the structure of many social groups, including the state, economic organization, literature, and art; the economic class struggles started by the socialist movement involve all "bourgeois" culture; the political revolt of the Nazi has left no cultural standards of Western civilization untouched; even such primarily artistic and literary currents as the Renaissance or Romanticism had wide religious, social, and economic implications. On a smaller scale the same phenomenon may be easily observed in traditionalistic rural communities. The sage of either party must have all the knowledge necessary to attack or to defend by reasoning and factual evidence his party's standards of valuation and conduct in any field of culture.

In his method he must subordinate altogether prob-

lems of truth and error to problems of right and wrong. His thinking is directed by two fundamental postulates: that which is right must be based on truth; that which is wrong must be based on error. And "right" for the sage whose role is bound up with a group in struggle is whatever his group wants; "wrong," whatever the other group wants in opposition to his. His method consists in showing what general truths are implied in his own "right" standards and what general errors the "wrong" standards of his opponents imply and in adducing facts which validate his judgments. Of course, facts will validate them: that is certain *a priori*. All that is needed is to select the facts properly and interpret them in accordance with his premises. Because this kind of argument is not reducible to the principle of contradiction, he needs both positive empirical evidence to support his own truths and negative empirical evidence to make his opponents' errors manifest.

There is no doubt but that he can perform this task to the satisfaction of himself and his adherents, for in the vast multiplicity of diverse cultural data it is always possible to find facts which, "properly" interpreted, prove that the generalizations he accepts as true are true and that those he rejects as false are false. But his task becomes complicated by the activity of the sages on the other side, who try to prove the rightness of their standards and the wrongness of his by deducing from the former "truths" which are confirmed by facts and from the latter "errors" invalidated by facts. If his group is in power, his opponents may be simply silenced. Never in

the course of history has silencing been so thorough and consistent as under the present regimes in Germany and Russia. But if there is a certain freedom of discussion, the sage must use either dialectics to prove that the reasoning of his opponents is false, or factual evidence to show that their facts are unreliable; or both.

✓ However, sages—like technologists—sometimes go beyond their socially determined roles and fail to limit themselves to a mere justification and rationalization of the existing tendencies of their parties. They try to create “higher,” more comprehensive and exhaustive standards of valuation and norms of conduct than those explicitly contained in the existing cultural order or the opposition against it. These become “ideals,” with reference to which cultural reality is conceptually organized into an axiological system. If the sage is a novationist, his ideal is the supreme standard of a new order which he constructs conceptually in advance, but it is also a standard by which the actual values and tendencies of the novationists themselves are judged. The future order is to include values which find no place in the old order and to satisfy tendencies which hitherto remained unsatisfied, but these values and tendencies must be justified by the ideal. Any values and tendencies detected among the novationists which are not in accordance with the ideal ought to be eliminated. On the other hand, the ideal may demand the creation of new values and the development of new tendencies by those who will participate in the new order. To participate in St. Augustine’s

“City of God,” men must become true Christians. The future communist society requires new values in every field of culture and a working class morally purified of all the defects shown by the *Lumpenproletariat* as well as by the passive servants of capitalistic paternalism and imbued instead by a new type of solidarity.

On the other side, the conservative sage, who regards the existing order as satisfactory from the point of view of higher standards of valuation and conduct, does not judge it to be a perfect embodiment of those standards. He sees many imperfections, not only individual deviations from the rules but conflicts between rules and inconsistencies in the common-sense knowledge that underlies them. He discovers some group values and group tendencies which should not be there, because they disagree with the highest standards, and also the lack of other values and tendencies which should be there because those standards imply them. The traditional order is thus normatively criticized, systematized, and perfected. This does not mean that the sage desires to innovate: the essence of the existing order is right; its defects are accidents due to the imperfection of human nature. Take as examples Confucius, Xenophon, Cato, Cicero, Seneca, Dante, Fénelon, Blackstone, and Disraeli.

A few sages even try to rise above the actual struggle between conservative and novationist currents and seek supreme standards to which the valuations and active tendencies of both may be subordinated, as, for example,

Lao-tse, Socrates, Marcus Aurelius (whose role as a sage was altogether independent from his role as an emperor). But this kind of thinking (for reasons which we hope to make clear in our next chapter) is rather characteristic of scholars when they act as sages and turn to the ideal standardization of practical cultural life—like Plato, Aristotle, St. Thomas, Spinoza, Locke, Hume, Kant—than of those sages who have no backing by a school and whose role depends on partisan support.

Impartiality is probably more frequent among sages who devote themselves mainly to negative criticism rather than to positive ideological construction. In any case, it is always easier for a sage to criticize his opponents effectively than to "prove" the rightness of his own standards and the truth of his generalizations. And a critique of culture in general may be used by each party against the other; such double use was made of the Book of Ecclesiastes, of the works of the Sophists, the Cynics, Montaigne, La Rochefoucauld, Nietzsche.

When a sage, instead of merely justifying and rationalizing existing collective tendencies, undertakes the task of standardizing and organizing them conceptually with reference to an ideal, this ideal takes the place of the popular standards of "right" and "wrong," and becomes a criterion of truth and error, in the sense that whatever generalizations are implied in it must be true while those conflicting with its implications must be false; whatever facts confirm the former must be real, whereas those that seem to invalidate them must be unreal. Thus, for a sage of China the axiological and normative order

of human society agreeing with his ideal coincides with the order of the universe.⁸ Only those who accept and conform to the former understand the latter; there is no conception of objective theoretic truth independent of ethical and political valuation not only as to culture but also as to nature. In the Socratic-Platonic conception, the Good is the supreme criterion and truth must agree with it; no idea can be true which conflicts with the idea of the Good, and because the empirical world is only real as a sensory manifestation of the ideal, no reality can objectively exist which does not conform with the idea of the Good: everything else is an *illusion*, a *μη ὄν*. For the Christian sage, "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom" and the love of God is its culmination: God, supremely good and wise, is the source of all truth and all reality; and any theoretic judgment that presumes anything else must be either error or a lie. In the Marxian doctrine, standards of knowledge are relative to natural conditions, determined by the economic structure of society at particular stages of the dialectical historical process; the validation of Marxian theory is that it corresponds to the final stage of this process—the passage from capitalism to the ultimate synthesis of communism, and any theory that disagrees with it must be invalid.

