

## ***Weltanschauung* as a priori: sociology of knowledge from a ‘romantic’ stance**

**Tamás Demeter**

Published online: 21 February 2012  
© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2012

**Abstract** In this paper I reconstruct the central concept of the young Lukács’s and Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge, as they present it in their writings in the early decades of the twentieth century. I argue that this concept, namely *Weltanschauung*, is used to refer to some conceptually unstructured totality of feelings, which they take to be a condition of possibility of intellectual production, and this understanding is contrasted to an alternative construal of the term that presents it as logically structured, quasi-theoretical background knowledge. This concept has Kantian reminiscences: it is a condition of possibility of intellectual production in general. The young Mannheim and Lukács rely on ‘*Weltanschauung*’ so understood as a phenomenon mediating between the facts of society and individual intellectual production and reception: it is seen as being conditioned by sociological facts and therefore as a historical and sociological category through which, and therefore indirectly, society enters into intellectual production.

**Keywords** György Lukács · Karl Mannheim · Worldview · Interpretation · Ideology · Historical a priori

### **Introduction**

The roots of the sociological tradition of Hungarian philosophy (Demeter 2008) reach through Simmel to Kant. Simmel himself wrote an influential monograph on Kant (Simmel 1904) and held views that were in several respects close and

---

T. Demeter (✉)  
Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, Hungary  
e-mail: demeter@webmail.phil-inst.hu

T. Demeter  
University of Pecs, Pecs, Hungary

congenial to the ideas of his contemporary neo-Kantians. He shared the view, for example, that the gap between natural and moral sciences is due to their different theoretical aims and methods. On this basis, Simmel rejected positivist approaches that considered the method of natural sciences an ideal for the study of history and society; and he rejected historical realism as well, i.e. the stance committed to the claim that the past is something already given and can be known factually. (For a summary of this debate see Anderson 2003, 226.)

On the theories of the young Lukács and Mannheim, and through their work on the entire sociological tradition, Simmel's thought had a profound influence with respect to these specific questions, and more general ones as well. In their early writings both Lukács and Mannheim studied the characteristics of various forms of knowledge. The main field of Lukács's interest was aesthetics and the knowledge represented in aesthetic form. He explored the nature of knowledge fossilized in the drama and the novel, and the interconnections among various social–historical conditions under which this knowledge had been manifested in various ways. Mannheim's interest had a much broader scope: it extended to the most general problems of interpretation and the limits and conditions under which philosophical and historical knowledge is possible. Both Lukács and Mannheim were highly sensitive to the problems and prospects of sociological methods in intellectual history, but they did not advertise it as the exclusive way to successful interpretive practice. They both situated sociological understanding in the context of non-sociological interpretation while granting significant room for immanent or purely aesthetic approaches to the intellectual content of any work—from philosophical tracts to cathedrals.

The enterprise they undertook, as I am going to argue here, is naturally seen from a Kantian–Simmelian perspective: they were searching for a priori *conditions of possibility* in the context of which various forms of knowledge, in the broadest possible sense of the term, could have emerged. *Intuition (Anschauung)* is a basic concept of Kantian epistemology. Space and time are a priori intuitions that provide the a priori form of possible human experience, as only something presented to us in space and/or time can be an object of cognition. Space and time are, therefore, a priori conditions of possibility of human knowledge: our knowledge must conform to them. Phenomena, the objects of possible experience, are accessible to human cognition in no other way but in space and time—and conversely, these a priori intuitions cannot be known independently of spatial and temporal phenomena.

In this paper I will try to show that the concept of a *worldview (Weltanschauung)* has a similarly central role to play in the emergence of the sociological tradition of Hungarian philosophy. In the young Lukács's and Mannheim's epistemology, '*Weltanschauung*' is used to refer to a priori conditions of possibility of cognition and intellectual production in the broadest possible sense of the terms. But unlike the Kantian concept of intuition, *Weltanschauung* is a *historical* a priori condition. Space and time are universal forms of human experience, characteristic of human beings in general: they are, for human beings, the same everywhere and at all times. *Weltanschauung*, albeit a universal condition, can be different historically, socially, and geographically. Different *Weltanschauungen* can be characteristic of different

peoples living in different social circumstances. So, while space and time are the same for us, we still can have different worldviews.

