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**THE THEORY OF GENERATIONAL CHANGE:
A CRITICAL REASSESSMENT**

by

Sharon Opal Scully, B.A. Hons.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Political Science

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
July 24, 2000

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acceptance of the thesis,

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Chair, Department of Political Science

Thesis Supervisor

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ABSTRACT

This thesis critically reassesses the scholarly literature on generational theory, illustrated through comparative, theoretical and empirical analyses.

It begins by reviewing Comte's insights, which have inspired two schools of thought, that of José Ortega y Gasset and Julian Marias, and that of Karl Mannheim. A series of mini case studies on U.S. electoral politics helps to illustrate the value of adding the Ortega-Marias approach, which has been underutilized by North American social scientists. We hold that a greater use of this approach to generational theory should produce fruitful additions to the scholarly literature. In addition, social demographer Richard Easterlin's postulated "Easterlin Effect" is also a useful potential addition to our conceptual toolkit that could help shed new explanatory light on generations.

This thesis aims to deepen understanding of generational theory in the hope that it might help others find general pathways sufficiently intriguing to warrant some follow-up studies.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

From the knowledge derived from our studies on competition and generations, we have concluded that what, from the point of view of immanent intellectual history, appears to be the 'inner dialectic' in the development of ideas, becomes, from the standpoint of the sociology of knowledge, the rhythmic movement in the history of ideas as affected by competition and the succession of generations.

Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (1936)

This thesis has two purposes. Firstly, it will seek to demonstrate that there is in the scholarly literature a vast amount of information on how politically significant generational change occurs and the mechanisms through which such change works. In doing so, it will argue, however, that North American scholars are not making full use of the European literature. In particular, they have failed

sufficiently to utilize the joint theories of the Spanish scholars José Ortega y Gasset and Julian Marias. The thesis consequently argues a second point that follows from the first. Secondly, putting together the different strands of generation theory, including those woven by Ortega and Marias, helps one to explain generational effects in American political science.

These two arguments will develop as the reader moves through the following chapters. Chapter Two offers an illustration of some non-linear historiographical approaches pioneered in the first instance by Auguste Comte, but greatly developed by Ortega and Marias. Then Chapter Three extends the discussion by outlining Karl Mannheim's generational theory and looking at some related subsequent research by prominent scholars whom Mannheim seems to have influenced. Chapter Four discusses the underlying methodological tools of the two main available traditional generational models – one developed together by Ortega and Marias, and the other by Mannheim. We compare and contrast these and in the process suggest what are the main tenets of Ortega's and Marias' contributions that remain largely absent from current North American theories on generations.

Chapter Five seeks to illustrate the value of a combined approach that combines the work of Marias and Ortega with that of Mannheim. It discusses two essentially U.S. contributions to generational theory that take the form of descriptions of the nature of political cycles in American history. The first is the three decade generational political or ideological cycle called the Schlesinger Cycle, in honor of historian Arthur Schlesinger Sr., who first described its operations

over a nation's entire political history, in this case the United States. The second is one of the many contributions made by the great American political scientist V. O. Key, Jr. who described the American party system as a self-steering historical process subject to critical realignments. These realignments refer to the changing nature of the effective coalitions that constitute the major strengths of the Americans' two major parties.

The two models presented each conceptualize the American party history creatively, and they are both useful as empirical case studies on their own. As well they yield up some evidence to illustrate that a synthesis between the Ortega-Marias and Mannheim schools of thought is both possible and desirable. We include a figure that shows the unfolding of these two cycles over time, and provides some strong *prima facie* evidence that they are not in fact two cycles but instead are one and the same phenomenon. That is, we will show that there is an extremely intimate and sustained temporal connection between the Schlesinger Cycle and Key's critical realignment/critical elections cycle.

In addition, we treat the so-called "Easterlin Effect," named to honor its discoverer, the socio-economist Richard Easterlin, which helps to solidify this thesis' arguments by permitting some real insight into the causative mechanisms involved. The Easterlin Effect postulates that a major motive force impelling generational change is a dialectically induced change in female fertility rates that in turn produces a relative change in the size of succeeding generations, with all the economic and social consequences that this change entails.

In effect, Chapters Two to Five combine to argue that if we put together different strands of the literature on generational theory, we can better explain major themes and movements. A combined theory permits one to look freshly for patterns that can give some clues as to how and why societies change or evolve generationally over time in politically relevant ways. Change is of course something inherent in life and constitutes a continuous process that begins with birth and ends only at death. And yet once this change has occurred at the sociological level, one may discern definite patterns and may postulate or seek to ascribe to these patterns some definite causes. Since social life is somewhat complex, such causes can also influence, moderate and interact with each other so that their combined effects help to sustain the rate, rhythm and route of historical change.

There is something out there which we may call social reality. It does exist independent of our perceptions of it. Ideas and social actions do indeed have real consequences. The problem is that these realities impact upon each other in highly complex and virtually invisible ways, such that reasonable human beings may easily disagree on the nature of their properties and their dynamic relationships to one another. Social reality does not appear to us directly. It is revealed to our understanding only through a screen of assumptions, beliefs, explanations, values, and sometimes largely unexamined knowledge. Together, these elements of the screen comprise an "ideology" that typically serves to direct our attention to philosophical innovations about historical change and help to determine which of these we find intellectually satisfying. It is time to subject generational theory to the

empirical test, which can then rebound upon the theory to help us see wherein it is fruitful and wherein it is barren. At its simplest, our argument is that generational political change reflects a society's inner constitutional "life" as well as displaying an outward trajectory and momentum.

CHAPTER II:

HISTORY OF THE CONCEPT OF GENERATIONS

Society is founded not on the ideals but on the nature of man, and the constitution of man rewrites the constitutions of states.

Will and Ariel Durant, *The Lessons of History* (1968)

This chapter treats some theoretical underpinnings of the non-linear historiographical approaches taken by Auguste Comte, José Ortega y Gasset and Julian Marias. Each of these innovative contributions relates to and advances the conception of generations.

I **First Steps: Comte's Theory of Society**

The source of many ideas concerning general patterns in society is that of Auguste Comte (1798-1857). The French philosopher Comte founded both the philosophical school known as positivism, and the whole science of sociology — a term he himself coined. A well-known social reformer, his goal was a society in which individuals and nations could live in harmony and comfort. Since Comte initiated the scientific study of generations, one may justifiably consider him to have been the father or originator of the modern idea of generations. He was the first modern scholar to have formulated clear, systematic and compelling ideas about society.¹ Although Comte never says what a generation is, he uses the concept amply to illustrate the “mechanism through which variations come about in society.”²

Central to Comte's dynamic formulation of society is the belief that all social organisms go through a process of innately generated, gradual, cumulative, determinable change from a state of “social infancy” to one of maturity. This belief underlies Comte's famous “law of three stages.” In terms of this so-called law, and on the basis of his studies of the history of science and other social institutions, Comte maintains that all societies develop at a gradual rate from what he terms a “theological stage” to a “positive stage,” passing through an intermediate, transitional and chaotic “metaphysical stage.” Comte draws on ethnographic and Western (particularly French) historical data to illustrate the predominant characteristics of the “theological” stage of society.³ Comte views society as tangibly existing in both a spatial and a temporal sense. For him, society exists as

a "continuous whole." At any one point in time, a society's parts relate to one another in what are – at least in principle – specifiable and scientifically lawful relationships. As these relationships extend across time, society links one era to another through specific and – again in principle – predictable forms of action and inaction. Thus "the social organism parallels a biological entity as a coordinated system of parts, each of which is engaged in different but mutually supportive activities."⁴

Finally, Comte's "law of three stages" relegates teleological reasoning to the transitional era he refers to as society's "metaphysical state." He asserts that such reasoning will be supplanted in eras of a "positive society" by scientific formulations based on the observation of relationships. Yet, Comte's overall social evolutionary formulation, his "dynamic" theory, is itself fundamentally a teleological argument. It presupposes that society has an innate tendency to develop in one (and only one) particular direction. In other words, Comte's own central arguments that he claims should serve as a foundation for a new scientific knowledge are themselves in a sense pre-scientific; he is a captive of his own generation hovering on the cusp of modernity but not quite willing fully to plunge into a thoroughly disenchanted scientific worldview. As a result, Comte's image of society creates a number of problems of comprehension for the contemporary scholar. Yet despite such problems, Comte's formulation is essentially modern in that it does attempt to present society in terms of functional, systematic, and evolutionary processes capable of sociological analysis.⁵

Comte insists that the "historical method" is the most characteristic of, and useful in, sociological analysis. It segregates sociology from biology and traditional and non-comparative history, and it allows one to see across time the relationships of parts of society to the whole in terms of progressive interactions. His descriptive formulations are virtually modern. For example:

The historical comparison of the consecutive state of humanity is not only the chief scientific device of sociology in a logical as well as a scientific sense. By the creation of this new department of the comparative method, sociology confers a benefit on the whole of natural philosophy; because the positive method is thus completed and perfected, in a manner which, for scientific importance, is almost beyond our estimate. What we can now comprehend is that the historical method verifies and applies, in the largest way, that chief quality of sociological science – its proceeding from the whole to the parts.... The prevailing tendency to speciality in study would reduce history to a mere accumulation of unconnected delineations, in which all idea of the true filiation of events would be lost amid the mass of confused descriptions. If the historical comparisons of the different periods of civilization are to have any scientific character, they must be referred to the general social evolution: and it is only thus that we can obtain the guiding ideas by which the special studies themselves must be directed.⁶

Comte's sociological and historical ideas constitute an impelling scholarly force that fostered a strong tendency among nineteenth century historians to stress the fact that one should conceive of history as the study of social and cultural phenomena rather than simply the doings of Great Men. Social and historical theory, in the Comtean sense, seeks to restrict the field of knowledge within the bounds of empirical phenomena and relations among these phenomena. In Comte's view, models of inquiry should "aim at discovering the rules governing the

succession and coexistence of phenomena.”⁷ Comte, who was already familiar with the writings of Montesquieu, Condorcet and Mill,⁸ blends those influences into a thoroughly sociological theory of history to make generalizations about society based upon the assumption that societal dynamics depend vitally upon the duration of generations. Comte holds that the most important influence on the rate of historical change is the duration of human life. Therefore social progress quite literally depends upon the arrival of death to those who would resist or avoid general change.

This general change or movement is hardly discernible in the course of an individual life, and only becomes pronounced as one generation gives way to its successor. In this respect, the social organism is no less subject to the same basic condition as is the individual. This means that after a certain amount of time has passed, the very nature of life transforms the different elements of society, making them unsuited to continue working together as a body. When this happens, new elements must replace old ones. In studying such a social necessity, we should avoid the illusory supposition that the duration of human life is indefinite.

[T]he more modifiable social order makes the ordinary duration of human life an essential element, not only in its static structure but more especially in its dynamic evolution, in which the rate of change is quite dependent on that duration. Since the living are essentially governed by the dead, the generational interval, always regulated by common longevity, directly affects the fundamental relationship between subjective and objective influences.⁹

Julian Marias characterizes Comte's treatment of generations by saying:

In the first place, the decisive factor is death: the limitation imposed on the duration of human life, and with it, the succession of generations. Secondly, that duration of life is quantitatively determined, and the rhythm of evolution depends on it. Thirdly, that duration is articulated in 'natural periods' or ages, which exhibit a certain proportion.

In this sense one may argue that generations constitute "social phenomena."¹⁰ This analytical enquiry allows scientific explanations of the relations between individuals and society.¹¹

Comte's sociological point of view transcends the focus on genealogy that had previously been a major preoccupation of most earlier philosophers treating generational concepts.¹² Comte upholds the ideal of applying scientific methods to the study of society in a far more radical and uncompromising manner than his predecessors had done. Through such dialectical movement, human nature expresses itself in ever-changing forms of life and experience. For Comte, the scholar's recognition of the essential variety that human development manifests is as much a precondition of true historical understanding as is recognition of the specific patterns that underlie historical change.

Comte's formulation of sociology is part of a larger theoretical system, which he refers to as his "positive philosophy." This overall system is concerned with the detailed delineation of the scope of the sciences, the analysis of each particular science, the establishment of mutually fruitful relationships among the sciences,

and the systematic reorganization and rationalization of the sciences. Comte uses the term positivism to refer to his system of thought – a system in which he holds the science of sociology to be his most significant innovation and contribution to knowledge. In presenting his findings about society Comte often uses such phrases as “sociological conclusions” and “positivistic conclusions” interchangeably.¹³ The central thesis of Comte’s system of positive philosophy is that the so-called law of three stages is applicable to the development of each particular science:

From the study of the development of human intelligence, in all directions, and through all times, the discovery arises of a great fundamental law, to which it is necessarily subject, and which has a solid foundation of proof, both in the facts of our organization and in our historical experience. The law is this: – that each of our leading conceptions – each branch of our knowledge – passes successively through three different theoretically conditions: the Theological, or fictitious; the Metaphysical, or abstract; and the Scientific, or positive. In other words, the human mind, by its nature, employs in its progress three methods of philosophizing, the character of which is essentially different, and even radically opposed: viz, the theological method, the metaphysical and the positive.¹⁴

In other words, in the course of its historical evolution, each science develops from a theological stage (wherein it explains phenomena with reference to supernatural agencies), through a metaphysical stage (wherein it explains phenomena via observed propensities), to a positive stage (wherein it explains phenomena with reference to observed relationships). Comte believes that each particular science moves through the stages at different rates and different times; thus some sciences reach the positive stage before others. This extremely

differential rate of advancement toward and into the positive stage forms a major basis for what Comte presents as the "hierarchy of the sciences."¹⁵

By encouraging the development of a "science of social phenomena" through use of generational concepts, Comte's clear-sighted work helped clear a path for such twentieth century social theorists as the Spanish essayist and philosopher José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955) as well as for Ortega's brilliant philosophy student Julian Marias (1914-). Comte's writings also inspired the work of the Austro-Hungarian sociologist and historian Karl Mannheim (1893-1947).

Ortega enthusiastically recognizes Comte's philosophical contribution to the study of how society works, saying: "It cannot be denied that August Comte is the first who sees the necessity of discovering the being of man, this is what he is, in his past."¹⁶ However important Comte is in fathering generational theory, it would be a mistake to suppose that his ideas and suggestions represent a fully articulated generational theory. Such a fuller development was to be a very long time in gestation, and along the way many others would make seminal contributions. However, Comte's idea about society did meanwhile lead to two intellectually stimulating approaches to the conception of generations, that developed together by Ortega and Marias discussed below in this chapter, and that of Mannheim treated in Chapter Three.

II The Ortega-Marias Model of Generations

In reviewing a 1998 study of Ortega's work, Michael Bentley plaintively yet quite correctly notes that "the canon of historical theorists between 1880 and 1950 rarely includes the Spanish thinker Ortega y Gasset."¹⁷ This is unfortunate because Ortega is a major contributor to generational theory, and his approach has considerable explanatory power. One reason is sometimes offered for scholars not having taken Ortega's work seriously. Some claim that they do not consider Ortega a philosopher in the strict sense. This is a thoroughly understandable viewpoint. For one thing, Ortega's preferred form was the essay, "in which he savored ideas without having to present rigorous proof."¹⁸ Moreover, his works are extremely scattered and therefore not directly accessible. This is especially the case with his many writings on generations. Nonetheless, Ortega's construction of broader and more abstract concepts potentially enables social scientists to formulate and formalize extremely insightful ideas about society.

Ortega extends Comte's theory of society by broadening the basis of knowledge, the idea of the continuous extension of human interests into problems relating to social phenomena. This tendency in intellectual and social history connects closely with the processes of individual and group contact, and of a consequent interpenetrating of different societies. For Ortega, human beings create their lives by exercising what he calls vital reason, and exerting their will. Human beings and their environment and circumstances exist in a dynamic interplay. By circumstance Ortega means literally our *circum stantia*, the mute things and forces

that surround us. For Ortega, I am not for myself alone. Reality comes to be created through the interplay of "I am" plus "I and my circumstance." That is, while the individual can influence his circumstances, and in some limited way may even overcome them, nonetheless he cannot wholly disregard them. How the individual influences his circumstance is his "*quehacer vital*," or creative action. Vital reason as opposed to pure reason is derived from history, which provides a story that leads to the reality of human life.

To answer the philosophical question of "what is man," one may begin by turning to the study of fundamental reality or metaphysics.¹⁹ The first theory of generations worthy of the name, according to Julian Marias, is that of Ortega. Like Comte's, Ortega's philosophy on the concept of generations evolved within a general theory of social and historical reality, fundamentally rooted in metaphysics.²⁰ Let us examine some of the context within which this evolution takes place.

1. *Reality Paradigm*

Philosophers customarily divide the study of the nature of ultimate reality into ontology (how many fundamentally distinct sorts of entities compose the universe), and metaphysics (what are reality's most basic and general traits). The general traits that together define reality could presumably, at least in principle, characterize any universe. Because these traits are not necessarily peculiar to this universe, but

might fit other possible universes, it is possible to pursue metaphysics at high levels of abstraction.²¹ Metaphysics may treat “notions;” that is, one may seek to understand subjects of interest by learning how to talk about them. Indeed, most analyses of metaphysical notions consist largely of finding the best ways for talking about them. Philosophers have found it useful to discover what directions already exist, and which they need still to construct, to facilitate their talking validly about each notion. “Metaphysics [concerns] wisdom par excellence, and the philosopher or lover of Wisdom is he who desires knowledge about the ultimate cause and nature of Reality, and desires that knowledge for its own sake.”²²

Under a strong neo-Kantian influence, Ortega's quest for knowledge focussed his interest especially on Comte's social and historical theory of society. In Ortega's hands this led to new ideas and concepts, expanding the boundaries of social theory and especially conceptions of the nature of social reality. Ortega interprets Comte's “idea of society” in the broadest sense, and this is the source of many ideas that Ortega later develops in more systemic forms, including his philosophy of generations. The first mature and explicit formulation of Ortega's generational theory is found in his seminal 1923 chapter titled “The Idea of Generations,” of his *El tema de nuestro tiempo* [*The Modern Theme*].²³

Ortega's philosophical innovations not only result in a serious questioning of the meaning of reality, but he also invents new concepts to illustrate the mechanisms through which societal change may come about. It is partly Ortega's penchant to pursue strictly literal meanings that lies at the heart of much of his

creativity. He avoids radical skepticism toward reality by equating “life” with history in very literal ways. In other words, human beings can only exist in time. Ortega seeks to define a paradigm, to elevate and comprehend a particular, concrete historical and social phenomenon into a way of understanding man and his world at one and the same time. He is thus a student of what Marias too calls metaphysics,²⁴ that is, Ortega investigates the meaning of historical epochs by seeking to uncover their underlying deep structures and rhythms of social change.