Obviously, the role of the sage makes him unable to construct the foundations for a practical control of cultural reality. For the kind of knowledge which his social

⁸ M. Granet, *La Pensée chinoise* (in the series "Evolution de l'humanité").

✓ duty makes him cultivate is not subjected even to the pragmatic test of success or failure, like the knowledge of the technological leader, expert, or inventor. The only test which it has to undergo is its acceptance or rejection by the people who participate in cultural life. And this acceptance or rejection is directly dependent on the attitude of those people toward the standards of valuation and norms of activity to which the knowledge of the sage is subservient. If they recognize his standards and norms, they believe that his knowledge is true, because they want it to be true; if not, they believe that his knowledge is false, because they want it to be false.

✓ Nor can the sage advance theoretical knowledge about culture independently of practical purposes, for this needs scientific objectivity, which is incompatible with his role. Therefore, with the slow but steady growth of the objective sciences of culture which scholars and investigators are building, the role of the sage is becoming increasingly difficult. For, although objective theoretic knowledge in such fields as sociology and economics can be applied to practical problems, just as objective theoretical knowledge in physics or biology is being applied, yet it furnishes no basis for the construction or defense of any ideological system: it can be used only to show how those who construct and accept this system can realize it.

And yet the social demand for sages does not decrease—rather the contrary. Not only do the ruling groups in societies with new “totalitarian” orders require all their scientists to be sages, helping to prove the validity of

such orders, but also among the populations of democratic countries there seems to be a growing demand for sages. In the great complexity of modern social life, with its numerous and partly overlapping groups, each having an order of its own, there are various in-group and inter-group conflicts which cannot be subsumed or regarded as parts of any universal ideological opposition.⁹ The growing rapidity of change brings with it a multiplicity of these conflicts at an ever-increasing rate. The interdependence between groups and societies makes many of these conflicts practically significant for people not directly engaged in them. The spread of communication and popular education inform the large mass of the people about the innumerable new and complex issues which continually arise in every domain of culture and in every part of the world and any of which may sooner or later have some influence upon their own lives. Of course, they cannot understand those issues or interpret the meaning of the crowding events with reference to their interests, valuations, and norms. They feel the need of enlightenment from men of superior mind and wider information. And in response to this need, there have arisen thousands of diminutive sages ready to tell them from the pulpit, the platform, the newspaper column, the pages of a magazine, the radio broadcasting center, what

⁹ This is well manifested in the inability of any ideological group in America to persuade the American people that the entire present situation in this country is one of fundamental opposition between capitalism and proletarian revolt, or individualism and collectivism, or democracy and totalitarianism, or nationalism and internationalism, or religion and atheism, or spiritualism and materialism, or any other such alternatives.

they ought to think about everything important that is going on in the cultural world. While such wise persons can unhesitatingly appreciate whatever they speak about in terms of religious righteousness or moral goodness, justice or artistic beauty, political efficiency or economic utility, eugenics or human welfare in general, the way they use facts and generalizations to "prove" such judgments shows that they either ignore the growing body of theoretically objective and methodologically exact knowledge about cultural phenomena or else arbitrarily pick out of this knowledge only that which seems to fit into their axiological thinking.

Often scientists who have achieved prominence as technologists in the field of nature or as theoretic scholars and investigators in mathematics, physics, or biology feel the urge to tell the human world what is good for it: as, for example, Howard Scott and Bertrand Russell. And when public opinion tends to make scientists partly responsible, along with rulers and leaders, for the common incapacity of mankind to direct cultural evolution and to eliminate the evils which plague it, there are many scientists who confess the guilt of their profession, condemn the idea of a purely theoretic science independent of practical considerations, and demand that it subordinate the "search for truth" to social ideals. We need only mention two recent well-known books written in this spirit: Bernal's *The Social Function of Science* and Lynd's *Knowledge for What?*¹⁰ It seems

¹⁰ There have been other significant attempts to show what "ought to be" the connection between science and social life; take, for example,

thus, at first glance, as if the trend toward theoretic objectivity in the domain of cultural knowledge, until recently considered one of the most marked achievements of the nineteenth century, were condemned to disappear or to weaken; sages, individually or in schools, would then rule this domain as completely as they did formerly—a retrogression that would defeat entirely the very object of those who claim that the supreme function of scientific knowledge is its service to human welfare.

8. THE BEGINNING DIFFERENTIATION OF ROLES IN THE REALM OF CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

However, along with the persistence of the old pattern of the sage, other trends appear in modern thinking about the cultural world. In the first place, the traditional function of the sage often begins to split into two different functions, in accordance with a distinction between two tasks which was logically established long ago but seldom clearly carried out in actual life. To construct an axiological system centered around some religious, moral, political, or economic ideal is one task; whereas, when the realization of this ideal or of a part of it is taken for an *end* of planful activity, to show how this end can be attained under the given cultural conditions is another task and a very different one.

This second task is apparently similar to that of the technologist's in the natural realm; the first one has no

T. B. Veblen, *The Place of Science in Modern Civilization* (New York, 1931); J. G. Huxley, *Science and Social Needs* (New York, 1935).