In what follows I will argue that while this concept, and thus Lukács's and Mannheim's theory of knowledge, are reminiscent of Kantian themes, they also have close connections to a 'romantic' outlook, as it introduces a fundamentally irrationalistic approach to the individual's relation to the world. This feature is mainly due to the way they construe the content of '*Weltanschauung*', a construal that presupposes an affective and unreflective stance toward the world, which is given in raw feelings. This stance is in sharp contrast with more rationalistic interpretations of this concept for which the individual's relation to the world is logically and conceptually structured and is therefore directly accessible to the interpreter's rational reconstruction.

Lukács's and Mannheim's romantic stance is the cornerstone of a sociology of knowledge which understands intellectual phenomena not as arising directly from social or economic relations or reflecting them; instead they trace the outcome of intellectual production back to a worldview that is subjectively given in the totality of feelings the subject has toward the world surrounding him. This totality is, in a very subtle and delicate way, conditioned by social and economic circumstances, but these are only distantly relevant for the purposes of interpretation: what really matters is given in a subjective and fundamentally affective *Weltanschauung* and its relation to intellectual production and reception.

Sociology of knowledge founded on this concept of *Weltanschauung* diverges from positivistic approaches, as well as from those sociologies of knowledge, including Marxist approaches, which presuppose a direct connection between the facts of society and intellectual phenomena. As Lukács puts it:

... the size of strata possibly influenced by literature, by drama, is merely relevant as a fact; the most relevant boundaries of influence are set by the quality of these strata, i.e. their feelings, evaluations, thoughts, that is to say: their ideologies. Therefore, economic relations determine only a couple of basic facts playing a role as the most general framework; the directly efficient causes are entirely different. I know it is a very rough scheme of these interconnections if I sketch them as follows: economic and cultural relations – frame of mind – form (the a priori of creation for artists) – life as subject matter – creation: life shaped in a particular form – audience (here again the chain of causes: frame of mind – economic and cultural relations) – artistic effect – the reaction of the possibilities of artistic effect to creation, and so on *ad infinitum*. (Lukács 1978, 21)

Therefore, Lukács's early methodology for his sociology of knowledge is not based on the reduction of artistic creation to 'hard', i.e. quantifiable and mathematically interpreted, economic and social facts. This is his main objection to Marxism which he keeps repeating in his early writings: Marxist theories all too hastily establish direct links between socio-economic facts and intellectual products. As an alternative view, he emphasizes that cultural production is embedded in the context of a worldview, of "life as subject matter," and the interconnections between them.

### ***Weltanschauung* as condition of possibility**

In Lukács's drama book, *The History of the Evolution of Modern Drama* (Lukács 1978; originally written in 1907, published in revised form in 1911), *Weltanschauung* is presented as a condition of possibility for artistic creation and the reception of works of art. In this sense it has a double role. On the one hand, *Weltanschauung* is the source of the material of dramatic composition, i.e. it provides the content that can be represented in the form of drama in any given age and society. And given that certain kinds of material can be more suited to some forms of representation rather than to others, therefore "a given worldview brings along some forms, and while it makes them possible, it also excludes some others" (Lukács 1978, 20). For this reason *form* is a priori in relation to artistic creation, or more generally, to representation. On the other hand, *Weltanschauung* is a condition of possibility of artistic *effect*; it is the background against which the audience's reception is possible and against which a work of art can exercise its potential effects. These two aspects can be easily combined and generalized: worldview is the source of both producing and making use of public representations. In any given age and social circumstances it defines the frameworks within which phenomena in general can be represented so as to be adequately perceived and therefore within which such representations can be understood.

It should be emphasized that *Weltanschauung* plays a general role in the production and use of representations: it is more than a constraint on and a condition of possibility of artistic representations, as it has the same role in relation to representations *in general*. Lukács's and Mannheim's sociologies of knowledge are frequently understood as discussing sociological questions pertaining to art, humanities, and social sciences while avoiding such questions in relation to mathematics and the natural sciences (see e.g. Bloor 1973, for a recent discussion see Seidel 2011). Despite the fact that similar questions were not explicitly raised with regard to the natural sciences—quite plausibly because Lukács and Mannheim were preoccupied mostly with the sociological interpretation of artistic creation and political thought—, Lukács's drama book is quite straightforward on the possibility of extending sociological inquiry in this direction:

It is a tendency of modern science, to use Simmel's words, to reduce qualitative definitions to purely quantitative ones. For instance, only quantitative differences decide on how we perceive the qualitative differences between lights and sounds. One could refer to the very general tendency that reduces human relations, the laws of sociological events etc. to statistical, purely numerical correlations. What is important here is this: development takes us from the direct apperception by the senses to intellectual apperception; the category of quality is being replaced by that of quantity, that is to say – in the language of art – definition and analysis takes the place of symbol. (Lukács 1978, 73)

Following Simmel, Lukács in this and some other passages points to the mathematization of nature and various phenomena in general, a tendency which emerges in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and dominates the development

of modern science for general orientation (see Reill 2003). Together with Werner Sombart and, again, Simmel, Lukács saw this development as clearly rooted in social processes, namely, in the consequences of capitalistic production. For him the essence of the modern division of labour, which he contemplated with significant aversion, is that the worker organizes his work independently of his personal and sometimes irrational inclinations and his qualitatively specifiable capacities: the worker does so in an exclusively functional way that is totally unrelated to his personality.

This is analogous to the main economic tendencies of capitalism: production becomes something objective, something independent of the personality of those performing productive work. As Lukács puts it:

As a result of the capitalist economy an objective abstractum, viz., capital, becomes the actual producer, which has hardly any connection to the personality of its contingent owner; what is more, it is often entirely superfluous for the owner to have a personality (corporation). Scientific methods, too, lose their connection to personality. While in medieval sciences (e.g. alchemy, astrology) – just as in medieval arts and crafts – all knowledge was bound up with a person, and a master passed on his knowledge, the “secret,” to his disciples, in modern science research into details is increasingly objective and impersonal. (Lukács 1978, 105)

From this angle Lukács explores the general tendency of alienation and impersonalization brought about by the transformation of social and economic conditions and their various manifestations throughout the spheres of labour and the bureaucratic organization of the state. Then he draws the conclusion:

... they all exhibit the same tendency: a development toward impersonalization and toward the reduction of the category of quality to that of quantity. Accordingly, and analogically, the way people contemplate life and the world tends in the direction of a reduction of everything to absolutely objective laws that are unrelated to anything human. Here I am contrasting only the two poles: a miracle as something to be anticipated in a worldview to occur anytime, and laws of nature reduced to mathematical formulations. Ties between person and person are becoming constantly looser, while objective ties are becoming more and more numerous, entrenched and complicated. (Lukács 1978, 106)

From these passages it is easy to overhear Lukács's romantic aversion to such developments. What is especially important for our present purposes is that the influence of social and economic conditions on the evolution of *Weltanschauung* is manifested generally: it permeates all the spheres of life and thought. Therefore the ways in which representing and understanding the world are possible in a given age depends on the *Weltanschauung* as conditioned by social and economic circumstances: whether representing nature by mathematical means can satisfy explanatory needs, and what sort of cognitive needs it can satisfy, depends on the way people look at their world, which in turn depends on their complex sociological status. However, social and economic circumstances play only an indirect role here, as the

focus of sociological understanding for Lukács is always set on *Weltanschauung*: it provides the direct context of understanding representations; it explains why a given kind of representation is legitimate, desirable, satisfactory, etc. Sociological relations provide only a distant framework for interpretation; they shed only a dim light on why *Weltanschauung* evolves the way it does.

One should note that Lukács in his early sociology of knowledge is not primarily interested in the content of particular representations. He does not look for causal explanations for the social processes as a result of which certain representations have emerged and become widespread. The main topic of his drama book is the raw material that modern life provides for representation in general, and how that material can be represented in the form of drama. Therefore the book is focused on the withering away of personal bonds due to which the modern individual takes on an increasingly inward-looking stance. As a result of this insight Lukács reaches the conclusion that this highly individualistic modern life-style poses a problem for dramatic representation as it provides experiences that constitute material much more suitable for a novel than a drama.