Ortega calls his philosophy the metaphysics of vital reason, and he seeks to advance philosophy by more concretely establishing the nature of the ultimate reality in which all else is rooted. Just what does reality mean to Ortega? Let us begin with what it is not. It is neither the “I” (*res cogitans*) nor “things” (*res*) but life itself.²⁵ What he calls “radical reality” (which in his view is the root of all other realities and itself irreducible to any other) is “my life.”²⁶ He writes: “I am I and my circumstances.”²⁷ For him, “living consists of what we do and of what happens to us. This is in no way a theory but simply reality as I find it. Life is given to me, but it is not given to me ready-made.”²⁸ Given that people must act, they are nonetheless at least partially free to determine the direction of that action. His basic principle, “self and circumstances,” impels him beyond the “I” into the world of “others,” and hence, into history.²⁹ What Ortega has discovered is the existence of an inter-individual or inter-subjective reality — the reality that essentially arises due to the relationships between several individuals acting as individuals. In this explicitly sociological sense, society becomes an association, one that predates individual

life.³⁰

By way of clarification let us note three important categories: the individual, individuals, and society. What is “social” manifests itself in the form of “usages”: usages are what people say, what they believe and what they do. By people Ortega means anybody and consequently nobody in particular – no individual in the sense of any specific individual. Society is impersonal; its contents and dictates are imposed on its individual members regardless of their personal opinion and will. The most fundamental motives behind social actions are not personal but arise from the automatic efficacy of the social body and from the system of reprisals brought to bear on those who fail to comply with society’s usages. What we call society is not a static or even stable reality but a dynamic, problematic resultant and concomitant of the forces of association and dissociation.³¹

From reflections on Comte, Ortega derives the substance of his celebrated formula that “man” has no “nature” but a “history” instead. In fact, he claims that “In the strict sense, man is spiritual man who is social man and society is not a thing — a static being — but it is dynamic, movement, passing from one state to another: everything in him is acquired, accomplished, become, in short, historical process. As nothing [exists] once and for all, he goes on making his being for himself. Hence, he has not nature but he is history.”³² Ortega insists that the historical transcends the “individual subjective,” and as such its reality extends beyond itself and individual or even collective psychology, and so it involves not only “the social,” but also history.³³

Ortega places his primary emphasis on “life” because he regards life ontologically, as the only immediate and radical reality. He links life to what he calls “historical reality.” This is a changing reality, one that moves from past, through a present into a future not yet here but sometimes anticipated. Ortega recognizes that even the historical past was once reality.³⁴

2. *Function and Relationship of Vital Reason and Historical Reason*

Historical reason dominates Ortega’s thought. He wants to reform philosophy by going beyond linguistic thought, and to integrate his own philosophy in a pragmatic and humanistic way with the new concept of vital reason — the study of the general structure of human life. “It is constitutive of what I called ‘vital reason,’” he claims, “to be an abstract discipline that speaks of a reality [human life] that is more essential than any other studied till now, concrete being, being always ‘my’ life.”³⁵ Ortega insists that this vital or living reason is an absolute requirement of being alive. What does this mean? Being alive, we must live. Just how we must do this is not entirely a given, and so at every point in life we must choose, whether instinctively, customarily, habitually, thoughtfully or scientifically. As Ortega tells us: “to live is to have no other recourse than to reason in the face of inexorable circumstance.” At every moment until the very last, life is not complete, but rather something that we must ourselves complete. This means that at every moment we must choose from among the possibilities that our situation offers.”³⁶ Ortega

stresses the oneness of life. For him, vital reason means "the reason of life, or with greater accuracy, the reason that is life." Again and again he stresses the radical inseparability of reason and human life. How does reason historically unfold? "It is life in its actual movement, in its biographical manifestation; it is what lends understanding and meaning to things."³⁷ While vital or living reason becomes concrete as historical reason, this is not a particular form of what we normally think of as Reason. Vital reason instead is "reason unmodified and without adjectives, reason in the fullest sense, as opposed to the abstract particularizations and simplifications of Reason. Living calls for a superior and more complex reason: vital reason, or if one prefers, historical reason."³⁸

Nevertheless, Ortega wants to rise above the level of the individual, to define the "general structure of all life," and thereby to live at the height of his times. According to Graham (1997), he tries to fill in the gaps left by pure vital reason by establishing a new discipline that would be like a rational mechanics of things human. This new discipline would be reflexive. In going beyond the givenness of historical reason, it would postulate the ways in which this reason comes to be effected as an inescapable part of human living. Ortega's model of historical reason would then permit one to test these generalizations methodically, and then use the results to help fill in the remaining gaps by means of concrete historical and social applications, and by tracing the origins and development of the person, of people and of epochs.³⁹

Ortega's system is thus not only "intentional," but also it is more than merely

“unitary” (embedded in vital reason) and more than just “dualist” (in contrast with historical reason). His system is meant to become “pluralist,” by which he means that it has at least the following three dimensions.⁴⁰ The distinguishing feature of this approach implies that reason is vital, historical and social. Ortega regards historical reason as potentially generating a new “worldview” that should have become a widely and firmly held “belief” dominating Western civilization,⁴¹ however, this was for his generation not currently the case.

3. *Vigencias*

Let us now turn to Ortega’s difficult yet basic and important concept of “vigencias.” This term comes from musical harmonics, describing how the separate instruments combine sounds, and how these combined sounds take on a life of their own to form the whole complex and dynamic sound the orchestra produces. Applied dynamically to society and history, such a concept virtually requires a “systematic” theory.⁴² Ortega and Marias use the term to describe the sum total of laws, customs, usages, traditions, and beliefs that currently prevail in a given society or collectivity. Thus vigencias arise naturally in living communities, and as such they have life (*quod viget*).⁴³ The concept includes social forces arising from many sectors of life and imposed on us without the intervention of our will. Vigencias contain binding, impersonal customs or forces that form the very fabric of the collectivity.⁴⁴

The social facts entailed in these societal relationships are the beliefs or

customs, usages and binding observances, that collectively make up the *vigencias*. These facts are not things in the strict or literal sense. Not literally and tangibly a part of nature, they are nonetheless quite real – realities that humans in society create.⁴⁵ In other words, Ortega characterizes *vigencias* as a society's complex and holistic systems of beliefs. He focusses on beliefs as the focal point giving rise to the identity of a particular generation.⁴⁶ Almost all binding observances, although changing to varying degrees from generation to generation, remain in force for several generations. Some remain stable and some disappear altogether, but others become stronger or weaker. The important thing is that the majority do persist. Thus the generations coalesce within the temporal eras of continuity that exist between the less frequent radical historical breaks that define the eras themselves. What Marias calls a historical period, then, consists of a whole series of generations that base their lives on a given system of binding observances .

Now just what does Ortega mean by society's binding observances? In addition to its musical application, the Spanish word *vigencias* also means binding observances. In both senses Ortega makes the concept of *vigencias* a technical term quite central to his social theory. This rich term, *vigencias*, has also a legal meaning that refers principally to the laws and practices that remain currently in force.⁴⁷ In this context, a law said to be "in force" (*vigencia*) has the "force of law" or is presently binding. If a law is repealed or falls into disuse or desuetude, it loses its vigor, becoming invalid or dead.⁴⁸

According to Marias, when Ortega adopted the word he introduced two new

elements. Ortega frees it from its restricted uses in the juridical sphere so that he can apply it in its fullest sociological range, and he applies the word substantively to any reality in a state of vigor or in force. If a force is truly binding in the social environment it supports the status quo and must be taken into account in this sense. If people can generally ignore it, it is not a binding observance.⁴⁹ To make sense of whole periods of history such as antiquity, the Middle Ages or the modern age, we must learn to study the functional interplay and relationships of different types of binding observances to one another. Any change from one historical period to another involves an important modification of the socio-political structure, which can occur in two ways.

The first is the "crisis of expectation." Here man finds himself closed in and apparently without a future because the aspirations implied in his basic beliefs have been realized or appear to be unrealizable, both of which can result in disillusionment. Now one thinks of things as likely to continue in the same way indefinitely. However, if desperation results, then quite possibly things will not go on as before, and in a short time may change considerably. Second, there may be the innovative appearance of a new and important element. Such an element can take many forms. One example very important for Spain was the discovery of the New World."⁵⁰ To determine the dynamics that occur in historical change in a given society requires a close examination of the society's most basic units. The unit that most directly produces the structure of history is the generations. It is not enough to observe that generations succeed one another. We must observe that at any one

time more than one generation is living in dynamic interaction.⁵¹

4. *What is a Generation?*

As was to be expected, Marias considers Ortega's theory of generations the first theory worthy of the name, probably because, having arisen from Ortega's general theory of social and historical reality, it is a systematic conception of reality rooted in metaphysics. It is upon Ortega's contributions that Marias builds. In *Man and Crisis* (1933), Ortega states his theory of generations in its fullest and clearest form. However, it was a decade earlier, In *The Modern Theme* (1923), that he first formally advocates "the idea of generations" as a "human variation" and as "the most important concept in history."⁵² Ortega explains why generations are important by saying:

Do not forget that in my historiological conception generations are very brief units of time — fifteen years — and that their most important historical character is not — as usually in the old genealogy — to be successive but instead to overlap. There are always three 'contemporary' generations and the equation of their triple dynamism constitutes the concrete reality of every historical date. It . . . was I who relaunched — and this time seriously — the decisive theme of generations . . . in my course on Galileo in . . . 1933.⁵³

Here Ortega sketches three coexisting generations,⁵⁴ divided into overlapping units of fifteen years, engaged in dynamic interactions that help to constitute reality. First of all, each man's historical world is his generation, and from it he must face reality and thus mould his life. Seen within this context, generations acquire an unexpectedly dramatic appearance, for our generation is a fundamental

ingredient in each of us.

In 1940 Ortega refined his theory of generations, not as rigid but as variable, even when they are “constants.” He defines generation as “a vital attitude” and “style of life.”⁵⁵ What does a generation mean for Ortega? He says:

A generation is a human variety.... [E]ach generation represents a certain vital level, from which existence is felt in a certain way. If we consider the total evolution of a people, each of its generations appears to us as a moment of its life, as a pulsation of its historical energy. And each pulsation has a peculiar and unique characteristic; it is an essential beat in the pulse, as is each note in the composition of a melody. Similarly we may imagine each generation as a species of biological missile hurled into space at a given instant, with a certain velocity and direction.⁵⁶

The most important fact, according to Marias, is that:

[G]enerations are born one of another, so that a new generation finds itself amid the forms of existence bequeathed by those past. For each generation, then, living is a two-dimensional task; one of these consists of receiving what the preceding generation has lived: ideas, values, institutions, etc.; the other, of allowing its own spontaneous impulses to be expressed. There are ‘cumulative’ periods during which the new generation feels itself as one with the preceding generation and stands with the older group still in power. And there are ‘eliminary’ and ‘polemic’ periods, generations of combat, which sweep away the old and begin new things. There appear as separate groups among ‘contemporaries’ (those of the same age): old men, young men, etc. — that is, the diverse generations coexisting at a given historical moment.⁵⁷

Ortega eventually arrives at an operational definition of generation. In the strictest sense: “The sum total of those who are coetaneous in a circle of current coexistence, is a generation. The concept of generation implies primarily only two

requisites: to be the same age and to have some vital contact."⁵⁸

At this point a question arises: what does "to be the same age" mean. "Although it may seem incredible," writes Ortega, "again and again attempts have been made to reject and limit the generational method by offering the ingenuous argument that men are born every day, and therefore that only those born on the same day would be in the strictest sense the same age. Hence the generation is a chimera, an arbitrary concept representing no reality."⁵⁹ Because over time the generations define themselves (and each other) vitally, through empirically observable interactions, this view is simply wrongheaded. Properly conceived:

[A]n age is a life within our total life with a beginning and an ending. One begins to be a youth and one ceases to be so, just as one begins to live and stops living. Age, then, is not a date, but a 'zone of dates,' and not only those born in the same year, but also those born within a zone of dates, are the same age vitally and historically.⁶⁰

5. *Types of Generations*

For matters of political importance, only two generations constitute the primary actors. Thus one may divide an age into two phases. These consist roughly of "men of thirty to forty-five (the period of preparation) and men of forty-five to sixty (period of control)." Ortega observes that these two generations are seeking the same things, which requires to some extent that they must engage in mutual combat. In other words:

they are contemporaneous and fully active. They are neither

successive nor coetaneous:.... [T]he decisive element in the idea of generations is not that they succeed each other, but rather that they overlap and touch. There are ever two generations acting at the same time, fully active as it were, regarding the same themes and concerned about the same things. But this is done with a different age index and therefore with a different meaning."⁶¹

According to Ortega, all generations are contemporary since they live at the same time, while only those of the same generation are coetaneous since they are of the same age group. Generations manifest or express themselves through deeds that are social in nature and sufficiently exceptional so that they stand out and are memorable.⁶²

History, seen as an ongoing process of articulation within and between generations, reveals the reality that each society functions through the interplay between a mass and an elite minority. This Marias accepts from Ortega, as seen in his mentor's *La rebellion de las masas* (*The Revolt of the Masses*). This interaction is of course reciprocal. The masses are quantitatively large in number, which of necessity means that a few select individuals must organize and structure their behaviour. "Without the mass, there is no minority [and] inversely, the life of a mass is impossible without a directive minority . . . because without the interaction between the two, collective life is impossible."⁶³

6. *How Long does a Generation Last?*

The historical participation of individuals in a society's main events, if it

occurs at all, may last for roughly thirty years. This period divides naturally into the two phases of (1) preparation and (2) control: "fifteen years of preparation and fifteen of acting." These are different and even opposite in nature.⁶⁴

[Between the ages of] thirty to forty-five man struggles to impose a certain world structure; from forty-five to sixty — approximately — he triumphs and is 'in power' until fifteen years later, when a new ascendant generation imposes its innovations and displaces from authority — in all areas of life — the convictions, usages, and ideas characteristic of the earlier period.

This is why according to Ortega, the *vigencias* form of life tends to last approximately fifteen years; and thus marks the duration of a generation. "The system of *Vigencias*,"⁶⁵ writes Ortega, "in which the form of human life resides, lasts for a period that almost coincides with the fifteen-year span."

A generation is a zone of fifteen years during which a certain form of life was predominant. The generation would be, then, the concrete unit of authentic historical chronology; or, stated in another way, history moves and proceeds by generations. Now the true affinity between the men of a generation can be understood. Their affinity does not arise so much from themselves as from being obligated to live in a world of a certain and unique form."⁶⁶

How does one date such zones? The essential key is the changing rate of social change. What is needed, Ortega contends, "is the discovery of a decisive generation in which social change is greater than usual. This involves discovering its representative man, the beginning of whose public life, usually around his thirtieth year, yields the central date of his generation."⁶⁷ To accomplish this Marias proposes an empirical method, a sort of "double entry" approach of approximations,

that would take into account not only the mechanism of generations but our very ignorance of their specific dividing lines. To pursue this method of successive approximations, one begins by making a list of a number of representative figures in different social functions approximately fifteen years apart. Next, a list of the names of those in the same social functions who were born a year later. Most probably these will belong to the same generations.⁶⁸ According to Marias, this method has two undeniable advantages. First of all is its universality. One may apply it to any period regardless of whether the generation is decisive or how difficult it is to locate the most representative individual. Secondly, it is immediately effective.⁶⁹

7. *Relation between Generations and Historical Change*

Generations help to determine the relationships that generate historical changes. Truly significant historical change occurs when a new system of vigencias or binding customs replaces the old one. The generations, in turn, change their historical role roughly every fifteen years.⁷⁰ Ortega distinguishes two very different types of historical change:

. . . first, when something in our world changes, second, when the world itself changes. The latter change occurs normally and inexorably with each generation, bringing about a greater or a lesser variation — the magnitude of change is secondary — in the general world tonality. When such change is quantitatively very pronounced, and especially when instead of veering toward an adjacent system of beliefs, man is left without beliefs — and hence without a world — one may speak of a historical crisis.... A decisive generation is one

that . . . for the first time thinks the new thoughts with full clarity and with complete possession of their meaning, a generation that is neither still a precursor nor any longer bound by the past.⁷¹

The idea of generations, Ortega argues, is:

. . . the visual organ with which historical reality can be seen in its real and vibrant authenticity. The generation is one and the same as the structure of human life at any given moment. It is idle to try to find out what really happened at such and such a date if one does not ascertain to which generation it happened, that is, within which form of human existence it occurred. The same event happening to two different generations is a vital and hence historical reality which is completely different in each case.⁷²

Ortega goes on to explain that the same event can happen to more than one generation, but each generation will perceive, interpret and react to it differently depending upon where the generation stands along the life course. Is this the first occasion for the event to have happened to the particular generation, or does this generation view the event as a recurrence? Thus the same event can happen to the different generations quite differently.

In summary, the main points of Ortega's contribution are the establishment of the generation as roughly a fifteen-year zone, and the distinction between changes occurring within society, and the society itself changing with each generation. "Approximately every fifteen years the entire system of binding observances varies, almost always very slightly," with the supplanting of one generation in power by another that has been preparing itself to take over power. It was Marias who connects this elemental unity of historical change with the

empirical structure of human life, specifically with the mean duration known as ages. "That a generation lasts fifteen years is an empirical determination, valid only as a matter of fact...." Upon this generational change Marias bases what he calls the macrostructure of history, that is, his conception of historical periods.⁷³ Ortega's theory of generations enables us to understand not only what generations are, but also what we might call their "ontological location" — their social and historical life — and the mechanisms that condition their historical functioning.⁷⁴ "Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are," goes the Spanish saying. Each of us moves with the "men" of our generation, submerged in the great anonymous multitude, and save for the final individual nucleus of our life, to ask ourselves to which generation we belong is, in large measure, to ask who we are.⁷⁵

If we compare these ideas to Mannheim's and to his North American followers' doctrines about generations, we see that the Mannheimians tend to give the generational theme a comparatively much more narrow treatment, as the following chapter will illustrate. Now let us turn to a direct discussion of Mannheim's own generational theory.

Chapter III

CURRENT CONCEPTIONS OF GENERATIONAL THEORY

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up....

Ecclesiastes 1:2-5

This chapter examines Karl Mannheim's generational theory, which in part, originated from Comte's positivist theory (as discussed in Chapter Two), and provides some analysis of relevant research by prominent scholars whom Mannheim has influenced.

I **The Generations Model**

The word generation has a variety of meanings. It can mean ranked descent as, for example, one might refer to third generation Canadians, or it can mean a time period of approximately thirty years. The term generation can also refer to a homogenous age group.⁷⁶ Popular views of a generation often characterize it as embodying a distinctive Zeitgeist, spirit of the times or collective spirit. This is the meaning one has in mind when referring to the "Lost Generation" of the 1920s or the Sixties Generation, or Generation X.⁷⁷ The use of the concept generation in the discussion that follows generally combines the later two meanings of the term.