This approach, however, is general, and it is not restricted to the field of artistic representation. The same question arises for modern science concerning the ways the worldview pervading modern life influences scientific representation. In this respect a specific *Weltanschauung* is a general condition of possibility of representation within given social-economic circumstances. As opposed to the “strong programme” in the sociology of knowledge (see Bloor 1973), which is preoccupied with a social causal explanation of truth-conditional content (see Demeter 2009), the focus in Lukács and Mannheim is not set on the connection between meaning as propositional content and social processes; instead it is set on something that is not propositional in nature; something that is very hard even to formulate in propositional form.

The trouble is due to the fact that *Weltanschauung* is not even conceptual in nature. The foundation of the young Lukács’s and Mannheim’s method of writing intellectual history is summarized in the “sociological assumption” that there is such a thing as a spirit or mood of an age, and any specific style of intellectual production springs from this spirit which is a “form of experiencing the world that strives for expression” (Lukács 1977, 404). So the central question for them is a *question of style*, and not a question about the sociological explanation of particular contents, works of art or scientific theories. As Lukács (1977, 405) put it when writing about the theory of literary history, style is sociological in the sense that it provides a permanent solution to the problem of representation: it is a sustainable way of giving form to the material available for representation. Not content but style, i.e. permanent common features of various kinds of representations, is the central concern of this sociology of knowledge: certain general insights that answer the question of *why in this way* and *why in this form* various contents are expressed under given social circumstances. The form, of course, has an influence on content, but it is style and not content that concerns Lukács and Mannheim foremostly.

The concept of a ‘style of thought’ is frequently used in intellectual history and history of science (see Hacking 1985). For Lukács ‘style’ means a “form of experiencing” the world, and when Mannheim (1986, 191n5) defines his concept of

a “style of thought” he proceeds along a similar way: it is defined by a specific “mind set.” Lukács’s “form of experiencing” and Mannheim’s “mind set” are both without conceptual structure and refer to a disposition to perceive the world in a particular way. These ways of perceiving are to be revealed in the background of cultural production—from cathedrals to scientific theories.

A style of thought gives the form to this unstructured perception and the former is thus an intellectual and conceptualized expression of the latter. A style of thought is not a property of individuals; it is rather a social and historical phenomenon from which individual thinking cannot be independent. Instead, a style of thought is part of the conditions within which individual thinking and expression are possible. And Mannheim provides a neat formulation of the sociological significance of this fact:

... even the “genius” does not think in a vacuum, but can only choose the starting-point for his thinking from among the concepts and problems with which history presents him. These concepts and problems express a spiritual and experiential situation which, just as much as the other constituents of our life, arises in the historical stream. However radical the novelty of what he brings to life, the thinker will always do it on the basis of the then-prevailing state of the question concerning life, the store of his concepts will be only a modification of this collective possession, and the innovation will inevitably be taken up in turn within the on-going historical current. (Mannheim 1986, 50f.)

In this sense, a style of thought sets the limits of thinking and expression, but it also ensures their possibility in so far as a style of thought provides a conceptual framework for grasping in a specific way the experiences characteristic to a given age.

This perspective may seem to invite us to interpret the works of cultural production exclusively in a sociological context. This impression may be further reinforced as soon as it is noticed that for Mannheim (1986, 58) styles of thought are reflected even in ideas that have no direct social relevance. It seems natural then that the meaning of these ideas is to be interpreted sociologically. However, Mannheim does not attribute an absolute status to the sociological perspective, as is obvious from his pronouncement concerning early Romanticism which can be understood as an “immanent ideological” phenomenon (*ibid.* 116); i.e. one that is devoid of sociological influences. This would mean understanding early Romanticism as a reaction to the tendency during the Enlightenment to rationalize everything—or at least to the effort to represent everything as rational. The sociological interpretation of Romanticism does not make immanent interpretation illegitimate—and this is a lesson that Mannheim (1980) generalizes to other cultural phenomena subject to interpretation.

The concept of style so understood can be extended beyond the limits of literary and artistic representation; indeed it can be generalized as an overarching category of the sociology of knowledge. This is what Mannheim does when he interprets conservatism as a style of thought that does not necessarily entail a political commitment. This style of thought can be revealed in the background of various theoretical positions, a ‘style’ that is highly similar to Lukács’s concept of a style in literary history:

We refer to a *style of thought*, as distinct from the mere variety of schools of thought, when the perceptible differences in thinking do not merely turn on theoretical differences, but rather when differences in the comprehensive world-view underlie the theoretical differences which can be readily made apparent; and – more importantly – if we can establish a different set of mind and a different existential relation to the object of knowledge. ... For want of a better expression we talk about a ‘style of thought’ whereby ‘style’ is a term taken from the history of art. Nothing is further from our minds than ‘analogue’ thinking with artistic creation. We can only learn something from the history of styles in so far as there are, in spite of differences, also commonalities that are shared by the disciplines relating to intellectual and cultural history. (Mannheim 1986, 191n5)

This sociology of knowledge is thus focused on the understanding of a style underlying the common features of various objectifications and representations the key element of which is *a given way of perceiving the world* – that is a worldview which specifies a relation to the world and provides the conditions of possibility of its expression. This is the most general foundation upon which the young Lukács’s and Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge is built.

### **The concepts of a *Weltanschauung***

Let us now turn to a more precise characterization of what Lukács and Mannheim understand by the term ‘*Weltanschauung*’, and what the methodological role of this concept is. Mannheim (1952) in an early paper, originally published in 1922, distinguishes two concepts of *Weltanschauung*. According to the first, ‘worldview’ is a *rational* category, a kind of theoretical construct that can be accessed in a logically structured and propositional form. Following Raymond Geuss’ (1981, 265) more recent reconstruction this concept of a ‘worldview’ can be taken to be coextensive with ‘ideology’ and to mean those beliefs: (a) that are widely accepted among the members of the group; (b) whose elements are connected systematically; (c) that are central to the agents’ conceptual schemes (in Quine’s sense, i.e. that the agents do not give up easily); (d) that deeply influence the agents’ behavior; and (e) that are about the central questions of metaphysics and human life in general.

Relying on this concept the role of the interpreter can only be the search for logically structured contents in the background of various works. By doing so, however, we give up the idea of understanding those fields of cultural production (most typically artistic creation) that do not presuppose a philosophically articulated relation to the world, i.e., that can be fully and rationally reconstructed. Besides, this understanding of ‘worldview’ prevents the aspiration to analyze this theoretical-philosophical background in terms of a worldview—simply because this background constitutes the worldview itself.

This rationalistic understanding of ‘worldview’ can itself be interpreted as a heritage of the tendency during the Enlightenment to represent everything as rational. By contrast, Mannheim unpacks the concept in a ‘romantic’ way that



places the emphasis on its affective content, and correspondingly labels this different concept of *Weltanschauung* as *irrational*. He follows Wilhelm Dilthey when he claims that worldview so understood is “a-theoretical,” and as such is not a product of thinking: theoretical or artistic contents themselves spring from some a-logical and unstructured totality. This totality is given as a set of mind in feelings and experiences, and the works of cultural production are “expressions” and “documentations” of this underlying totality from which the totality itself can be reconstructed and interpreted (see Mannheim 1952, 43).

This means that the latter “irrationalistic” concept of *Weltanschauung* is not essentially irrational—if it was, then that would entail the impossibility of making it rationally accessible. An essentially irrationalist concept of worldview would make impossible theoretical discussions of the phenomenon, and thus it would be methodologically useless. A happier term, therefore, would be ‘a-rationalistic’—meaning that a worldview is neither rational nor irrational, because due to its nature the category of rationality cannot be applied to it.

The young Mannheim and Lukács perceive a methodological problem pertaining to this a-rationalist concept of worldview; a problem that was perhaps best formulated by Georg Simmel:

it is then simply the essence of human spirits not to allow themselves to be bound together by *one* thread, in the same way that scientific analysis does not stop with the elementary unities in their specific bonding strength. Indeed, perhaps this whole analysis, still in an objectifying and apparent reciprocal meaning, is a mere subjective act: perhaps the bonds between the individual elements are indeed frequently rather uniform, but *that* unity is not within the grasp of our understanding ... In every moment these processes are of so complex a kind, harboring such an abundance of manifold or contradictory vicissitudes, that identifying them with *one* of our psychological concepts is always incomplete and actually falsifying: even the life moments of the individual soul are never connected by just *one* thread. Nevertheless, even this one picture is that which analytical thinking goes about creating from the inaccessible unity of the soul. Certainly there is much that we have to conceive of as in themselves fully unitary – as a blend of emotions, as a compound of multiple drives, as a competition of conflicting feelings; however, the calculations of understanding lack a schema for this unity, and so it must construct it as a resultant of multiple elements ... with various analogies, prior motives, or external consequences (Simmel 2009, 232f.)