At the core of generational theory is the premise that people of the same age share certain important learning experiences, particularly exposure during their formative years to critical events, such as depressions, wars, or mass movements. Of course, not all people of the same age have these common experiences, and if they do they do not have them to the same degree. For example, a difference of a year or two may mean being too old or too young to serve in the armed forces during a major war. Being of upper class parents during a major war can also reduce the likelihood of seeing active military service. This points up the fact that a shared experience will not affect everyone in the same way. In the face of an approaching war, for example, some members of the younger generation may react to the common event by becoming "hawks," while others become "doves," as occurred with respect to the Vietnam War.

Although we usually think of generations being shaped and defined by great events, they may also be pulled apart gradually by the slow grind of evolutionary change. Furthermore, even as widespread a calamity as, say, the Great Depression may have largely bypassed some North Americans, and some people may even have benefited from the economic bust that caused others to suffer so greatly. Nevertheless, most people of roughly the same age probably share a significant degree of exposure to the grand events of their time.⁷⁸

For Mannheim, the concept of generation is important because it implies that individuals of the same age group are to a certain extent unified by the fact of holding an essentially common position in the flow of history, a position that he sees as being analogous to, and as significant as, their objective class position.⁷⁹ To begin with, Mannheim states that individuals who belong to the same generation by virtue of sharing the same year of birth, are endowed to that extent with a common location in the social process' historical dimension.⁸⁰ He does acknowledge that the year of birth in and of itself is insufficient to create generations. And he also adds that one could not consider people born, say, in China and Prussia in the same year to be part of the same generation.⁸¹ Mannheim claims, furthermore, that the concept of generation implies some common political or social experience, one that can very well make those who comprise a generations continue to act in distinctive ways.

II Two Antagonistic Schools of Thought

Mannheim's dissatisfaction with traditional approaches to the conception of generational theory led him to explore two antagonistic schools of thought. First is the positivist approach, which is based on the biological duration of life, divided into different ages or "seasons." According to Mannheim, this approach portrays an idea of generations as "a unit of measurement and the echelons of progress." Second is the romantic-historical view, which focuses on an idea of "inner time and the historical content of the generation." This second approach draws attention to the fact that history is more messy than our neat conceptual schemes, that the length of the various generations appears "irregular and indeterminate, varying with historical forces."⁸²

As Mannheim clearly sees, these two schools represent antagonistic types of attitudes toward reality, and the scholars' very different approaches to the problem of generations typically reflect this contrast of basic attitudes. Whereas the positivist approach employs a quantitative formulation of factors that its followers presume will ultimately shape human existence, the second school, holding to a romantic-historical view, adopts a qualitative approach. This latter approach Mannheim criticizes as "firmly eschewing the clear day light of mathematics, and introverting the whole problem."⁸³

1. *The Positivist Approach*

The positivist and quantitative approach to the problem of generation aims at finding a general law of man's limited life-span that helps to define and temporally determine the overlapping of new and old generations. Mannheim emphasizes that the positivist's intention is to "understand the changing patterns of intellectual and social current directly in biological terms, to construct the curve of the progress of the human species in terms of its vital substructure."⁸⁴ It is noteworthy, he says, that the rationalism of positivism is a direct continuation of classical rationalism, and this approach at its best shows the French mind at work in its own domain. In fact, Mannheim claims that the truly important contributors to the problem of generations are for the most part French. These include such names as Auguste Comte, A. A. Cournot, Justin Dromel, F. Mentre, and others who are positivists or have come under their influence.⁸⁵

Mannheim finds Mentre's work⁸⁶ useful as the first comprehensive modern survey of the generational problem. Mentre's analysis of the history of the aesthetic sphere in France since the sixteenth century led him to conclude that numerous typical and essential changes had come about at intervals of roughly thirty years.⁸⁷ Mannheim notes, furthermore, that Mentre does not try to state a new theory of human generations. Rather he tries to rid the concept of the almost mystical elements with which Dromel, Ferrari and Lorenz had burdened it. Mentre tries to uncover and retain the abiding elements that could be said to adhere to the concept, and also to establish the concept's overall validity. Mentre begins by

distinguishing between family (genealogical) and social (sociological) generations. For instance, a social generation is "a group of men belonging to different families. Its unity results from a particular mentality and its duration spans a specific period."⁸⁸ According to Mannheim, the French had recently become interested in the problem of change from one generation to another largely because they had witnessed the sudden concealment of "liberal cosmopolitanism" as a result of the arrival of a "nationalistically-minded" younger generation. Although Mentre occasionally makes remarks that point beyond a purely quantitative approach, Mannheim considers him to be a positivist whose treatment of the problem of generations so far, represents best if not the final word of the school on this subject.⁸⁹

David Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) is a very important representative of positivist sociology who recognizes the influence of human groupings in social evolution and hence in the generational mechanism. Durkheim makes a crucially important contribution by specifying one of the key demographic mechanisms through which a specific type of generational change affects the historically changing rate of social change. He observes that social change is usually quite limited and slow when a large generation of elders strongly subjects its own successor generation to the conservative influence of tradition. Conversely, some important change processes will tend to accelerate when the youthful groupings are themselves relatively larger in size, and young men (and now women) therefore come to be less bound by their elders' would-be restraints.⁹⁰

In various writings Durkheim uses the term “society” (*société*) in several different ways. At times, the term merely refers to group or collective life or to the group’s influence on the individual. At other times, it appears to be the sum total of all social activities. Occasionally, it signifies the goal, purpose, or motivating force behind individual and group actions. Essential to Durkheim’s overall conception of a society is the definition of it as a distinct form of reality. In other words, society (and the subsidiary social phenomena it entails) forms a reality in and of itself. Durkheim often uses a Latin phrase to express this last point when he refers to society as a *sui generis* reality – one we cannot reduce to, or explain in terms of, the other concepts we use to describe other realities. Thus, society or social reality emerges from and depends on the existence of other nonsocial realities, but it is different from and more complex than any of them.⁹¹ As this is a subtle point, it is perhaps best to let Durkheim himself explain his precise meaning. According to Durkheim:

[S]ociety is not the mere sum of individuals, but the system formed by their association represents a specific reality which has its own characteristics. Undoubtedly no collective entity can be produced if there are no individual consciousnesses: this is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. In addition, these consciousnesses must be associated and combined, but combined in a certain way. It is from this combination that social life arises and consequently it is this combination which explains it. By aggregating together, by interpenetrating, by fusing together, individuals give birth to a being, psychical if you will, but one which constitutes a psychical individuality of a new kind. Thus it is the individuality and not in that of its component elements that we must search for the proximate and determining causes of the facts produced in it.... In other words, there is between psychology and sociology the same

break in continuity as there is between biology and the physical and chemical sciences. Consequently every time a social phenomenon is directly explained by a psychological phenomenon, we may rest assured that the explanation is false.⁹²

Durkheim's overall view of society as a *sui generis* reality is essentially a dynamic one. He conceives of society not as a static organization of human activity, but as an organization that is constantly in a natural process of change or development through a series of sequential or evolutionary types, stages or "seasons." Durkheim's earliest works depict social change in terms of a movement from mechanical to organic forms of social organization. In later works, however, Durkheim tends to develop and to emphasize a more complex set of evolutionary societal types. Like other seminal thinkers of his generation such as Karl Marx and Max Weber, Durkheim's later work is inconsistent with his earlier views. In general, he argues that much social change is a process of differentiation of parts and specialization of activities. Consequently, the basic elements that underlie the makeup of all social life will remain fundamentally unaltered.⁹³

Durkheim's intellectual influence has been pervasive, widespread and sustained through time, both in terms of a variety of disciplines that reflect his ideas and the number of countries whose intellectual traditions have incorporated elements of his thought. In France, Durkheim almost single-handedly institutionalized sociology. Also his ideas were highly influential there and elsewhere in later developments in anthropology, linguistics and history.⁹⁴

Mannheim notes that in Germany and France, the predominating trends of thought in the last epoch emerged closely related to their historical and political structures. In France, the positivist viewpoint prevailed, and it inspired progressive and oppositional groups, as well as those professing conservatism and traditionalism.⁹⁵ Mannheim argues that one must view the antithesis between French positivism and German romanticism in a wider context if we are to understand either in relation to the narrower problem of generations.⁹⁶ Within positivism, as a philosophical school *sensu stricto*, and particularly among the sociologists, there are a few echoes of Comte's ideas. However they are, Mannheim suggests, of slight interest.⁹⁷

2. *The Romantic-Historical Approach*

It is normal to trace the modern romantic-historical approach to the problem of generations to Germany. Mannheim argues that the German approach relies on data provided by a conservative technique of observation and focuses on the problem of generations as evidence against the concept of unilinear development in history.⁹⁸ However, German analysts tend to pose the problem of generations and indeed to analyse it in purely qualitative terms. Mannheim recognizes the relative novelty of Wilhelm Dilthey's work, which makes extensive distinctions between various qualitative and quantitative conceptions of time. Dilthey's point of view differs slightly from that of Comte, who began his study of the concept of generation from the perspective of social reality. In contrast, Dilthey happens upon

the concept while exploring his great discovery: human life.⁹⁹ Dilthey is interested in the problem of generations primarily because, as he puts it, the adoption of the generation as a temporal unit of the history of intellectual evolution makes it possible to replace such purely external units as hours, months, years, decades, etc., by the concept of a generational "season," a measure operating from within (*eine von innen abmessende vorstellung*). The use of generations as units makes it possible to appraise intellectual movements by an intuitive process of re-enactment.¹⁰⁰

Dilthey also concludes that the phenomenon of generations is not only the succession of one after another, but also that their co-existence is of more than mere chronological significance. Contemporary individuals experience the same dominant influences deriving from the prevailing intellectual, social and political circumstances, not just in their early and formative years, but also in their later years. They are contemporaries and they constitute one generation, primarily because they are subject to common influences.¹⁰¹ Mannheim proclaims that the analysis of the problem of generations only in quantitative mathematical terms (as the positivist approach), is replaced by a qualitative one, centered about the notion of something which is not quantifiable, but capable only of being experienced. The "time-interval separating generations becomes subjectively experienceable time; and contemporaneity becomes a subjectively experienced condition of having been submitted to the same determining influences."¹⁰²

The art historian Wilhelm Pinder was thoroughly enmeshed in all the

confusion of romanticism, according to Mannheim. Although Pinder gives many deep insights into the problem of generations, Mannheim claims that Pinder does not know how to avoid the natural excesses of romanticism. The non-contemporaneity of the contemporaneous is what interests Pinder most in relation to generations. Different generation live at the same time. However, since they occupy different seasons of life and since experienced time is the only real time, they must all be living in qualitatively quite different subjective eras. Moreover, Pinder argues that "everyone lives with people of the same and of different ages, with a variety of possibilities of experience facing them all alike. But for each the 'same time' is a different time – that is, it represents a different period of the person's self, which he can only share fully and profoundly with people of his own age."¹⁰³

a. Entelechy

Another important idea of Pinder's, on which Mannheim builds is that each generation builds up an "entelechy" of its own, by which means alone it can really become a qualitative unity. According to Pinder, "the entelechy of a generation is the expression of the unity of its 'inner aim' – of its inborn way of experiencing life and the world." This concept of entelechy represents the transfer of Riegal's concept of the "art motive" (*Kunstwollen*) from the phenomenon of unity of artistic styles to that of the unity of generations, in the same way as the concept of art

motive itself resulted from "the rejuvenation and fructification, under the influence of positivism" and "the morphological tendency already inherent in the historicist concept of the spirit of a people (*Volksgeist*)."¹⁰³ Pinder notes that:

the generation - entelechies thus serve to destroy the purely temporal concepts of an epoch over-emphasized in the past (e.g., spirit of age or epoch). The epoch as a unit has no homogeneous driving impulse, no homogeneous principle of form – no entelechy. Its unity consists at most in the related nature of the means which the period makes available for the fulfilment of the different historical tasks of the generations living in it.¹⁰⁴

Hence Pinder's analysis focuses on "birth" as a decisive factor in generations and his appeal to the Aristotelian concept of "entelechy" serves as a less mechanical but nonetheless empirical way of exploring the concept of generation.¹⁰⁵ Pinder's principal contribution to generational theory is the idea that "nature permits rhythmic pauses between a succession of births of leading minds. Overlying the rhythm of epochs, there is a rhythm of generations."¹⁰⁶ He realizes that "a generation is an abstraction, but an abstraction that retains an extraordinary proximity to life...." He therefore defines generation as "a group of persons who are more or less coetaneous."¹⁰⁷ According to Pinder, in addition to entelechies of whole sociological generations, there exist entelechies of art, language and style; entelechies of nations and tribes – even an entelechy of Europe; and finally, entelechies of the individuals themselves.¹⁰⁸

What is immediately striking to Mannheim is the exclusion of social factors in this enumeration of determining factors. For Mannheim, any biological rhythm

must work itself out through the medium of everyday life, through social events, and if this important group of formative factors is left unrealized in this way, then life's potentials that existed in the original formulation of the problem are liable to be jettisoned in such a reformulation.¹⁰⁹ Mannheim notes that the romantic tendency in Germany at the time completely obscured the fact that "between the natural or physical and the mental spheres there is a level of existence at which social forces operate." Perhaps it would be useful, he claims, to ask whether society can produce nothing more than "influences" and "relationships," or whether social factors also possess a certain creative energy, a formative power, a "social entelechy" of their own.¹¹⁰

One of Mannheim's central themes is that as a result of an acceleration in the tempo of social and cultural transformation, when basic attitudes must change quickly, then various new phases of experience will consolidate to form a distinguishable new impulse and a new centre of configuration. Mannheim argues that it is in this case that we can observe the formation of a new generation style, or a new generation entelechy.¹¹¹ He goes on to explain that the biological fact of the existence of a generation merely provides the *possibility* that generation entelechies may emerge at all. If there were no different generations succeeding each other, the phenomenon of generation styles would not exist.¹¹² Mannheim stresses that one can find genuine entelechies primarily in the social and intellectual trends or currents through which certain basic attitudes evolve, and which exist over and above the change of generations as enduring formative

principles underlying social and historical development. He argues that: "successively emerging new generations, then, superimpose their own generation entelechies upon the more comprehensive, stable entelechies of the various polar trends; this is how entelechies of the liberal, conservative, or socialist trends come to be transformed from generation to generation."¹¹³

Mannheim concludes from this that generation units are no mere theoretical constructions, since they have their own entelechies. One cannot however, grasp these entelechies in and for themselves. One must view them from within the wider framework of the trend entelechies. The trend entelechy, Mannheim claims, is prior to the generation entelechies. This does not mean to say that every one of the conflicting trends at a given point of time will necessarily cause one or more new generation entelechies to arise.¹¹⁴ Mannheim expresses considerable discontent with both the positivist and romantic-historical approaches to the problem of generations, due to the lack that both display of methodological reflection upon social factors themselves, or upon their generational effects. As a dynamic thinker, Mannheim cannot bring himself to accept the static situation he sees emerging in the evolution of sociological thought on generations. This discontent led him to formulate an innovative understanding of generation as a "historical unit."

III Mannheim's Single Generation Society

Mannheim outlines the importance of social factors and their link to the

problem of generations, through a thought experiment involving what he calls the "single generation society." In this single generation society members are born into a society all at once, they age together as part of the collective, and then perhaps they all die, or else they all live immortally. This experiment, he claims, shows us that in real life "the vitality of the society comes from the continuous production of new members and replacement of current members, and the rhythm of that process was linked to the duration and limitation of the individual life span."¹⁵ It is this linkage between "generational replacement" and social change that Mannheim decides to explore. He asks that one imagine "what . . . that social life course of man [would] be like if one generation lived on forever and none followed to replace it?"¹⁶

Mannheim poses this question as a particular framing of an earlier thought experiment suggested by David Hume. Hume (1711-1776) asked; "suppose that the type of succession of human generations was completely altered so that older generation disappears at one stroke and the new one is then born all at once."¹⁷ In Hume's counterfactual world, there would be a continuous sequence of "fresh starts," a series of open choices whereby each successive generation would create its own social institution and make its own decisions about the social organization of production and distribution; where each new generation would define as "good and right" and "fair" as it deems appropriate. Both of the Mannheimian and the Humean thought experiments postulate in different ways a single generation society. By proposing a society composed of members of a single age, both

experiments focus upon the role of generational succession in producing both immediate social organization and eventual social history.¹¹⁸

1. *What is a Generation?*

Mannheim argues that in its most general sense a generation refers to an age group sharing the same time and space. These age groups have an identity in terms of their historical-social location. They thus have the potential of participating in a common destiny, and this comes about due to the accidents of biological and geographical commonality. It was Mannheim who most greatly influenced many North American scholars' conceptions of generation, so in this sense, Mannheim's own generation possesses life without end. As the cumulative social history and lived experience of biography continue to build, one event or experience builds upon another. Although scholars may well reinterpret past experience in light of new information, one can only reinterpret memory, but cannot view transpired events through the lenses of those born in another time.¹¹⁹ The prominence Mannheim gives to the concept of a shared, similarly stratified consciousness for providing the essential link between generation and social change transfigures the concept of generation into a clean, analytic device adaptable to and susceptible of analysis through scientific methods. Perhaps recognizing the complexity of these issues, Mannheim chose not to return to this topic in his later writings.