In other words, the seemingly paradoxical task here is that the interpretation of a work of cultural production should, in a way that is conceptualized and structured, grasp a totality that is originally an a-logical and unstructured totality, i.e. a worldview, which is given in subjective feelings and experiences. The difficulty here comes in two forms: first, to understand the work to be interpreted as an expression and document of a worldview, and secondly, to reconstruct this worldview in a conceptually structured way. That is to say, interpretation in the first step has to deconstruct a logically structured work into a worldview that is non-conceptual and

affective, and then in the second step it has to rationalize this worldview that is essentially a-rational and a-logical.

This task may seem paradoxical, but it is not hopeless. As Mannheim sees it, a worldview is beyond thinking but it is not beyond interpretive reason: it is not a product of thinking, but it can be made rationally accessible, at least to some extent. The task of “*Weltanschauung interpretation*” is precisely to make the unstructured totality of a worldview accessible from its documents, i.e. to make a worldview rationally and theoretically accessible. For Mannheim’s (1952, 73) methodology “the crucial question is how the totality we call the spirit, *Weltanschauung*, of an epoch, can be distilled from the various ‘objectifications’ of that epoch—and how we can give a theoretical account of it.”

The documentary character of works is not given as a material or physical fact, but it serves as evidence which interpretation can rely on. Therefore interpretation for Mannheim is a positive science itself, but not in some sense analogous to natural science: interpretation is based on the phenomenological insight that this documentary character is omnipresent in any work of intellectual production. Works, no less than material or psychological realities, are given in this way. Relying on the a-rationalist understanding of ‘*Weltanschauung*’, works can be understood as documents expressing an underlying totality of feelings and experiences, and as such a worldview can be treated as the “principle” of general concepts of style, i.e. one whose validity is not restricted to some specific realm of intellectual production.

The young Mannheim and Lukács take this a-rationalist concept of worldview as methodologically central for sociologically inspired interpretative enterprises. When Lukács (1978, 38) talks about the worldview of the author as the “ultimate cause” of any drama which the author seeks to inculcate into the audience, then he does not mean that the author is to convey philosophical contents to the audience, but rather the expression, communication and reception of a specific way of seeing and feeling. When he discusses the problems of eighteenth-century drama, he concludes that the experience of the rising bourgeoisie did not provide sufficient raw material on the foundation of which aesthetically successful tragedy could have been written. The worldview of author and audience in this period did not provide a sufficient ground for the expression and reception of tragic feelings, because the world was not experienced in a tragic way; the world was not given in a tragic feeling.

This experience is accessible only during ages of decline that are quite unlike the eighteenth century for the experience of the nascent bourgeoisie. Within the alienating and depersonalizing relations of bourgeois society individuals turn inward and make their existence increasingly psychological as opposed to extraverted, i.e. embedded in social relations and organic communities. Due to these individualistic and psychologistic tendencies, the decline of the bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century cannot supply the experience that could be aptly represented in dialogical forms as required by the form of drama. Expressing experiences in an age of inner-directed individuals is much less possible in dramatic form than in the form of a novel. As Lukács (1971, 89f) puts it in *The Theory of the Novel*, first published in 1916, the hero of the drama does not know the intimacy of the inner world; the novel, by contrast, is about the intrinsic value of the soul that undertakes the project of knowing itself, that looks for adventures in order to test and thereby to find and

justify itself. And this is the tragedy of the *modern* drama: it has as raw material only experiences that cannot be put into dramatic form.

The set of possible feelings and experiences in any given age is limited for Mannheim (1952) as well, and the limits are set by sociological and/or anthropological factors—depending on the framework of interpretation. We have seen: worldview is the mediating link between the works of intellectual production and the facts of society; it is given in the unstructured totality of feelings that arises under social circumstances, and which is an a priori condition of possibility of representation and cultural production as well. In this respect *Weltanschauung* is again a close relative of Kant's *Anschauungen* that are likewise non-conceptual forms of experience (see Hanna 2005): *Anschauungen* (and we may add, *Weltanschauungen*) are not concepts, they are not conceptual in nature, they do not mean knowledge, and do not have a structure similar to Geuss' analysis.