Mannheim's definition of generation presupposes a three dimensional

generational phenomenon whose facets are: generation location, generation as actuality, and generation unit.

a. Generation Location

The generation location (*Lagerung* or what he calls *Generationslagerung*) ascribes to individuals belonging to the same age group a common experiential location in the social and historical process. Guided by Marx's conception of social class,¹²⁰ Mannheim proposes that both classes and generations receive their unity in the first place from the objective fact of social location. An individual's location in a social class does not necessarily lead to the kind of personal interaction characterizing concrete groups; however it does circumscribe his life chances with regard to wealth and power and modes of feeling, thought and action.¹²¹

Mannheim's methodological reflections make it possible to draw a distinction between generations as mere collective facts on the one hand, and concrete social groups on the other: for example, the family, tribe or section. For Mannheim, the generation is not a concrete group in the sense of a community, that is, a group which cannot exist without its members having concrete knowledge of each other and which can under compelling circumstances cease to exist as a mental and spiritual unit. It is in no way comparable to associations such as organizations formed for a specific purpose.¹²² By a concrete group, then, Mannheim means the union of a number of individuals through naturally developed or consciously willed

ties. Although the members of a generation are undoubtedly bound together in certain ways, the ties between them have not resulted in a concrete group. One can define similarity of location (*Lagerung*) only by specifying, Mannheim claims, the structure within which and through which location groups emerge in historical-social reality. Whereas class position was based upon the existence of a changing economic and power structure in society, generation location rests on the existence of biological rhythm in human existence, that is, on the factors of life and death, a limited span of life, and the ageing of individuals who belong to the same year of birth, and are endowed with a common location. These constitute the historical dimension of the social process.¹²³

Mannheim argues that to have in common belonging to the same class, and belonging to the same generation or age group, tends to place the affected individuals at a common location in the social and historical process. This common location tends to limit them to a specific range of potential experiences, predisposing them for a certain characteristic mode of thought and experience and a characteristic type of historically relevant location. On the other hand, in a society where there was no change of generation, there would be no "fresh contact" of this biological type. If the cultural process were always carried on and developed by the same individuals, then, to be sure, he argues, fresh contacts might still result from shifts in social relationships, but the more radical form of fresh contact would be missing.¹²⁴ Mannheim claims that fresh contacts resulting from shifts in the historical and social situation could suffice to bring about the changes in thought and practice

necessitated by changed conditions only if the individuals experiencing these fresh contacts have sustained a nearly perfect "elasticity of mind." He therefore concludes that the continuous emergence of new human beings in society acts to compensate for the restricted and partial nature of the individual's consciousness. The continuous emergence of new human beings certainly results in some loss of accumulated cultural possessions; but, on the other hand, it alone makes a fresh selection fully possible.¹²⁵

The generation location only contains potentialities that may materialize, or be suppressed or become embedded in other social forces and manifest themselves in modified forms. Mannheim states that mere co-existence in time is not enough to bring about a community (*Gemeinschaft*) in the sense of having a common generation location. Instead, he says, to be able to use the handicaps and privileges inherent in a generation location, one must be born within the same historical season and cultural region.¹²⁶

b. Generation as Actuality

An obvious derivative, therefore, is Mannheim's second concept, that of generation as actuality or generational coherence and association (*Generationszusammenhang*), which adds a binding force to mere existence within some given socio-historical unit. Such generations form in periods of "dynamic destabilization," when same-aged individuals ". . . participate in the characteristic social and

intellectual currents of their society and period, and insofar as they have an active or passive experience of the interactions of forces which made up the new situation."¹²⁷ Thus youth who are not exposed to these currents share the same generation location but do not share in the processes creating an actual generation. The generation as actuality releases the latent potential inherent in generation location by orienting similarly located contemporaries toward each others' conflicting attempts at the interpretation and shaping of ideas and forms of action surrounding the unfolding of a common destiny.¹²⁸ Such a conflicting orientation can serve to produce generational combat units. As an actuality then, Mannheim argues, generation involves even more than mere co-presence in such a historical and social region. A further concrete nexus must exist, which he describes as participation in the common destiny of this historical and social unit.¹²⁹

c. Generation Unit

This third conceptualization of generation arises from the fact that divergences may occur within actual generations, both in terms of behaviour and in the directionality of goals and values. These divergences, born out of intense forms of shared responses to the unfolding history, lead to what Mannheim calls generation units (*Generationseinheit*). The distinction between actual generations and generation units Mannheim sums up in a famous dictum: "youth experiencing the same concrete historical problems may be said to be part of the same actual

generation; while those groups within the same actual generation which work up the material of their common experiences in different specific ways, constitute separate generation-units."¹³⁰

The generation unit represents a much more concrete bond than the actual generation. Youth who are experiencing the same concrete historical problems may not even realize that they form a part of the same concrete generation. Those subgroups within the same actual generation that "work up" or regenerate and recycle the society's historical material, whether they do so in cooperation or conflict, constitute for Mannheim discrete generation units.¹³¹ They may never have all met each other, but they will often recognize that they belong in the same category of historical actors. One example that Mannheim uses is the concept of freedom which was important for a season for one specific liberal generation unit, not merely because of the material demands it implied, but also because in and through this concept, it was possible to unite individuals scattered spatially and otherwise.¹³²

Mannheim argues that within any overall community of people who possess (or are possessed by) a common destiny particular generation units will naturally tend to arise. They are characterized by the fact that they do not merely involve a loose participation by a number of individuals in a pattern of events shared by all alike, though interpreted by the different individuals differently. However, their common experiences do help to form a loose identity of responses. Furthermore, within any generation there can exist a number of differentiated, antagonistic

generation units, together they constitute an "actual" generation precisely because they are oriented toward each other, even though only in the sense of fighting one another. For example, those who were young about 1810 in Germany constituted one actual generation whether or not they adhered to the then current version of either liberal or conservative ideas. But insofar as they were conservative or liberal, they belonged to different units of that actual generation.¹³³ The main point he is making is that the generation units will tend to impose a much more concrete and binding tie on their members because of the parallelism of responses that common action involves and to some extent requires.

Apparently following Durkheim, Mannheim claims that new generation units will best and most fully realize the potentialities inherent in a generation location only under conditions of accelerated social and cultural change. The need for rapid changes in basic attitudes ruptures the process of cultural transmission, creates a generation gap and helps to form new generation units. Moreover, it motivates these new generation units to form a novel "generation style" which is sharply different from the life style of older members of society.

Mannheim concludes his work with several observations on the interest and risks in the idea of generations. He writes that:

the importance of the theories of generations consisted in the fact that they accentuated more and more a theoretical interest in the factor of human historical happening. Undoubtedly this was important, but we may say in summary that it was a one-sided view that came from trying to explain by this one factor alone the total dynamics of historical occurrence. Such a one-sided vision is always inherent in

the happiness of he who discovers it and hence is forgivable.¹³⁴

Marias recognizes that there is much more in the idea of generations as a historical category than is conceived in the theories considered by Mannheim. As well it is idle to try to explain history solely by means of generations, because the subjects of historical actions must work within the structure of the basic present time, so one cannot ignore the real content of history itself.¹³⁵

2. What is the Duration of a Generation?

There are various ways to estimate a generation's duration, many assessing it arbitrarily at around fifteen years (e.g., Dromel). However, most scholars Mannheim claims evaluate it as lasting roughly thirty years, on the basis that during the first thirty years of life people are still learning, that individual creativeness on an average begins only at that age, and that by sixty, most men will have virtually stopped participating effectively in public life. The thirty year length of a generation seemed to encompass the major periods of activity experienced during the standard life span. That is, those who define a generation have roughly thirty years to work in positions that allow decision making and direction, and this period leads naturally to a subsequent withdrawal from positions of power. This posited thirty years rhythm is more characteristic of individual life and family structure (with different generations of children, parents, and grandparents) than of the overall society, since new waves of births occur continuously in society through overlapping and

adjacent kinship structures.¹³⁶

During Mannheim's time, the main problems facing the positivist school appear to have been (1) to find the average period of time it takes for a younger generation to supercede the older generation in public life, and, principally, (2) to find the natural historical starting-points from which to estimate each new period. Furthermore, according to Mannheim, what is even more difficult to attain is to find the natural beginning of a whole generation series because birth and death in society as a whole follow continually one upon the other, and full intervals exist only in the individual family where there is a definite period before children attain marriageable age.¹³⁷

An important question for Mannheim is: what was the link between this ongoing biological process and the specific triggers for social change? To develop this linkage, Mannheim turns to Dilthey, particularly Dilthey's use of generations as an internal measure of time and as a crucial factor in defining the true meaning of contemporaneity. True contemporaries do not simply live at the same times. Clearly, several different generations coexist at any one point in time, yet these generations do not experience the same events in the same way. In other words, different generations do not live in exactly the same world nor do they experience events during the same season of life, and so their different subjective experiences tend to separate them.¹³⁸

The biographical significance of historical experience lies in the creation of

different stratifications of human consciousness, in which experiences are not simply layered, one on top of the other, but dialectically articulated. This is a process that allows people to interpret new experience in the light of history and to revise history in light of new experiences. The biological process that defines generations creates the potential for development of a shared consciousness that unites and motivates people.¹³⁹ Historical experiences provide them a similar location, much like social class, but do not guarantee that they will form an actual generation. For a generation to trigger social change, its members must share something more than a simple co-presence in time and space; they must forge an additional bond that allows them together to generate a shared consciousness that in turn motivates them to "participate in a common destiny." The basis for that additional bond lies in the (largely unconscious) cultural orientations developed in early life. Further, members of a generation need not all respond to historical circumstances in the same way. As a result of these different responses, members form a generational unit that acts for them as an actual generation but may also react against the position of other generational units, thereby allowing multiple and perhaps antagonistic generational units to coexist.¹⁴⁰

To convey a clear idea of the basic structure of the phenomenon of generations, Mannheim clarifies the specific interrelations of the individuals comprising a single generation unit. He says:

. . . the unity of a generation does not consist primarily in a social bond of the kind that leads to the formation of a concrete group, although it may sometimes happen that a feeling for the unity of a

generation is consciously developed into a basis for the formation of concrete groups, as in the case of the modern German youth movement. But in this case, the groups are most often mere cliques, with the one distinguishing characteristic that group-formation is based upon the consciousness of belonging to one generation, rather than upon definite objective.¹⁴¹

IV. Political Generation

Scholars usually conceive of generations as consisting of tangible cohorts, that is, groups of people born within a certain time span. However, measuring the actual contents of a specific generation has proven troublesome. One source of difficulty lies in identifying the formative years during which a common experience can have had a decisive impact on political outlooks. Another problem is how to determine which shared experiences have the most profound effects on people's political beliefs. Many political scientists, however, tend to identify only political events and political experiences as the principal sources of political beliefs.¹⁴²

Scholars have often used a concept of generations nonetheless to help them account for various political phenomena. Writing in the 1920s and 1930s, Mannheim was one of the first prominent social scientists to discuss in detail the implications of specifically political generations.¹⁴³ He pioneered its usage in chronicling the rise of the Nazi movement in Germany.¹⁴⁴ Since that time, the conceptualization of generations has been sharpened, the sources of generational causation been dealt with more explicitly, and the quality of available data has improved. Among the topics dealt with have been political and cohort generations,

birth cohorts, period effects and life cycles, which we will be treating in some detail below in Chapter Five in a discussion of advances made by Mannheim's followers in North America.

In writing specifically about political generations, Mannheim notes that the crucial formative period for individuals is late adolescence to early adulthood.¹⁴⁵ Of course specific cultural factors may cause this crucial period to occur somewhat earlier or later in different societies. Mannheim conceptualizes a political generation as a group that experiences shared formative social and political conditions and as a result holds a common interpretive framework that is importantly shaped by those historical circumstances.¹⁴⁶ More than an age group, members of a political generation are bound together by shared transformative experiences that create enduring political commitments and worldviews. Mannheim views political generations as being characterized by a common set of beliefs, ideological differences and worldview.

Recent studies have tended to conceptualize political generations in terms of the attitudes and beliefs that characterize a particular age group.¹⁴⁷ Inherent in this approach lie several problems. First, it tends to view political generations as residing in the individuals themselves *qua* individuals, rather than in their socially constructed interrelationships and collective action. Second, it tends to assume a static model of political generations as consisting of fixed belief structures that are held by age strata.¹⁴⁸ Mannheim argues that experiences in adolescence or early adulthood are formative because they shape a "natural view of the world," and this

produces a lens through which people view and interpret later experiences. However, a political generation need not be defined wholly by age but instead may be defined in part as a group that has had a common experience during the same period.¹⁴⁹ This common experience may be birth (for an age cohort) or other events such as completion of school, marriage, migration, or entry into the workforce. While these may be closely related to age, they may not be so determined. Think, for example, of the veterans returning to North America at the end of World War II to resume their families, jobs, and even educations. They found themselves engaged in many activities side-by-side with others much younger.

In the case of social and political movements, the defining factor may in fact be the era or wave of the movement when the involved individuals initially find themselves to have been politicized.¹⁵⁰ Thus members of a political generation have roughly the same "activist age," although their chronological ages may vary. Political generations are made up of multiple, overlapping micro-cohorts that enter the movement during the same era and share some commonalities. This definition of a generation does not include all members of an age group, unlike media-created stereotypes of the Baby Boomers or Generation X. Instead, members of a political generation will have shared some formative experiences in collective action from which they have, perhaps subsequently, constructed enduring networks and commitments.

In this vein, many studies focus upon a time interval covering what the authors consider the most crucial age range for the creation of a distinctive, self-

conscious political generation. There is nothing magical in these figures; however Karl Mannheim puts the age span at 17-25.¹⁵¹ Another scholar has recently built an elaborate biosocial rationale for 18-26 as the span during which a "political-cultural consciousness" takes firm hold, and if appropriate psychohistorical conditions prevail, a new political generation will form.¹⁵² At a more general level, Erik Erikson's work on identity crisis also singles out late adolescence and early adulthood as potentially the most important period for political character formation.¹⁵³ Overall, then, the life-stage changes experienced by the young adults coupled perhaps with some dramatic historical occurrences touching their lives, at a purportedly vulnerable time, help to distinguish them from their middle-aged parents.¹⁵⁴ Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee suggest that in the United States where youth is relatively apolitical and where political loyalties are affected by marriage and career-related friendships, political loyalties may not be firmly set until the late twenties (if at all).¹⁵⁵ While it is customary to think of political generations being formed as the result of cataclysmic events such as the Great Depression, generations may also be the result of more complex and gradual formative factors such as the spread of affluence.

Not surprisingly the first country in which there was empirical observation of generational effects was Germany. In Germany there had been a variety of markedly differently social periods; war, prosperity, hyperinflation and Depression had followed in rapid cycles.¹⁵⁶

Recent American studies of political generations, particularly with regard to

electoral behaviour, have tended to concentrate on the lingering effects of the 1930s' Great Depression. Not only did the Depression have an enormous impact on economic conditions in the United States; it was also the period in which a most dramatic political realignment occurred. This realignment created the so-called Roosevelt coalition that later came to be known as the New Deal coalition. This important political innovation that occurred basically within the Democratic Party has had major overall effects extending to the present day.¹⁵⁷

One of the first studies using survey research data to look at effects of the Depression on electoral behaviour was that of Angus Campbell, Phillip Converse, Warren Miller and Donald Stokes, and it was reported in their book *The American Voter*. Using massed polls taken over a period from 1952 to 1958 altogether eliciting information from about 10,000 respondents, They found that people coming into the electorate during the Great Depression were more likely to identify with the Democratic Party than either the cohorts that preceded or that followed them.¹⁵⁸ Also, in three polls taken in 1948, 1952 and 1956, the Depression cohort reported having had a higher level of class voting than the electorate as a whole.¹⁵⁹

While it is customary to think of generations as being formed due to great events, scholars have also found generational effects that developed more gradually, and that seem to be the result of long-term processes affecting the content and nature of political socialization. Paul Abramson documents a generationally based trend toward lower levels of partisan identification in the United States.¹⁶⁰ While Abramson does not claim to know the reasons for this trend,

Walter Dean Burnham has suggested that the trend may relate to the development of a partisan realignment.¹⁶¹

Another work suggesting gradual, generationally based change is Ronald Inglehart's "The Silent Revolution in Europe." Inglehart measured what he called "acquisitive" and "post-bourgeois" or post-materialist values by asking people to choose preferred values. The younger cohorts proved far more likely to hold the post-materialist values than their elders. This he attributes to a generational effect. The young had grown up during a long era of prosperity during which acquisitive values came to be less necessary, and this was also a "season" during which freedom was no longer a luxury.¹⁶² Maurice Pinard finds that there were by 1962 much higher levels of support in Québec for the Social Credit Party among the young than among their parents. This seems to have been a specific generational phenomenon since later generations did not become Social Credit supporters and yet this group remained distinctive in its level of Social Credit support.¹⁶³ Pinard also reports that young Québec youth expressed higher levels of support for separatism.¹⁶⁴ In a later article, Richard Hamilton and Maurice Pinard report much higher levels of support for the separatist Parti Québécois among the young.¹⁶⁵

Both the length of a generation and the nature of the formative experience involved in the creation of a generation vary with the topic examined. In some instances a generation's formation results from impacts of events that have very definite time spans such as World War II. In this case we can expect that a generation so formed will be distinctive as compared to its preceding and following

generations. To take another example, if we are looking at a long term trend, we may expect to find a predictable generational difference, with the younger generation being, say, more secular than its parents.¹⁶⁶

V. Generational Cohorts

Cohort analysis is a method of research that demographers have developed in recent years, and other scholars have adapted it for the study of various attitudinal and behavioural phenomena, especially the study of political phenomena such as, for example, voter turnout and party identification. Some scholars have extolled it more broadly, as a technique with great potential for providing insight into the effects of human aging and into the nature of social, cultural and political change.¹⁶⁷ The term "cohort" originally referred to a Roman military unit, and a common dictionary definition is still a "group of warriors or soldiers." In nontechnical language the term more often than not refers to a person who is one's companion, accomplice, peer, or associate, or in a collective sense, to a band or a group of associates. The delineation of cohort boundaries may be a very fuzzy exercise, since the "given period of time" may be of any length – from a day or less, to twenty years or more – and it may begin at any arbitrarily selected point in time.¹⁶⁸ The cohorts used for social scientific research usually consist of people who have experienced a common significant life event within a period of from one to ten years previously. The "significant life event" is more often than not birth, in which case the

cohort is termed a birth cohort.¹⁶⁹

Strauss and Howe (1992) break new ground with their book, *Generations: the History of America's Future*, by interpreting American history through the use of a framework to analyse a repeating cycle of attitudes and approaches to life. The cycle they propose consists of four parts or phases, each roughly twenty years in duration. They trace this cycle from the first American settlers from Europe to the present day and then go further to make predictions for the future, right up to 2069. While America may offer the world's best example of cyclical history, other modern societies have displayed similar rhythms, and since World War II, these rhythms appear to have been drawing closer together. They say that archetypal generational phenomena similar to those the Americans display may well exist, in roughly the same age brackets, in Canada and Australia, throughout Western Europe, Russia, Israel and even China.

There are many other researchers doing work in other countries around the world which is demonstrating that generational phenomena may well be universal, and not to be found only in the West. This comparative work now shows a new tendency – for generational phenomena to converge due to the global culture created by international media forces, like CNN and cheap transistor radios.¹⁷⁰

Strauss and Howe use the concept of cohorts to help them define a generation. A generational cohort is one that displays similarities in attitudes and worldview, mainly due to shared life experiences at comparable ages. Strauss and

Howe identify four generations especially affected by the four different phases of their overall generational cycle. They argue that groups of people born within a few years of each other will be likely to experience world historical, defining events at similar ages. They insist that although history creates generations, it is also dialectically true that generations create history. The cycle draws the energy it needs to move forward in large part from each generation's need to redefine the social role of each new phase of life it enters. These authors repeat a point we encounter many places throughout the generational literature. One of the main reasons that a generational cycle perpetuates itself is the human tendency to keep going in the same direction until circumstances force a change. Call this the tendency toward a form of "overshoot" born of rigidity or frozen states of the human mind. One of the main reasons why generational cycles perpetuate themselves is this: each new generation is likely to react against the worst rigidities of the preceding generation, especially it seems in relation to the style of parenting.¹⁷¹

Strauss and Howe suggest that the following attributes will be useful in identifying a generational cohort: a "common location" in history (i.e., the background chronology of trends and events), common beliefs and behaviours (something like a generational *Weltanschauung*), and a common perceived membership or self-definition. This generational theory goes on to argue at length that one will normally find four main generational cohorts, sometimes defined by very specific events and at other times by a more "fuzzy" border zone lying between the generational cohorts. In general, the cohorts alternate between optimistic and pessimistic

outlooks, and therefore between dominant and recessive efforts in the world, and these outlooks develop with the eras. It will be easier to understand this dynamic cycle, if we look at each cohort in isolation and track how it grows through its life stages in relation to the four eras.¹⁷²

1. *Birth Cohorts*

Most writers use the phrase cohort analysis to refer to any study in which there are measures of some characteristics of one or more cohorts (birth or otherwise) at two or more points in time. Students of generational change do not ordinarily apply the term to studies in which they compare different cohorts at a single point in time (cross-sectional or synchronic studies).¹⁷³ Scholars sometimes use the term generation synonymously with birth cohort, or generation may refer to a specific birth cohort with "natural" rather than arbitrary boundaries. In the latter sense, one may for instance consider persons whose early formative experiences occurred during the Great Depression to comprise a generation.¹⁷⁴ Paul Abramson uses cohort analysis in this way for a study of partisan orientations reported in his book *Generational Change in American Politics*. Abramson traces the level of class voting of the Depression-raised cohort between 1948 to 1972, and he finds that this cohort continues throughout the period to vote more strongly on a class basis than does the electorate as a whole. Abramson's research also indicates that there is a generationally based trend toward lower levels of partisan identification.¹⁷⁵

More than thirty-five years ago, economic demographer Richard Easterlin first presented an argument that swings in relative income among cohorts of child-bearing age produce the baby boom and then the baby bust phenomena – and vice versa. This we will also be discussing below in Chapter Five. Initially concerned with describing demographic cycles (Easterlin 1961), his work has continued to evolve more fully developed statements of this basic thesis (1968, 1971, 1973), and he offers an original explanation of the baby boom and bust phenomena.¹⁷⁶

A generation is what Easterlin and other demographers mean by a birth cohort. He uses the terms generation and cohort completely interchangeably.¹⁷⁷ The so-called Easterlin Effect was doubtless inspired by the observations and insights of Durkheim. It consists of observed cyclical changes in demographic and social behaviour that have resulted from fluctuations in birth rates and cohort size during the post-World War II period in affluent societies. The comparison of high income nations with lower income nations demonstrates clear differences in a variety of dimensions of social and economic life. In the latter the Easterlin Effect simply does not apply.¹⁷⁸ In the advanced industrial societies, though, these changes in behaviour themselves help to determine changes in the female fertility rates that in turn eventually result in changes of cohort size. Thus the relationship is both cyclical and dialectical.

Ironically, a large cohort size has at the same time virtually opposite macro and micro economic effects. A demographic baby boom generates an overall long wave economic boom, initially due to all the economic activity needed to raise,

clothe, educate, etc., the large cohort, and then later due to the fact that there are now so many people in the workforce producing economic effects. However, at the individual level, a baby boom's sheer size relatively reduces the economic opportunities of its individual members and reduces their own income relative to that of their smaller parental generation. Although economic activities increase overall, they do not do so sufficiently to offset the fact that there are in a given society simply too many people seeking too few jobs. The widespread, relatively low economic status of individual baby boomers in turns leads to lifestyle decisions that in turn produce a lower fertility rate. These decisions include: higher rates of female labour force participation, later marriage, higher divorce and illegitimacy, and increasing homicide, suicide and alienation.

On this basis, Easterlin predicts that the small baby bust cohorts entering adulthood in the 1990s in industrial societies will enjoy higher relative income, more traditional family structures and lower levels of social disorganization,¹⁷⁹ and these predictions seemingly are coming to pass. The importance of Easterlin's theory comes in part from this potential predictive capability, which makes it a significant contribution to theories of social change. Whereas most theories of modernization, including those of the demographic transition and value transformation, did indeed identify important trends, Easterlin focuses on explaining unexpected and puzzling deviations from the secular trends.

Norman Ryder substitutes the concept of birth cohort for Mannheim's notion of shared consciousness. Back in 1927, Mannheim's distinction between

"generation" and "generation-as-actuality" was already central to his view of the structural linkage between agency and social change. Ryder argues that a society's structural transformations may be linked to population processes through the twin mechanisms of cohort succession and cohort replacement. Further, Ryder argues that a comparison of different cohorts is a powerful strategy for studying social change.¹⁸⁰ Ryder explains that though cohorts may continue to diverge as members age, cohort variability in many respects is present at birth and thereby represents a set of ascribed cohort characteristics, reflecting the characteristics and behaviours of parents. Though he agrees with Mannheim that the concept of cohort generation is in many ways similar to the concept of social class, both try to locate individuals relative to social institutions.¹⁸¹

Conceptually, Ryder emphasizes that cohort effects or what he sometimes calls "period effects" occur because some macro level phenomena have influenced micro level behaviours. Articulating the linkage across levels of aggregation requires some conceptualization of the mechanisms through which social structure affects individual behaviour. By way of example, he considers four competing explanations that can account for why members of a given cohort may behave similarly. Cohort members may manifest the same behaviour of interest because of correlated individual effects, ecological effects, conceptual effects and/or endogenous effects.

A correlated individualistic explanation implies that people who share similar characteristics are likely to react to similar environmental conditions in similar ways.

An ecological explanation emphasizes social structural arrangements in which groups exist and individuals as group members face similar constraints and opportunities, which in turn tend to shape their behaviours in similar ways.¹⁸² The remaining two categories of effects are arguably more sociological, he claims, since they invoke the importance of the reference group in shaping individual behaviour. The key to the difference between the first two effects and the remaining two lies in the extent to which the individual is influenced by group characteristics and group dynamics. Contextual effects link individual behaviours to the distribution of background characteristics in the reference group. The notion that the individual's behaviour is, at least in part, shaped by characteristics of the groups to which she belong stands behind the development of contextual models.¹⁸³

Norman Ryder (1965) argues convincingly for the utility of the cohort as a unit for the study of social and cultural change. However, Ryder's essay does not deal with specific techniques of research. Although other scholars have frequently cited Ryder's work, this interest has led to few attempts to use cohort analysis for the primary purpose of studying generationally-based social or political change.

2. *Period Effects*

Period effects constitute a major indicator that displays discontinuity in a virtually ideal form. One may find such effects in play for each generation, reflecting important events and trends of the time. Writers often refer to them as "Zeitgeist"

effects. True period effects have a roughly common impact on most segments of society. Illustratively, certain elements of a war, an economic depression, a unique regime, a major technological innovation, or a mass cultural movement may leave their mark on the entire society, even though other effects may touch population segments in more unique ways. Of course in the real world it is no more easy to identify period effects than any other processes. Rather, the three factors of age, date of birth and historical period often work simultaneously and in varying combinations.

Richard Easterlin argues that period effects sometimes prompt parallel shifts in both of the active generations, most notably regarding evaluations of the political system and of government actors. Also, one may encounter visible signs of generational effects that have a lasting influence extending well beyond the originally affected generation. The invention of television is one obvious example. Similarly, some generational effects may not fully crystalize for some time.¹⁸⁴ Such is the case with the Easterlin Effect.

Easterlin's theory of cohort competition suggests that individuals born during the baby boom are more likely to be poor than those born before or after them. A decomposition of poverty by age, period, cohort and household type shows that among whites, every successive generation of family heads born throughout the baby boom has faced an increasingly greater chance of being poor.¹⁸⁵ Easterlin found that period effects will differ by race, since increases in discrimination in hiring and promotion would raise the chances of impoverishment among blacks in

each age category more so than it would among whites. Due to their labour market position, blacks are more greatly affected by economic downturns compared to whites.

3. *Life Cycles*

The alternative life-cycle model focuses on the roles that society accords to people due to their age, to the effect of the accumulation of experience, or to the psychological effects of biological change. Therefore the sixty year old may be expected to have held the same job for a long period and be more likely than a twenty something person to have political attitudes congruent with those prevalent in the work environment.¹⁸⁶

Discussing the life-cycle effects at the individual level can restrict the idea that individuals are more open, receptive or vulnerable to change at some points in the life span than at others. Students of life-cycle effects often interpret them as movements by the young which, as they pass through time, bring them roughly into line with where the older generation stood when it occupied that age bracket. This interpretation rests on the assumption that certain kinds of change are endemic to the life course. These changes stem from shifting responsibilities and transpire as people move through young adulthood and into the middle years. But life-cycle effects may also be a function of movements among older people, and this would increase, or conceivably decrease, the distance between them and the young.¹⁸⁷

The most often cited example of a life cycle effect is the purported relationship between age and conservatism. One may view conservatism due to age as the combined result of changing social roles and of physiological changes. New voters may lack responsibilities and wealth and thus tend to be more radical while the accumulation of responsibilities with age may make people more conservative. According to Seymour Martin Lipset, the responsibilities associated with parenthood can make one more appreciative of the role of authority in society.¹⁸⁸ Thus parenthood can make one more conservative, at least in the sense of being more willing to support the exercise of authority.

One perspective in which a life cycle explanation of political behaviour is highly appropriate is that of political participation. The life cycle entails varying demands on time, interests and resources, all of which may affect one's ability to participate in politics. At the beginning of the life cycle people are involved in settling into their life pattern. This is what Norman Nie and Sidney Verba refer to as the "start-up" phenomenon.¹⁸⁹ The demands involved in starting up tend to lessen the rate of political participation. Similarly, knowledge about political issues develops gradually. Thus rates of political participation tend to increase slowly as one ages. At the other end of the life cycle the "disengagement phenomenon" occurs. As people retire and as their friends and relatives die off, they tend to become increasingly isolated and uninvolved. This decline in involvement is reflected in decreasing levels of political participation.¹⁹⁰ In Canada, John Courtney and David Smith present some evidence in a journal article on "Voting in Saskatoon

City" which suggests that consistency between voters' federal and provincial voting behaviour increases with age.¹⁹¹ Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee in *Voting* find that the young are more likely to change their vote intention during the campaign and less likely to cast a vote consistent with their stands on issues.¹⁹²

Paul Abramson explains that:

a life cycle explanation suggests that as young persons gain more experience in the work force they will become socialized more fully into the norms of their social class. As this socialization occurs, an increasing proportion will learn to support the prevalent party of their class. The net effect of this socialization (and resocialization) will be an increasing relationship between social class and partisan preference.¹⁹³

Other findings relating to the life cycle suggest that the old are more religious,¹⁹⁴ that they are more likely to pick extreme alternatives in evaluating political leaders¹⁹⁵ and they are less likely to favour changes in policy.¹⁹⁶ The life cycle model provides a theoretical basis for, for example, predicting age differences in participation. Young people just entering the electorate will tend, as opposed to their elders, to display more mobile attitudes, and not to be as well integrated into their community. Opinions and knowledge about politics develop slowly. Both settling in and acquiring knowledge of politics with age lead to the prediction that participation will increase with age. At the other end of the life cycle other factors are operative which tend to decrease the level of political participation.

In comparative analysis, one finds evidence pointing very strongly toward continuity as well as change growing out of the pure and mixed impact of generational, life-cycle, and period effects.¹⁹⁷ It is mainly Mannheim's typology of ideas that has influenced the development and application of these basic and useful concepts; together they do help one to fill out as well as to explain the conception of generation.

In summary, Mannheim concludes that "the importance of the theories of generations consists in the fact that they accentuate more and more a theoretical interest in the factor of human historical happening."¹⁹⁸ Mannheim utilizes decisive concepts to explain his hypothesized and fanciful single generation society. The essential importance of his views lies in the fact that he coins and uses the concepts just examined, concepts that have over time proven extremely useful in the social sciences, as well as adding to our understanding of how advanced industrial and post-industrial societies work. Mannheim's intellectual insights are occasionally profound. North American scholars have quite properly given him the fullest possible intellectual credibility. These scholars have utilized his concepts and approaches and his postulated research agenda to develop and reveal cycles in, for instance, American history, as we will be discussing at some length in Chapter Five.

Let us conclude this discussion by saying that both Mannheim's and Ortega-Marias' generational theories derive in easily discernible and important ways from the work of August Comte, who was the first to have a modern "idea" about society.

To argue the importance of Ortega and Marias is not to belittle Mannheim's contribution in any way. These two intellectually stimulating approaches are quite different, but both fruitfully use innovative dialectical concepts and modes of analysis. And, as we shall see, they have some important potentially synergistic uses that remain in this scholarly generation very largely unrealized.

Chapter IV

THE MISSING CONTRIBUTION OF ORTEGA AND MARIAS IN CURRENT CONCEPTIONS OF GENERATIONS

L'oeil est le juge
universel de tous
les objets

Leonardo Da Vinci

This chapter further explores two traditional generational models – that developed together by Ortega and Marias, and that of Mannheim. The purpose is

not just to highlight these scholars' approaches, but also to explore the missing contribution of Ortega and Marias in current North American theories on generations.

I Traditional Generational Models

In the twentieth century there arose a new form of "historical awareness," and one of its results has been a greater effort to understand the concept of generations. Contributors to world literature have recognized and used the genealogical fact of generations for well over two thousand years, from long before the poetry of *Ecclesiastes* to the unsystematic work of Auguste Comte, who as we have seen first formulated a virtually modern idea about society based upon its generational foundation. The most penetrating and coherent advances though emerged during the first half of the last century, mainly through the efforts of José Ortega y Gasset, Julian Marias, Karl Mannheim and others. As discussed in Chapter Two, Marias considers Ortega's generational theory to have been the first ever truly worthy of the name. This theory arose, according to Anton Donoso, out of Ortega's general theory of social and historical reality, it and was rooted "in metaphysics as a systematic conception of reality."¹⁹⁹ However noteworthy Ortega was to Marias, he has not been so highly revered among most North American generational theorists. In the New World, Karl Mannheim is the chosen mentor whose work clearly dominates the generational field of inquiry.

At a fundamental level, every field of inquiry rests on an implicit or explicit

conception of its “scope,” that is to say, a conception of the nature of its subject matter and a delimitation of that subject from others. To be sure, overlaps and linkages usually exist among any set of academic fields, particularly among the sister disciplines that comprise the various social sciences, and over time these linkages appear to be becoming still denser. Nevertheless, prevalent conceptions of a field’s scope generally imply more than just an arbitrary and subjective interest in a particular phenomenon. They also imply that a subject matter so differs from others that it justifies or indeed requires considerable autonomy. Such autonomy may suggest the need for a distinct set of disciplinary tools and processes, especially discrete descriptive concepts and methods of inquiry, some general theoretical perspective and approach, and the use of empirical generalisations.

The mind represents the world in myriad ways, and it is legitimate to enquire of any mental representation whether it is mainly subjective or objective in nature. That is, is this aspect of the world being so represented because of some specific constitution of the representing mind? Or does the representation reflect the world as it is – a world that, independently of the mind, contains some feature that simply demands representation? Which aspects of our view of reality have their source in our subjective make-up and which reflect reality as it is in itself? This question lies at the intersection of metaphysics and the philosophy of mind. An attempt to answer it would be to assert something both about how the mind is or must be, and about how the world is objectively constituted.²⁰⁰

Once one has established a demarcation to separate the subjective and

objective ways of representing the world, further questions may suggest themselves. One may wonder what is distinctive of each way, and precisely how they are related, if at all. Are there any general principles governing subjective and objective modes of representation? Is one more basic than the other? Can one somehow eliminate either? Does one possess greater verisimilitude than the other? Can looking at both the subjective and objective realities help us to understand what we study? We hope to make these abstract questions more concrete if not wholly tractable by considering in some detail how Ortega and Marias subjectively represent generations, contrasting their approach with the steadfastly objective way that Mannheim and most North American scholars follow.

Generally speaking, there are two innovative and distinctive schools of thought on the theme of generations that have derived from Comte. On the one hand we have those two brilliant speculators Ortega and Marias. Their intellectual insight emerges from their multifaceted approach that encompasses subjectivism, perspectivism and vitalism. On the other hand is Karl Mannheim's innovative yet solid contribution, a dualist model based on a sociological and objective representation of society. Each school offers a traditional, unique and, we shall argue, potentially complementary way of viewing reality.

II Ortega and Marias' Multifaceted Model

1. Background

José Ortega y Gasset, arguably Spain's most important philosopher, was born in Madrid in 1883 and died in the same city in 1955. Ortega studied at a Jesuit College in Miraflores, Malaga between 1891 and 1897. He continued in Bilbao University and the University of Deusto (1897-1898), and finished his Ph.D. in philosophy in 1904 at the University of Madrid. Between 1905 and 1907 he went abroad to continue his studies at the Universities of Berlin, Leipzig and Marburg. Ortega then returned to Spain, where he worked for two years as a professor at the Escuela Superior del Magisterio,²⁰¹ and he founded the journal *Faro* (Beacon). In 1910 he became a professor of metaphysics at the University of Madrid. There he edited the *Espana* review from 1915 to 1923, and the *Revista de Occidente* from 1923 to 1936. This work, which involved reviewing many books, was instrumental in helping to put educated Spaniards in touch with Western and especially German thought. With the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, Ortega's academic work came to an end, and he had to seek a living mainly as a writer – though he did make occasional excursions into Spanish politics.