Unlike Kant's a priori pure *Anschauungen*, *Weltanschauung* as a condition of possibility of representation can only be accessed, for historical-interpretive investigation at least, by *reconstruction* which is possible only on the basis of documents. What they document is not accessible independently of the documents themselves: "we understand the whole from the part, and the part from the whole. We derive the 'spirit of the epoch' from its individual documentary manifestations—and we interpret the individual documentary manifestations on the basis of what we know about the spirit of the epoch." (Mannheim 1952, 74) So, we could say in the Kantian idiom, *Weltanschauung* is empirically real but transcendently ideal: works of cultural production are impossible independently of a worldview, but a worldview cannot be known independently of the works of cultural production.

The fact that understanding a worldview requires interpretation of documents provides some latitude to the interpreter in two respects. First, the selection (or accessibility) of documents on the basis of which reconstructing worldviews is possible is not neutral as to the result of such reconstruction. Secondly, and more importantly, much depends on the contribution of the interpreters themselves, i.e. on "where the interpreter grasps the connecting principle of the spirit of an age," as Lukács (1977, 404) puts it, which can serve as the basis of constructing styles and building canons.

This latitude entails that the reconstruction of a worldview can proceed along different lines and toward different results, depending on available evidences and the sensitivity of the interpreter. This does not necessarily entail, however, arbitrariness on the interpreter's part, but a general methodological constraint on this specific mode of cognition. What *Weltanschauung* interpretation can do is to attempt to grasp conceptually and theoretically the totality of experiences that is given in a non-conceptual way, and on the foundation of which cultural "objectification" is possible. As a result, we can hope that

... [c]ertain details may even stand out more vividly, when illuminated by theory; and theory may help us to see as enduring 'facts' certain things which would otherwise fade away after the intuitive flash is over. This, then, is one thing scientific analysis can do for cultural products: it can stabilize them, make them endure, give them a firm profile. (Mannheim 1952, 72)

## *Weltanschauung* and ideology

In Lukács's drama book the concepts 'worldview' and 'ideology' are not separated with sufficient clarity, and more often than not they seem to be nearly identical. Despite the lack of differentiation, it is possible with some interpretive effort to draw a distinction between the two concepts, mainly because the content of 'ideology' is frequently vague, while that of 'worldview', as we have seen above, is fairly clear. In Lukács, and in the young Mannheim as well, the emphasis is placed on worldview as distilled experience, as a way of feeling toward world and life, which can be expressed and communicated in various forms.

The meaning of 'ideology' can be revealed against the background of Mannheim's (1954, 49f) concept of a "total ideology" that is characterized as the "total structure of the mind of this epoch or of this group," and contrasted with the "particular conception of ideology" which refers to representations that are "more or less conscious disguises of the real nature of a situation." I would emphasize the *structured* nature of ideology, in contrast with the unstructured nature of a worldview. Ideology as structured fits well with the rationalist concept of *Weltanschauung* from which it is hardly distinguishable. If ideology is just a conceptually structured worldview, then different conceptual structures and belief systems built upon them are just different worldviews and ideologies at the same time.

However, as we have seen above, a worldview can be structured and expressed in various ways, and various aspects of it can be revealed in various forms of intellectual production. As Lukács, almost echoing the Simmel passage quoted above, puts it in his drama book:

Every classification actually is only the outlook of a theory; in the actual cases there are always inseparable unities. Classification is given real meaning by the fact that these outlooks remain different sides of something, even if it is the same thing; they remain lines coming from different directions, even if they meet in a common point. (Lukács 1978, 94)

That different sides are revealed and stabilized by conceptualization is a significant feature of classification, because conceptualization does not merely arise from the worldview but it also has an effect on the future development of the worldview from which it arises. Ideological work, i.e. intellectual work that rationalizes and conceptualizes a worldview, is thus itself work on the worldview to which any work of intellectual production owes its ideological content. Expressions and rationalizations of a worldview have an influence on our relationship to the world primarily given in feelings and affections – i.e. on our *Weltanschauung*.