Ortega's work as editor and publisher helped to ease Spain's chronic isolation from contemporary Western culture. As a prolific writer, Ortega was the leader of the most productive school of thinkers Spain had known for perhaps three centuries. Together they tried to help philosophy escape from a centuries-old

viewpoint, which held that theory was somehow un-Spanish and therefore dangerous.²⁰² Although his collaborations in newspapers and magazines, his books, lectures and publishing efforts decisively influenced Spanish life, it took a long time for his influence to reach strongly outside Spain. Ortega's leap onto the world stage began in 1932 when a New York company translated and published what became for North Americans Ortega's best known work, *The Revolt of the Masses*, in which he argued that twentieth century society was coming to be dominated by masses of mediocre and indistinguishable yet collectively dangerous individuals.²⁰³

On the other hand, we cannot characterize Ortega's protégé Julian Marias in terms of a single occupational description. As Harold Raley has noted, Marias' life and his methods transcend the arbitrary limits of all conventional academic disciplines and sub-disciplines, many of which are seemingly becoming even narrower in scope just as scholars' come more to need the kind of comprehensive approach that distinguishes Marias' writings. A close student of Ortega, Marias' extensive work on the concept of generations offers an intellectually credible example of such comprehensiveness, in that it contributes to the disciplines of demography, history, sociology, philosophy and political science with almost equal meaningfulness and promise. Raley recognizes that Marias' versatility and uniqueness reflect a basic philosophical perspective that informs all of his works. This perspective enables him to discern previously unsuspected meanings in any topic he considers, however familiar or even hackneyed it may seem.²⁰⁴

In contrast, Ortega never considers the generational concept formally and

comprehensively in a single work. Furthermore, it remained for Marias to formulate a mature “Ortegan” conception of generations. While one can easily sense the importance of this concept in much of Ortega’s work; it is only by way of Marias’ summary of that work that the Ortegan concept becomes fully accessible. Much is made of the influence of the older generations on the younger. As the collaborative relationship of Ortega and Marias demonstrates,²⁰⁵ the converse effect of the young on the old is also a very real though all-too-often ignored phenomenon. This intergenerational collaboration is important, not only because it allows for linkages with other philosophers such as Mannheim.

Marias views his role or mission as a theorist to be that of “verifying” the system of connective relationships that other writers merely present in portraying life in their works. By the time Marias had completed his first year at the University of Madrid, he was certain that philosophy was to be his central and lifelong interest. His teacher that year, the eminent thinker Xavier Zubiri, introduced Marias to two things for which he would always be grateful: Ortega’s philosophy and that of the Greeks. In fact, Marias had already had an introduction of sorts to Ortega. At the age of fifteen he had read Ortega’s collection of essays entitled *Notas (Notes)*.²⁰⁶ It was Marias’ own personal problems and circumstances that pushed him, he himself admits, very deeply into Ortega’s philosophy, and yet Marias considers his mentor the most creative philosopher of the twentieth century.²⁰⁷ The same spirit that led Plato to philosophize guides both Ortega and Marias.²⁰⁸ In Ortega, Marias finds both a rich heritage and an extremely creative mode of thought. But mere

adherence to a master is idle unless it arises from a deeper commitment. For Marias, Ortega represents a firm starting point, but this tells us little of Marias' final aims or of his worth as a philosopher. Marias describes philosophy as the responsible vision in that it responds to human problems, realities and possibilities in the world people actually experience. Marias professes an abiding respect for the extraordinary multiplicity of human possibilities. Donoso contends that Marias does not impose a system on the reality he treats; instead, he discovers a system within that reality. The reality of the generations is essential to the system that fascinates Marias, and one cannot comprehend this system apart from the totality that the generational concept implies.²⁰⁹

2. *Three Theoretical Dimensions*

Not until Comte²¹⁰ do we have a theoretical basis that will allow the vague and pre-scientific notions about generational change to begin to assume a viable conceptual existence.²¹¹ One of Ortega's greatest contributions to contemporary historiography is his effort to re-introduce the concept of generation as a fundamental term for analyzing the dynamics of history, a term derived not from an arbitrary symbol system, but rather from the basic rational data of individual and social life.²¹² Ortega's thought is so multifaceted and fragmented that he is forever overflowing scholars' cups of comprehension. Noted for his prefaces, Ortega himself sees that when a "perspective" shifts, so must one's justification for another

approach in matters that involve new general problems of identity and relation.²¹³

The philosophical conception of generation developed by Ortega and Marias has three dimensions: 1) perspectivism, 2) subjectivism and 3) vitalism. Both the historical and the social thinking of Ortega appear to be distinct, to exist separately and in their own right. They go further than simply "completing" his philosophy of life, which itself goes considerably "beyond philosophy," as he put it.²¹⁴

a. Perspectivism

As a layman offered an opportunity to speak to experts, one needs some perspective that would at least provide a chance that the remarks might contribute something. Ortega himself calls his theory of knowledge perspectivism. Scholars have over the years been repeatedly impressed, if only in retrospect, by Ortega's contemporaneity because he identifies and deals directly with many current problems a decade or so before their discussion shall have become common.²¹⁵ In Ortega's work, there appears the idea that perspective is a constituent ingredient of reality:

The definitive being of the world is neither matter nor soul, nor any determined thing; it is a perspective.... The individual point of view seems to me to be the only point of view from which we can see the world in its truth. Reality, precisely because it is reality and is found outside our individual minds, can reach our minds only by multiplying itself into a thousand faces or facets. Reality can be looked at only from the vantage point that each and every man occupies, by fates, in the universe. Reality and the vantage point are correlates, and just as reality cannot be invented, so the vantage point cannot be feigned. Every man has a mission of truth. Where my eye is, there is no other; no other sees that part of reality which my eye sees. There is no

substitute for any of us; we are all necessary.²¹⁶

More importantly, perspective is one of reality's main components. Far from being a deformation of reality, for Ortega, perspective is reality's organization. A reality that would always turn out to be the same no matter what point it was viewed from is an absurd concept for Ortega scholars. This way of thinking leads to a fundamental reformulation of philosophy and, what is more important for our consideration of Ortega and Marias, to a novel appreciation of the cosmic sensation. Ortega states that "every life is a viewpoint on the universe."²¹⁷ Perspective then is an ingredient of reality, and as such it is literally essential. As there are many possible perspectives, reality is no longer monolithic, for now it implies an essential range of phenomena and so consists precisely in being a repertory of possibilities. For Ortega and Marias, the defining force generating perspective is time. This is not only clock time or calendar time, nor even merely vital time or age, but also and primarily historical time. These thinkers deliberately inject history into the very thing they and others call reality. In other words, reality is historical. In the primary and concrete sense, we must set out as historical reality that which we encounter – and in this we must include the form in which we encounter it.²¹⁸

In contrast, Mannheim's approach to knowledge is antagonistic toward perspectivism. In his 'aperspectivism' the agency of the individual observer disappears to be replaced by intersubjectively agreed upon and therefore 'objective' account. This occurs by "letting the world select its own representation" free from

the contamination of local knowledge and individual perspectives.²¹⁹ Mannheim holds to a neo-Kantian belief in "essences." Perspectivism is the theory that various essential meanings come into being together with the epochs to which they belong. These essential meanings belong to essences which have their own being in an absolute sense, however the student of history can comprehend them only in a limited fashion, looking at them from a standpoint which is itself a product of history.²²⁰

According to Goldman, Mannheim maintains a neo-Kantian view in which reality lies not in the perspective but somewhere between what on the one hand a perspective discloses, and on the other the "facts," "being per se," or "the stream itself." That is, reality resides where some form of congruence permits the "in itself" to act as a check on, or a test of, perspectives and judgement. Furthermore, Goldman notes that Mannheim later shifted to a more descriptive notion of perspective in an effort to be socially scientific. Mannheim argues that "the structure of appearance [*Aspektstruktur*] signifies the way in which one views an object, what one grasps in it and how one constructs the facts for oneself in thought." Therefore a "perspective [*Aspektstruktur*] of a thinker is tied to concrete existence [*Seinsverbunden*] or is bound up with a viewpoint [*Standortsgebunden*]." Even a very one-sided *Weltanschauung* may provide for intellectual insights, offering an "an opportunity to gain access to specific areas of knowledge" otherwise hidden. There is "an extremely wide range of areas . . . which is accessible only either to particular individual subjects or to specific historical stages but only reveals itself in them

through specific social situations.”²²¹

In philosophy there are theories holding that there are non-equivalent, alternative systems of concepts and assumptions, within whose terms one may interpret the world, and as between which there is no authoritative external way of making a choice. We find this approach, for example, in the philosophy of Nietzsche, for whom belief systems are instruments made to serve the will to power, the impulse to survive, succeed and command. In a less passionate and more domesticated form we find this too in Ortega. A support for this approach lies in the apparent facts that different languages are not wholly translatable into each other and that they may supply their speakers with quite different pictures of and approaches to the world.

Like other sceptical hypotheses of comparable generality, perspectivism invites an equally sceptical question: is it not itself just one more perspective²²² on thought and language among others, with no greater claim to validity than they have?²²³ Mysticism demonstrates our dependence upon others. Without others (even if they do no more than haunt our memories) we are nothing. As the mature Ortega writes, “our life is the radical reality.” This notion, that our “essence” is to express one another to ourselves, overturns ordinary understandings about society.²²⁴ Marias contends that a man’s literary style is a manifestation of his life-style, expressing him and his aspirations even as his face does.²²⁵ For him, the analytical procedure of philosophy contrasts sharply with the synthetic unities of experiences that we spontaneously apprehend in our encounters with our

circumstances. While the intellect interprets particular events and objects as instances or examples of concepts, in our concrete life's specificity and particularity lie the essential criteria of reality. What is most real for us is not that which is most cognitively certain but that which we cannot mistake for anything else.

From a scientific point of view the real is the interchangeable. Science attempts to break synthetic and qualitative unities down into elementary components, which are then recombined according to mathematical functions. The prestige of science derives from the fact that one can correlate the entities it discovers, postulates and puts into relation, with perceived phenomena in everyday life. Manipulations of those entities provoke predictable changes in phenomenal unities, and so science has impressive practical but appreciative consequences. Now, Ortega stands this formulation upon its head, or rather finds it on its head and sets it upright. He notes that our practical life is grounded in sets of uniquely interrelated circumstances. Our particular life is the radical reality within which we must root all scientific inquiry and technological projects.²²⁶

b. Vitalism

The second important feature of the philosophy under examination is the vitalistic tendency of thought that first emerged in the nineteenth century in response to metaphysical realism.²²⁷ It was a new way of thinking about and investigating the world, or what really exists, generally by means of rational argument rather than by direct or mystical intuition. It may be either transcendent,

in that it holds that what really exists lies beyond the reach of ordinary experience. Or it may be immanent, in that it takes reality to consist exclusively of the objects of experience. The most primary component of metaphysics is ontology. Metaphysicians also propound theories about the overall structure of the world.²²⁸ Metaphysics in turn presupposes through epistemology a critical investigation of the various sorts of knowledge claims and methods of thinking from and by which one may derive a general picture of the world or *Weltanschauung*. Many of the main preoccupations of modern technical or academic philosophy existed already in the writings of Plato and Aristotle and, less comprehensively, in the work of their still more ancient Greek predecessors. These constitute a continuous tradition of philosophical discussion.²²⁹ We see this tradition in the use that Ortega and Marias make of vitalist language to describe and explain what they understand as "reason."

Ortega speaks of a "vital reason" or "living reason" that "is life itself, one and the same thing as living."²³⁰ More importantly, for Ortega, human life is always individual life. Yet within my life, as part of it, I discover the lives of others.²³¹ The contrary opinion is that of the sociologist who tries to produce a theory of social or collective life and in so doing sets it up in contrast with individual life. On the one hand stands individual reality, on the other, social or collective reality. This radical separation overlooks something very important, as Ortega points out. Missing is "interindividual reality," that is, the reality of the relationships, between several individuals acting as individuals. Chapter Five below will illustrate empirically and analytically that adding this missing factor back in can help us move toward a

synthesis of the Ortega-Marias and Mannheim generational theories.

The category of life was intended to provide a critical synthesis encompassing the scientific notion of mechanism together with historical teleology. What is clear is that early vitalist thought attempted to interpret life as a metaphysical idea, which led such thinkers as Henri Bergson to affirm that this effort generated "irrationalist doctrines." The vitalists' irrationalism, however, was never as comprehensive as their critics made it out to be. The vitalists, for the most part, confined themselves to critiquing what above we called the cognitive fallacy. They were insistent in proclaiming life's spontaneity, paradoxes, uniqueness and unpredictability against all attempts to explain its meaning or purpose intellectually. The early vitalists, certainly, were not adequate to the demands of a critical life, but at least they had the courage to explore realms of experience that are neglected by modern science and sublimated and domesticated by myth.²³²

According to Michael Weinstein, the mistake of vitalist metaphysics was to maintain that individuals are driven by life. But how can we be impelled by what we are? We are intrinsically driving beings who are capable, as Friedrich Nietzsche dryly observed, of mendacity.²³³ Regardless of economic and political imperatives, however, in Ortega's words, "we are irreplaceable and insubstitutable [*sic*]." Furthermore, the horrifying gulf between the painfully intense shadow worlds of everyday social interaction points to the deepest tragedy of our common life.²³⁴ What Marias' style reveals is the synthesis of his disciplined method of ratio-vitalism and his sensitivity to the most important question one can ask concerning

one's self; "what is to become of me?" This method Marias learned from his mentor Ortega, and in rethinking it and applying it Marias saw for himself its validity.²³⁵

a. Subjectivism

A major key to the model of Ortega and Marias is subjectivism. The terms subject and subjectivity are central to this theory and they mark a crucial break with humanist conceptions of the individual, notions that are still central to Western philosophy. For most philosophers, subjectivity refers to an individual's conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions, his sense of self, and his ways of understanding his relation to the world.²³⁶ Among linguists and other professional students of language, the word subject and its derivative subjectivity tend to evoke a grammatical association: subject as distinct from direct or indirect object, for example. In some contexts, subjectivity contrasts with objectivity in suggesting something "soft," unverifiable and even suspicious.²³⁷ The subjectivity explored here concerns expression of self and the representation of a speaker's perspective or viewpoint in discourse. Different discourses provide for a range of modes of subjectivity, and how particular discourses constitute subjectivity has implications for the process of reproducing or contesting power relations. To help understand these implications, we may ask what assumptions a particular discourse makes about language and consciousness. While all discourses work with particular assumptions, we can see differences most clearly where writers have made them

explicit, as in the case of discourses explicitly committed to producing theories of human society and culture.²³⁸

The term subjectivity may denote that the truth of some class of statements depends on the mental state or reactions of the person making the statement. Not all uses of the term subjective are strictly philosophical. Thus a medical doctor might call a pain subjective if it has no apparent physical basis. In epistemology, the notion of subjectivity suggests that knowledge is restricted to one's own perceptions. "Subjectivity of sensory qualities" is a phrase one may use if he or she accepts that the qualities experienced by the senses are not something belonging to the physical beings, but are subject to interpretation. This view highlights the limitations of the senses as physical organs. The subject or observer is herself involved in the object of the perception. In metaphysics, subjectivity includes the ideas of solipsism and subjective idealism. Berkeley expresses the latter notion in his contention that "to be is to be perceived." In ethics and aesthetics, subjectivism is the view that statements about a person's character or an object's beauty are not reports of objective qualities inherent in those things. Instead we are either (cognitively) reporting our own inner feelings and attitudes, or (noncognitively) we are merely expressing our feelings.

Thomas Kuhn writes that "'subjective' is a term with several established uses: in one of these it is opposed to 'objective,' in another to 'judgmental'." For Kuhn, science is subjective in the first sense, but not in the second. Following Kuhn, Rorty distinguishes between two notions of subjective: (1) a product only of what is in me,

as opposed to out there; and (2) considerations that rational discussants should set aside. Rorty rejects the first notion completely, since it depends upon a notion of objectivity (correspondence to what is out there) that is impossible to achieve.²³⁹ He accepts the second. In contrast, Hegel argues that the "subjective spirit knows itself and, by passing through all levels of consciousness, reaches absolute knowledge."²⁴⁰ Ortega challenges the readers' understanding by suggesting a metaphor that would view both subject and object as inseparably facing each other, like the Roman household deities, the twin sons of Jupiter, Castor and Pollux, who lived together. He also expresses this inseparable and irreducible union as Adam in Paradise. Both these metaphors are ways of stating one of his major themes: "I am I and my circumstances." This subjective perspective of Ortega seeks to throw light on reality, to discover aspects of reality, and to show reality as a plurality containing interconnected aspects. The imperative of a vision is to keep on looking at things.²⁴¹ This task is imposed on me by circumstance; it is I who must at all times choose my way from among my possibilities. Thus Ortega's subjective approach to the understanding of generations stands very close to life-experience. Spanish ecclesiastics consider Ortega an agnostic relativist, if not an outright atheist. We see this relativism when Ortega argues that the initial observation or objective pole becomes the subjective pole to the degree to which the subject feels a need to know and deliberately open himself to his circumstances. To this degree, the observation becomes an impression.²⁴²

In summary, Ortega and Marias expound a multifaceted approach that

encompasses perspectivism, vitalism and subjectivism. This approach is quite adequate and accurate when dealing with the cultural history of a society. However, it is hard to find suitable titles to describe their theory, partly owing to its mutual relations and interdependence. Wohl praises Ortega's ideas as having much in common with those of Mannheim and Mentré, and as a notable contribution to the analysis of "cultural crisis" and to a "psychology of crisis." However, Wohl regrets that Ortega's actual philosophical output on generations is just "a shadow of what it might have become." He considers Mannheim's, "social-scientific" theory better than Ortega's "historical-metaphysical reflection." Ortega did not, Wohl argues, solve his own theory's problems, so "the entire scheme [then] becomes useless" – a perfectionist's judgment that historians are unlikely to concede.²⁴³

III Mannheim's Dualist Model

The second innovative approach to understanding generations we wish to highlight is that of Karl Mannheim. His perspective has commanded a still prevailing intellectual credibility by most contemporary North American and European theorists. Mannheim's objective and sociological viewpoint allows one to understand generations by using sociological tools and employing narrow yet useful concepts, thus fostering genuine knowledge of historical and social phenomena.

1. *Background*

Born in 1893, Karl Mannheim began his career as a philosopher in proximity to the Hungarian philosopher and literary critic Georg Lukacs who, in 1910, published an essay collection on "The Soul and Forms."²⁴⁴ Mannheim came eventually to be the originator of that sociological subfield known as the sociology of knowledge.²⁴⁵ Initially a member of Lukacs circle in Hungary, Mannheim later taught at the Universities of Heidelberg (1926-1930) and Frankfurt am Main (1930-1933) in Germany, and then after the Nazis came to power, in exile at the University of London (1933-1947).²⁴⁶ Mannheim's early preoccupation with philosophy and the sociology of knowledge constitutes the first phase of his intellectual career, spanning the years 1931-32 and beyond. One may retrospectively subdivide his early work into a largely philosophical initial stage, extending roughly from 1918 to say 1924, and an essentially sociological stage that ran from about 1925 at least to 1932.

Later scholars often describe Mannheim's 1923 essay on "The Problem of Generations" as the seminal work treating generations as a sociological phenomenon. This key essay also contributes to our understanding of sociological issues that range well beyond the generational problem per se.²⁴⁷ In Hegelian fashion Mannheim's problematic construction of this historical process proceeds from a conceptual basis and gains momentum as it advances along the borders of historiographical metaphysics.²⁴⁸

2. *Two Theoretical Dimensions*

Karl Mannheim established his two-dimensional approach during the second decade of the twentieth century. In doing so, he left the safe and tried path leading to quick scholarly success. Unafraid of rocking the boat, he began asking radical questions about the modern world. Mannheim sought to gain fundamental understanding of how cultural elements interplay under conditions of complex interdependence. This involved intricate mapping of human behaviour in the labyrinthine landscape of the overall social situation. Mannheim was heir to some of the most vital ideas the sociological tradition could offer. He eventually fulfilled an intellectual writer's duty, one Jean-Paul Sartre defines (in *Situation II*) as an effort to make sure that no individual may remain so in ignorance of the world, that he "may call himself guiltless of what goes on in it."²⁴⁹ Until the First World War, Comte's²⁵⁰ optimistic equation of scientifically controlled evolution with orderly, unilinear progress had retained a persuasive hold on the imagination of most sociologists, with the notable exception of social Darwinist or Marxist conflict theorists.²⁵¹ Bridging this gap, Mannheim himself eventually arrives at a level of intellectual work where concern for the quality of life emerges as a major motivating force. The quality of life could only be improved if liberals were to follow "the lodestar of order and stability."²⁵²

a. The Sociological Dimension

This first dimension of Karl Mannheim's model is one for which he is well known. He asks the fundamental question: what is sociology? The study of societies involves not only observation and description of social phenomena, but also their synthesis and analysis in terms of a coherent conceptual scheme. For example, Rousseau contrasts the state of nature with that of society and postulates a social contract in which the wills of all are fused into a single personality, the community.²⁵³ One of sociology's major concerns has been to explain how membership in social groups affects individual behaviour. To find out, many sociologists adopt a strategy that French sociologist Emil Durkheim (1858-1917) had pioneered to help him investigate the causes of suicide.²⁵⁴ Finally, one can look at sociology not as a scientific discipline, defined by its concepts and methods, but more humanistically as a mode of consciousness or way of observing the subtle and complex ways in which men interact with one another. Here one would report these interactions in their full complexity rather than simplifying them as a science necessarily does.²⁵⁵

Sociology arose as an attempt to transcend seemingly fixed alternatives presented to modern men. Of special interest were the virtually opposite problems of conservative corruption, and of the instability that radical disruption brings.²⁵⁶ Mannheim realizes that the sociologists' unmasking of unconscious roots of intellectual existence has contributed to the erosion of man's confidence in thought per se. Surrounded by the political self-consciousness and cultural neuroticism of

Weimar Germany, Mannheim however permits the thrust of his intellectual energies to carry him beyond the political confines of the immediate ideological zone. He turns the weapon of ideological analysis against himself, as it were, by trying to lay bare the social roots of all theories – including his own.²⁵⁷

Starting with Comte's earliest writings, one finds a persistent attempt to delineate precisely what the sociologist's proper methods of research ought to involve. For Comte, the sociologist as a scientist is to be concerned with positivistic observation. The goal of the observer is to link observed facts with more general statements and to reduce the number of general statements to a system of the fewest number of statements sufficient to account for the phenomena with which one is concerned. As an observational science, sociology is to exclude a "metaphysical" concern with "essential natures" and the "first causes" of things. It is, instead, to focus on static and dynamic relationships. Finally, Comte is partially responsible for the usual meaning ascribed to the words "sociological theory."²⁵⁸

According to Jane Pilcher, Mannheim's seminal work exemplifies sociology at its very best and represents the strongest sociological account we have of generations. It is though a highly abstract and theoretical treatment of the problem. Aside from stressing how powerfully cultural factors impinge upon each generation, this theory lacks empirical research guidelines and directions for further research. We see this in his failure to specify what kinds of data best reveal a "generational consciousness." In Mannheim, the study of generational sociology appears to share the empirical difficulties we associate with the larger area of the sociology of

knowledge. As Dant (1991) notes, Mannheim does not clearly specify exactly what constitutes empirical knowledge other than suggesting that words are significant objects for study. Mills (1967) is critical of most sociological theories of knowledge, including Mannheim's, for their inadequate formulations of the terms with which they connect the mind with other social factors.²⁵⁹

Mannheim emphasizes that the sociologist's classification principles must differ greatly from those of the statistician. The latter needs measurable units. In contrast, the sociologist seeks to find more amorphous concepts that define genuine social groups, the more or less stable relationships that integrate members in social life. For Mannheim, purely external characteristics rarely form real links between people; the bonds that create and sustain social relationships are mostly psychological and spiritual. As such, they exercise a definite influence upon human behaviour. This means that anybody trained to use the tools of sociological research should be able to recognize and analyse their effects.²⁶⁰ By stressing the internal, psychic character of social bonds, Mannheim leads us towards a deeper understanding of social life. Whatever links people in society must become an effective constituent part of their inner worlds through the mechanism of identification. These group-forming factors constitute integral parts of a wider social process. Consequently, the sociologist should use the analytic tools of dynamic psychology, as well as systematic social theories, and should not rely heavily upon quantitative methods or pure common sense. Mannheim's principles of group classification are in harmony with this approach.²⁶¹

Mannheim's analytical tools work well for his discussion on generations. Jane Pilcher argues that his essay "The Problem of Generations" is a most systematic and fully developed sociological treatment because it firmly locates generations within their socio-historical contexts and places their study within a wider sociology of knowledge. For Mannheim, the sociology of knowledge is the study of the interconnectedness between ideas and situations. It shows how social currents and situations bear upon thought, belief and action. It is the theory of the social or existential conditioning of knowledge by location in a socio-historical structure in terms of generational factors.²⁶²

b. Objectivism

The other side to Mannheim's dualism is the concept of objectivism. Social scientists deal with what is and what will be on the basis of what is, rather than with what ought to be. When doing science, the scientific investigator avoids offering opinions on what is right, wrong, desired or detested. His own biases or preferences should not enter the picture. He is neutral in the sense that he will accept without personal reservation what his evidence has revealed. Objectivity is the willingness and ability to examine evidence dispassionately. Does being objective mean that one must discard one's own beliefs and moral convictions? Does being neutral require the view that one idea or perspective is as good as any other? The answer, of course, is no. Scientific objectivity does not mean that we

must abandon moral convictions and beliefs. Instead, we must control our convictions and beliefs while reviewing the evidence dispassionately.²⁶³

What makes a line of inquiry objective is not the topics it concerns, but rather the adjudication and confirmation practices we use to conduct the inquiry. Does objectivity require that one put one's values aside? That depends on how we understand the matter at issue. We often hear that values are mere matters of taste, mere personal predilections. If this were true, then objectivity would indeed require that we sideline them, but how often is this really so? The question comes down to whether one can objectively apply normatively cogent accounts. Some philosophers despair on this issue, but such despair is hardly justifiable.²⁶⁴

The word objectivity refers to the view that the truth of a thing is independent from the observing subject. The notion of objectivity posits that certain things exist independently from the mind, or that they are at least in an external sphere. Objective truths are independent of human wishes and beliefs. The notion of objectivity is especially relevant to the status of our various ideas, and the question is to what extent objectivity is possible for thought, and to what extent it is necessary. In epistemology, the objectivist position is that truth exists independently of the individual; this follows the correspondence theory of truth. However, idealists may use the term objectivity in conjunction with their belief that existence in thought is the only kind of real existence. In an essentially metaphysical vein, Plato identifies objectivity as pertaining to the world of "forms." For Plato, forms reside in a separate world, one that though invisible to our senses is obtainable through

reason. Thus, Plato refers to real objects as “knowable forms,” which include the objective truths of justice, beauty and love.

Philosophers of the modern period concede the reality of the objective realm, although they typically argue that a full grasp of it is unattainable. This is so of Locke’s account of anything’s substance, and Kant’s view that our knowledge can only reside in the phenomenal realm, since we can have no direct access to things within themselves. In this century, Richard Rorty distinguishes between two notions of objectivity. One involves establishing a correspondence with what is out there, which one supposedly can discover by use of an algorithm. This Rorty rejects since we have no idea as to how to perform this task. His second notion of objectivity involves the realm of agreement established through a discourse leading to a consensus of rational discussants. This he says is the most objectivity for which we can hope.²⁶⁵

Scholars have argued that objectivity calls for putting one’s idiosyncratic predilections and parochial preferences aside in forming one’s beliefs, evaluations and choices. It is a matter of proceeding in line not with one’s inclinations but with the dictates of impartial reason.²⁶⁶ The methodology often prescribed is intended to help prevent the intrusion of subject-bias due to overreaching zeal. It is argued that a person’s categories of thought, ideological tastes and general point of view may explain his own opinions and account for the “discovery” of hypotheses, but will have no bearing on their validity. Indeed, the idea goes, they may impair it since preconceived beliefs and expectations filtered by a point of view would undermine

observation as an independent control on generalization.²⁶⁷ Objectivity calls for not allowing the indications of reason, reasonableness and good common sense to be deflected by "purely subjective" whims, biases, prejudices, preferences, etc. Accordingly, objectivity always strives for the sensible resolution, while subjectivity gives rein to temper and lets personal inclination have its way. This does not require excluding personal values as such, but rather insists on not being deflected from the path of reason by rationally inappropriate or prejudicial influences.

Epistemic objectivity is thus tantamount to rational appropriateness. It consists of proceeding in such a way that people at large, or at any rate the reasonable ones among them, will see the sense of it because any sensible person possessed of the relevant information would do the same.²⁶⁸ One must recognize the universality of reason: what it is rational for one person to do, to believe, or to value will thereby also of necessity be equally rational for the rest of us who might find ourselves in exactly the same circumstances. In this view, rationally is inherently objective: it does not reconfigure itself to meet the idiosyncratic predilections of particular individuals.²⁶⁹

According to Nicholas Rescher, objectivity rests on potentially universal recognition among the scholarly community. Such objectivity calls for seeking to eliminate the distorting influence of personal or parochial eccentricities. Objective thought is what we would expect any rational (intellectually idealized) person to think under a given set of circumstances.²⁷⁰ This we may call the strong view on objectivity. However, William James gives a more reasonable though weaker view

when he insists that “there is no point of view absolutely public and universal.”²⁷¹ Such a “God’s eye view” on things is unavailable, at any rate to us. Whatever we can judge we must judge from the vantage point of a position in space, time and cultural context. James recognizes that it is not the absoluteness of an unrealizable universal viewpoint that is at issue with objectivity. Objectivity is instead a matter of how we should proceed, and how highly reasonable people would proceed if they were in our shoes in the relevant respects. It is a matter of doing not what is impossible but what is appropriate. Reason is only circumstantially universal; it is objectivity’s coordination with rationality that links it to universality. That which is the sensible thing for one to do in a given set of circumstances is thereby the reasonable thing for any rational individual to do in those same circumstances.

The objectivity at issue accordingly comes down to rationality. If it is reasonable for you to do A in circumstances X, then this is so for anybody else.²⁷² One may therefore argue that objectivity pivots on rationality. The idea of rationality is in principle inapplicable where one is at liberty to make up one’s rules as one goes along, and thus effectively to have no predetermined rules at all. For a belief, action or evaluation to qualify as rational, the agent must in theory at least be in a position to give an accounting of it on whose basis others can see that it is only right and proper for him to resolve the issue in that way. Here the rationality at issue involves more than mere logical coherence.²⁷³ It is also a matter of the intelligent pursuit of circumstantially appropriate objectives.²⁷⁴

Ludvik Fleck says that the “state of the opinion of the day” is itself something

"objective and matter-of-factual" and not something dependent on the variant perspective of particular individuals. What is at issue is a potentially variable belief regarding the objective reality of things, about how things actually stand in the world. After all, a scientific investigation addresses our questions about the world's processes and not questions of what people think about them.²⁷⁵ On the traditional metaphysicians' construction of the concept, objective reality is the condition of things answering to "the real truth;" it is the realm of what is as it is. The pivotal contrast is between mere appearance and reality as such, between our picture of reality and reality itself, between what actually is and what we merely think (believe, suppose, etc.) it to be.²⁷⁶ Why be objective? Because it is the sensible, the rationally appropriate thing to do. And why is this so? Because it is quintessentially rational to pursue one's best or real interests in the way that appears the most promising along with the use of that reason which carries objectivity in its wake. Objectivity need not be pursued for its own sake.²⁷⁷ Its value emerges in the context of ulterior purposes. The merit of a commitment to objectivity is utilitarian and lies in the positive things objectivity can do for scholars in the pursuit of normative adequacy in matters of belief, evaluation and practical action.²⁷⁸

In summary, Mannheim's sociological, objective approach is a dualistic one that fosters and elevates intellectual insights while insisting on cold, hard facts. Thus Mannheim's followers deal with the brute facts of generational combat, not with how a generation's members come to understand and feel in the world. Mannheim offers no principles governing the use of a subjective versus an objective

mode of generational representation. His perspective then is dualistic, but one-sided.

We think that both of the above-described approaches should turn out to be complementary. Awareness of these differences reminds us of one of the more peculiar facets of contemporary North American political scientists; they continually define explicitly the nature of what they study – something normally taken for granted and therefore left implicit in other academic fields. This discussion presents yet one more such attempt, justified by a continuing lack of consensus on the matters being examined, and by the equally significant continuing failure to work out a satisfactory delimitation of the field's scope.²⁷⁹

IV How are these Approaches Related?

The two traditional generational models discussed above offer intellectually insightful epistemologies about society's inner workings. Ortega and Marias contribute to their field with their multi sided approach. So does Mannheim's dualism. Both approaches are distinctive and unique. Nonetheless their dynamic components do allow one to view them as related. Narration is the way of presenting or making patent human life, in its internal articulation and its living connectedness. If a narrative is to make sense, the ingredients of life should be present in it in their actual dynamic relatedness. Otherwise they miss the point. That narration which emerges from a faithful rendering of the vital rhythm itself should

automatically set these ingredients in their proper place and exhibit their authentic function. When the narration is effective, it contains a multiplicity of viewpoints or perspectives all contemplating the "scene." The eye moves continually and attempts to take up successively, and according to the requirements of the story itself, the respective positions of the elements which form and take part in it. This multiplication of viewpoints is not a requirement that reason imposes on the analyses from outside, but is demanded by the very structure of the analyses.²⁸⁰ Ortega's literary gifts permitted him to effect a transformation in the language and style of writing. Like other great writers such as Tocqueville and Toynbee, his was a hard act to follow. Ortega has had scant influence upon a great many contemporary generational theorists.

Ortega created a terminology and a philosophical style in Spanish that had not previously existed. His technique, a multi sided methodology, consists of rejecting neologisms in general. He restored to his language's deeply felt, commonly used expressions and even idioms, their most authentic and original significance. As such they often naturally brim with philosophical meaning or prove capable of taking on such meaning. Ortega, more so than Marias, sometimes carries to an extreme the effort to make himself intelligible, to the point that he quite frequently leads the reader to think that because one has at some level understood him easily, one does not have to exert oneself to understand him fully.²⁸¹ Although he has been reasonably well translated into English, Ortega's appearance in print in North America has been brief, limited and marked by enormous gaps and

distortions.

However one views Ortega – as liberal or conservative, neo-Kantian or existentialist, Spanish educator or pan-Europeanist – none of his profiles finally make him attractive to the official censors and arbiters of North American intellectual life. A natural bias against the Ortega-Marias philosophy would have been unavoidable, for both read more like poets than positivists. This is unfortunate because Ortega's insights are sometimes profound. Without being attacked for this, Ortega has simply been roundly ignored. The structure of Ortega's works, and the obscurity of the intellectual environment in which he obtained his greatest successes, have together prevented his ideas from emerging with any real impact here.

Hans Meyerhoff did not of course intend to misrepresent Ortega, but Meyerhoff is perhaps typical of philosophers and historians who, not having bothered to learn Spanish, largely fail to understand Ortega's philosophy.²⁸² H. S. Hughes also misplaces Ortega as belonging in the German idealist tradition for making ideas and spirit the "ultimate reality."²⁸³ Like James and Weber, Ortega espouses a moderate realism in balance with a conceptual idealism.²⁸⁴ These remarks also apply to the work Marias did in connection with his mentor. This is not to say that he imitates Ortega, although both consider clarity a primary courtesy. Both Ortega and Marias realize that the point of departure of a literary style is the various modes in which a writer is installed in life, beginning with language itself, which already imposes a certain style. They seem as one in holding that style is not

secondary or irrelevant for a philosopher: "Style is the substratum, and to that extent intrinsic, of all philosophic doctrine, and at the same time the standard which permits us to measure the degree of authenticity of its realization."²⁸⁵

In other words, each philosophy assumes a style through which the background life-pattern and linguistic interpretation of reality become manifest. Style is the most authentic expression of a writer's concrete situation. A philosopher's ultimate contribution depends partly on others' willingness to spend time studying his thought so as to adopt it as their starting point in further consideration of the themes and directions the studied thinker has introduced. More importantly, these others must acknowledge him as their source and inspiration. Although Professor Marias' professional life has begun to impact upon a few scholars who so acknowledge him, having published his major treatise *Generations* in North America at the University of Alabama Press, he is at a great disadvantage. Ortega and Marias have a far different writing style than Mannheim's – though all consider clarity very important. They demonstrate this ability by the generous use of metaphors and a free dramatization of concepts that permit them to express life as it is.

Concepts have a common use for business managers and social scientists as tools with which to examine and understand social behaviour and socially induced phenomena.²⁸⁶ If concepts are to be useful to either the manager or the researcher, they must, it seems to most North American scholars, be relatively narrow (e.g., cohorts, life cycle, period effects), and point to relatively simple

relationships that are easy to understand. Mannheim's dualist model certainly fits these requirements. In stark contrast, the literary styles of Ortega and Marias deploy on their field of inquiry such broad, all-encompassing concepts as we discussed in Chapter Three: *entelechy*, *vigencias* and other forms of binding observances.

Marias was as comfortable adopting his mentor's idiom as his vocabulary. Together they created a personal style where none had existed, rather than a personal modification of an existing style.²⁸⁷ A new style is the gift of a very few writers, such as Ortega and Mannheim, to their fellow authors. Such a new style or even the new modification of an existing style does not come cheaply or freely, since however delightful it may be the act of creation is also painful. The union of a disciplined style and a disciplined philosophic method has given Marias the ability to cut in a clear and orderly manner across an enormous amount of experience and knowledge to give his readers the essentials and discard the trivialities. This, according to Donoso, is an ability reserved only for a gifted and extraordinary author,²⁸⁸ one that North American scholars should use as an important source of generational theory. The American response to Marias' reflections on their country has been fairly positive. Most agree that he consciously tries to avoid the usual stereotypes that have distorted the vision of other commentators. As a result, Americans can learn much about themselves, as their author learned much about himself and his own people by constantly contrasting the two cultures.²⁸⁹

Let us now address some important questions. Is one model more basic than

the other? Would it make sense to eliminate either? And does one exhibit more verisimilitude or carry more conviction than the other? The short answer is no. Both the Ortega-Marias and the Mannheim models offer valid and valuable intellectual insights. As well as being complementary, they are equally useful and indeed may help to illuminate each other.