Ideology can thus be understood as a rationalized formulation of some pre-theoretical and non-conceptual worldview. Due to ideology-critique, ideology can be recognized as ideology, and this entails *a kind of* recognition of the underlying worldview as well. Just as different processes of conceptualization and rationalization of a worldview may result in different ideologies, ideology-critique can also be pursued in various ways depending on the critic's sensitivity and intentions. Ideology-critique is thus an ideological work itself that inevitably relies on the critic's worldview. There is thus no accurate mapping of ideology on worldview;

the relation cannot even be adequately reconstructed in the process of ideology-critique: there can only be competing interpretations of this relation from among which one can choose on the basis of one's own worldview.

A worldview expressed as ideology, i.e. in a conceptually structured way as a system of beliefs, is a *qualitatively* different phenomenon than the worldview itself: instead of dealing with affects and unstructured feelings, in the case of ideology we have to deal with meaning (see Mannheim 1993). This meaning can be clarified by 'internal' reconstructions sensitive to the relations of ideas, but it can also be clarified with reference to its non-semantic causal history, or by the interpretation of some otherwise meaningful "existential totality." In these cases we are no longer talking about the expression and reception of an a-rational sphere, or its reconstruction from "cultural objectifications" interpreted as its documents. Instead, we are talking about the interconnections of meanings. Only through these interconnections can the interpreter gain access to *Weltanschauungen*, to the totality of feelings underlying intellectual creation. However, reconstructing *Weltanschauung* from its documents and expressions can provide us only with limited and imperfect access to it, but there is no other way to choose: not having any other way to access to it, interpretation can do no otherwise than to try to make *Weltanschauung* conceptual.

**Acknowledgment** I am indebted to István M. Fehér, Ferenc L. Lendvai, and Kristóf Nyíri for helpful comments and discussions. This paper and the collection have been financially supported by the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA 79193).

## References

- Anderson, R. L. (2003). The debate over the *Geisteswissenschaften* in German philosophy. In T. Baldwin (Ed.), *The cambridge history of philosophy* (pp. 1870–1945). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bloor, D. (1973). Wittgenstein and Mannheim on the sociology of mathematics. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, 2, 173–191.
- Demeter, T. (2008). The sociological tradition of Hungarian philosophy. *Studies in East European Thought*, 60, 1–16.
- Demeter, T. (2009). Can the strong program be generalized? *Review of Sociology*, 15, 5–16.
- Geuss, R. (1981). Ideology. In T. Eagleton (Ed.), *Ideology*. London: Longman.
- Hacking, I. (1985). Styles of scientific reasoning. In J. Rajchman & C. West (Eds.), *Post-analytic philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hanna, R. (2005). Kant and nonconceptual content. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 13, 247–290.
- Lukács, G. (1971). *The theory of the novel*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Lukács, G. (1977). Megjegyzések az irodalomtörténet elméletéhez. In Á. Tímár (Ed.), *Ifjúkori Művek*. Budapest: Magvető.
- Lukács, Gy. (1978). *A modern dráma fejlődésének története*. Budapest: Magvető.
- Mannheim, K. (1952). On the interpretation of 'Weltanschauung'. In P. Kecskemeti (Ed.), *Essays on the sociology of knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- Mannheim, K. (1954). *Ideology and utopia*. London: Routledge.
- Mannheim, K. (1980). *Strukturen des Denkens*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Mannheim, K. (1986). *Conservatism: A contribution to the sociology of knowledge*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Mannheim, K. (1993). The ideological and the sociological interpretation of intellectual phenomena. In K. H. Wolff (Ed.), *From Karl Mannheim*. New Brunswick: Transactions.

- Reill, P. H. (2003). The legacy of the 'scientific revolution'. In R. Porter (Ed.), *Cambridge history of science: Eighteenth-century science* (Vol. 4). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Seidel, M. (2011). Karl Mannheim, relativism and knowledge in the natural sciences—A deviant interpretation. In R. Schantz & M. Seidel (Eds.), *The problem of relativism in the sociology of scientific knowledge*. Frankfurt: Ontos.
- Simmel, G. (1904). *Kant*. Leipzig: S. Hirzel.
- Simmel, G. (2009). Conflict. In A. J. Blasi, A. K. Jacobs & M. Kanjirathinkal (Eds.), *Sociology: Inquiries into the construction of social forms* (Vol. 1).