V In Defense of Synthesis

At the forefront of a research frontier disciplinary boundaries count for very little. On the social science frontiers those pushing knowledge beyond its known limits often borrow shamelessly from other disciplines to do so. This can provide unexpected insights as advances in one area lead to surprising advances in other areas. Often we can see a particular discipline in better perspective by viewing it alongside other disciplines. A synthesis is sometimes the closest one can get to some absolute form of truth. Syntheses may embody major aspirations and interpretations existing at a given time. In such a synthesis, one can approach as nearly as possible the ultimate content of the historic process.²⁹⁰

The influence of Mannheim stems partly from the fact that he wrote early in the last century. At that time in the United States there were graduate schools that self-consciously followed the German academic model. Academically, the Germans had long been ahead of the Americans, and Mannheim was arguably Germany's

leading sociologist when he moved to England. From the start of his intellectual career, Mannheim sought to understand the historical syntheses men had come to call ideologies, utopias, philosophical systems and Weltanschauungen. Ideology, for example, was a word the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy coined (*Elements d'ideologie*, 1801-1805) to denote a science of ideas that could reveal to men the source of their biases and prejudices.

Within contemporary sociology, Mannheim identifies ideologies as different “styles of thought,” and he carefully distinguishes between particular ideologies (the rationalized self-interests of specific groups), and more general ideologies that take shape as Weltanschauungen or complete commitments to a way of life.²⁹¹

In theoretical and methodological discussions and in analyses of historically specific constellations, Mannheim argues that syntheses are central to the history of intellectual life. This is so because historical investigation shows that “every concrete sociological analysis of thinking and the history of styles,” indicates that “styles of thought blend uninterruptedly and penetrate one another reciprocally.” Mannheim’s own analysis, however, is more than the reflection of a purely intellectual interest or the enthusiasm created by a new discovery. He seriously asks whether such a synthesis is still possible: “[I]s it possible for different styles of thought to be blended with one another and to undergo synthesis?” Mannheim searches for a current form of synthesis, a “comprehensive view of what is not yet combinable into a system” as the “relative optimum” for today and a “necessary preparatory step toward the next synthesis.” This search, he admits, was the

product of his own "inclination" and of a prior "decision to seek a dynamic mediation" [*Mitte*]. Thus convinced that history's central trend is the tendency toward construction of more and more comprehensive *Weltanschauungen*, Mannheim himself proposes to carry this trend forward. He offers to show that his method not only analyzes "higher" standpoints but also helps to produce them, and that with its aid one can seek out or create syntheses as comprehensive as possible, based on both an "awareness of situatedness and relationism."²⁹²

In his *Contemporary Tasks of Sociology*, Mannheim argues for an extension of the empirical dimension in German sociology, and insists upon the need for close contact with the practical problems of everyday life. A careful review of ways that Ortega and Mannheim intersect and potentially interpenetrate might well provide scholars with an opportunity to pursue further these issues within a comparative perspective, taking into account basic differences in the Spanish and German practice of social science. On the positive side, Mannheim praises the Americans for the comprehensiveness of their scientific teamwork and chides his German colleagues for their exaggerated individualism and excessive striving for originality and personal uniqueness. The Americans score again with their practical approach that effectively relates each methodological issue to concrete social problems demanding immediate solutions, and this also helps to guarantee the authenticity of factual observations on the basis of ready documentary evidence. This direct approach contrasts soundly with the alleged tendency of German sociologists to forget the pressing necessities of everyday life in abstract searches for general

methodological development, divergences and prerequisites. After this appraisal of meritorious characteristics, Mannheim turns to a discussion of American sociology's "defective" traits.

First, he says, American sociology suffers from a methodological asceticism that suffocates the development of constructive hypotheses and the growth of comprehensive theories concerning the functional interplay between parts and the whole, and the totality of social problems and processes. American sociologists master a sophisticated methodological apparatus, which he claims permits them to produce outstanding treatments of social details. However, the absence of basic, integrative conceptions of social life condemns single phenomena such as delinquency, crime, marginality and poverty to a barren arena in which they remain marooned – in an empty social space.²⁹³ The American practice of "isolating empiricism," which buries social reality beneath secondary details, mirrors a typical lack of commitment to issues of social and political importance. Mannheim's interest in the divergences between American and German scholars is not merely an expression of his theoretical concern for contrasting thought styles and their socio-existential roots. He foresees the possibilities for interpenetration and mutual enrichment. American scholars, he says, could teach their German colleagues how to stay attuned to everyday problems and the demands of social existence. Conversely American sociologists would be enriched by contact with their German counterparts. Mannheim establishes and clarifies a basic assumption: contemporary Western democracies suffer from tensions created by two conflicting

socio-economic practices.²⁹⁴ The new generation of social scientists has demonstrated that the independent and courageous use of the tools of social analysis not only permits significant insights into many social developments, but it also provides a larger, more coherent outlook that lets us live both in and above the immediacy of social existence. We agree. However, we would add that there needs to be more inclusion of Ortega ideas among North American scholars. The growing commitment of the new generation of social scientists to free and fearless social analysis numbers among the lasting contributions that the campus revolt among other influences, has made to Western culture.²⁹⁵

Mannheim argues that, now that the older model of the intellectual leadership capabilities of a leading economic class is no longer reliable, it is the intellectuals' mission to become a synthesizing and relatively unaffiliated group, and so to take and hold a "ruling" or total perspective. Like Plato's philosopher-kings, though without their political authority, the new intellectuals would be recruited widely, would separate themselves as much as possible from their origins, and would be educated to ascend the heights from which to grasp the "totality" (*Ganzheit*).²⁹⁶ John Friedmann, the Director of Urban Planning at the University of California at Los Angeles, acknowledges that contemporary theories of societal guidance and planning have their roots in Karl Mannheim's pioneering explorations into these processes.²⁹⁷ Moreover, Mannheimian themes and concepts inform the general structure of their arguments. Unfortunately, most Americans have not taken up Mannheim's suggestions regarding synthesis.

Mannheim had hoped that education would foster the formation of syntheses to release intellectuals from structural bonds to their class origin and affiliation, and would enable them to cultivate "a will, which seeks the dynamic equilibrium. Furthermore, oriented toward the whole," capable of producing "dynamic syntheses" and a "total perspective," his search was not very different from those conducted by some of his contemporaries, Max Weber among them, for a leadership or directing elite with a commitment to an ultimate ideal or totality. Thus, Mannheim seeks increasingly comprehensive syntheses or totalities to incorporate old insights and widen the concept of truth. Yet he provides no argument for accepting his standards and goals as something other than the product of his own intellectual and social milieu, or as something more than assertions that are unexamined and unjustified or are true by definition.²⁹⁸ Indeed, Mannheim's hope for syntheses in the present and the future rests not only on the results of historical inquiry, but also on his conviction that an increasingly "collectivist" reality has made such syntheses possible. In fact, however, from his days with Lukacs in the Hungarian *Sonntagskreis* study circle, to his involvement at the end of his life with British intellectuals in the group known as the "Moot," this hunger for wholeness and search for synthesis was a feature of Mannheim's own intellectual life. And yet this need was probably felt widely among much of Europe's intellectual elite. As the saying goes, "one synthesis prepares the next one."²⁹⁹

If one's use of language is sufficiently clear and transparent, reification becomes difficult if not impossible. Synthesizing the works of Ortega-Marias and

Mannheim enables us to experience a world that is meaningful when discussing the topic of generation. Re-phrasing Durkheim, we argue that the synthesis that is produced is not that there is a sum of individuals, but that the system formed by their association represents a specific reality, one which has its own characteristics. Undoubtedly no collective entity can be produced if there are no individual consciousnesses: a generational "thesis" is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. In addition, these consciousnesses must be associated and combined, in a certain way. However, Durkheim was talking about society.³⁰⁰ Much of the best – and, it must be admitted, the worst – writing in social philosophy, or in any other subject for that matter, is born out of polemic. The following Chapter may have a distinctly polemical ring to it, taking the form of a discussion of Arthur Schlesinger and V. O. Key's prominent works. We hope only to illustrate that North American scholars, when exploring the concept of generation, should occasionally utilize both the Ortega and Mannheimian's schools of thoughts.

Chapter V

APPLYING THE GENERATION CONCEPT WITH THE DIMENSIONS OF VIGENCIAS AND ENTELECHY

Order is not pressure which is imposed on society from without, but an equilibrium which is set up from within.

José Ortega y Gasset *Mirabeau and Politics* 1927

This chapter explores several phenomena. The first is the three decade generational political cycle called the Schlesinger Cycle in honour of historian Arthur Schlesinger Sr., who first described its operations over a nation's entire political history, in this case the United States. The second comes from political scientist V.O. Key Jr., who taught us to understand the American party system as

a self-steering historical process. The two models these scholars use to conceptualize American party history are useful for their empirical as well as their analytical contents. We may use them to adduce evidence that may help us illustrate that a synthesis between the Ortega-Marias and Mannheim schools of thought is possible, as suggested in Chapter Four, and desirable as well. This chapter lays out some of the theoretical underpinnings of both models and discusses the research used to develop the models. Moreover, we try to solidify this argument through reference to the brilliant work of socio-economist Richard Easterlin and what has come to be known as the Easterlin Effect.

I Cyclical Theories

The study of cycles per se goes back to ancient times, and indeed there are many distinctly different fundamental rhythms affecting nature and man. Mankind's history is in large part the story of progressive efforts to overcome natural cycles through invention and social organization. The important question is what are cycles? And why do they impart a cyclical rhythm to modern history? With such esoteric concepts such as *vigencias* and *entelechy* to absorb, naturally there are unanswered questions. We partially defeat the natural cycle of the day with electric light, and the waking-sleeping rhythm through the invention of shift work. Wesley C. Mitchell, Director of the Americans' National Bureau of Economic Research, is widely recognized in the U.S. as the father of economic cycle theories. He divides

waves into two phases: periods of expansion and contraction. Noteworthy is Joseph Schumpeter's 1939 essay on the *Kitchin Cycle*, a 3 to 4 year business cycle, and a longer 10 year *Juglar Cycle*.³⁰¹ Economic cycles reflect a patterning of events, each stimulating the next leading to expansion and contraction of the economy in a rhythm that at least until recently has defied effective manipulation and avoidance. Until 1936, the fluctuations of the so-called business cycle were generally accepted as a basic force in modern economic life as natural deviations moving around a long-term secular growth trend. For instance, Nicolai Kondratieff showed that a 50 year pattern exists in the economics of the whole world capitalist trading system.³⁰² As American cycle specialist Edward Dewey says: "If trends have continued for decades, or if the oscillations of cycles around the trend have repeated themselves so many times and so regularly that the rhythm cannot reasonably be the result of chance, it is unwise to ignore the probability that these behaviours will continue."³⁰³

Dewey shows that a growth trend amounts to a pattern that is similar for almost all organisms, whether they be cells of a pumpkin, or human beings in a nation, corporation or industry. This pattern, the familiar elongated S shaped logistic curve, describes the natural path of innovation endowed by the terms of its lease of life, whether the innovation is a human birth, a new machine, a religious awakening or a scientific theory. In this sense, much of life is a composite of many different cycles, and even long term secular trends are themselves generally long cycles.³⁰⁴ In this connection Jay Forrester has pointed to the danger of confusing

the cycle with trend:

The economic long wave is important because its symptoms are easily confused with the symptoms of the end of the life cycle of growth. Exponential growth can continue for several hundred years before reaching the point half-way to the ultimate world limit. One more doubling in the life cycle of growth probably will occur during the next 50 years – which is also the periodicity of the economic long wave. Unless the economic long wave and the life cycle of growth are understood both separately and in combination, it will not be possible to interpret properly the changes in standard of living, unemployment, and social and economic stresses that are arising separately from each mode but are appearing superimposed in the symptoms of economic change.³⁰⁵

The reason for cycles in human behaviour is not mysterious but is rooted in the nature of the way people relate to their world. Cycle of action form and endure because as Ortega tells us the fact that people are alive forces them to act, but seldom in any particular way. To make decisions they must have a stable set of ground rules, a tacit understanding that (whatever the facts) posits a stable reality as well. To act, people require an original repertory of firm convictions about themselves, about others, about the immediate environment, and about the more remote environment as well. In action the utility of this conventional wisdom can never be wholly tested, but ideas – probably all ideas – have life cycles of their own, for the law of entropy is universal, and so in action old ideas overwhelmingly tend to wear out, to lose their power to command belief, and then to be periodically discarded or renewed in different forms.

Ideas about the immediate social environment tend to be far more testable

through experience than ideas about the more remote environment of domestic politics due to social stratification, and therefore to be subject to more rapid change. Thus we may hypothesize that the shorter (30 year) Schlesinger cycle relates essentially to the more immediate environment of domestic politics, while the longer (50 year) K-Cycle relates essentially to threats to international stability arising in the more remote environment. This latter cycle is the half century technological cycle that has profound impacts upon world history, especially world economic and political relations. In its national manifestation it is called the Klingberg Cycle to honour its discoverer political scientist Frank L. Klingberg, who first described its operation in American foreign policy over his nation's entire political history. In its international economic manifestation, this same cycle is commonly known as the western international long wave or Kondratieff Cycle, in honour of Russian economist Nicolai Kondratieff, who gave this phenomenon its first clear theoretical, empirical and historical description. Where we refer to this technological cycle in general, we call it the K-Cycle to honour both its independent discoveries.³⁰⁶

2. The Schlesinger Cycle

In 1939 Arthur Schlesinger, Sr. published a seminal essay called "The Tides of National Politics," in which he described a fairly regular pattern of mood-based ideological shifts in American domestic political history. The motive force behind this oscillation between liberalism and conservatism he attributed to what today is

called the stratification of experience. The American polity, he says, has historically been quite evenly balance between those who put primary trust in the higher classes and those who consider the people at large the safest depository of power, and so a small shift from one side to the other accounts for changes in the dominant mood. In an expanded essay published in 1949, he explains:

A period of concern for the rights of the few has been followed by one of concern for the wrongs of the many. Emphasis on the welfare of property has given way to emphasis on human welfare.... An era of quietude has been succeeded by one of rapid movement.... The test is whether the object is to increase or lessen democracy, and the achievement is evidenced not by words but by the resulting legislative and executive accomplishment. Such oscillations of sentiment, moreover, express themselves through changes of direction within a party as well as by displacement of one party by the other. . . . It should be underlined that the labels conservative and liberal as here used described effective tendencies in government; they may or may not denote a change of parties.³⁰⁷

Schlesinger plots these shifts of mood from 1765 to 1947, dividing American history into periods of alternating left and right ascendancy, and in 1980, Thomas Cronin updated the Schlesinger Cycle to 1973 as follows.³⁰⁸

LIBERAL	CONSERVATIVE
1765-1787 (22 years)	1787-1801 (14 years)
1801-1816 (15 years)	1816-1829 (13 years)
1829-1841 (12 years)	1841-1861 (20 years)
1861-1869 (8 years)	1869-1901 (32 years)
1901-1919 (18 years)	1919-1931 (12 years)
1931-1947 (16 years)	1947-1960 (13 years)
1960-1973 (13 years)	1973-

The 1765-87 phase was that of liberal revolution, followed by the conservative federalist phase, between 1787 and 1801. Thomas Jefferson's presidency in 1801 brought in a liberal, activist democratizing phase. When the ensuing quietist 1816-1826 conservative phase ended, a new activist democratizing liberal phase, 1829-1841, began as Andrew Jackson and the "plain people" romped into power. The 1841-1861 phase saw a conservative strengthening of slavery despite bitter liberal opposition, and the short but activist Civil War phase was one in which liberalism triumphed, 1861-1869. Perhaps due to the massacre of the best and the brightest young men of the Civil War generation, this phase was foreshortened. Then began a long conservative double phase, 1869-1901, that restored the basic rhythm. From 1901 to 1919 a liberal, progressive, muckraking and activist phase again reversed the field. This provoked a reactionary or conservative era from 1919 to 1931 of "rugged individualism." The New Deal tide of liberalism that began in 1931 and ended in 1947 completes Schlesinger's narrative.³⁰⁹

The suspicion that a political overturn was due even without a depression is fortified by Schlesinger's calculations in his above-mentioned essay. He claims that alternations between state activism and state quietism (in his somewhat parochial terms, between liberalism and conservatism) in the Americans' national life succeed themselves at intervals of about fifteen or sixteen years. This alternation takes place, he says, without any apparent correlation with economic circumstances or

political psychology. By this argument, a liberal epoch was due in America around 1934 or 1935, depression or no. Schlesinger recognizes that the New Deal was, among other things, an expression of what would seem – to use a currently unfashionable concept – an inherent cyclical rhythm in American politics. The depression did not cause the cycle: what the depression did was to increase its intensity and deepen its impact by superimposing on the normal cycle the peculiar and unprecedented urgencies arising from economic despair and the fear of fear itself. One could possibly argue along these lines that the depression coming at another stage in the cycle would not necessarily have produced a New Deal. It is certainly true that depressions did not induce epochs of reform in 1873 or in 1893. However, Schlesinger claims that the magnitude of the shock made a political recoil almost certain after 1929. Still, the fact that this recoil took a liberal rather than a reactionary turn may well be due to the accident that the economic shock coincided with a liberal turn in the cycle.³¹⁰

From 1939 to 1947 the mood had remained liberal, confirming in history Schlesinger's 1939 conjecture that a new phase might emerge about 1948. Franklin D. Roosevelt's adviser David Niles told the elder Schlesinger that FDR's 1944 decision to run for reelection had been influenced by Schlesinger's forecast that liberalism would remain dominant through the next presidential term. Similarly, political journalist James Reston discovered that John F. Kennedy based his 1960 presidential campaign on the assumption that the Schlesinger theory meant another turn to liberalism was in the offering.³¹¹ From 1947 to 1960 the national mood had

been one of conservative patriotism. The left recovered political initiative with the civil rights movement in the late 1950s, and the cycle did in fact turn as expected. The liberal rhetoric of a "New Frontier" was followed by the activist liberal completion of the welfare state (at first as a "New Frontier," and then as a "Great Society") between 1960 and 1973. By 1973 the tide had turned again to a dominant mood of conservatism.

Walter Burnham argues that every American election is a discrete event. The 1976 election is no exception. He hypothesizes that a conjunctural crisis of politics occurs when political settlements collapse along with the operational ideologies that justified and sustained them. This occurs when conditions in the society and the economy have made the prevailing political settlement irrelevant to the point where large parts of the population come to regard it as oppressive. He describes the 1976 election in terms of the political settlement that grew out of the New Deal and World War II. This settlement had two essential elements. Domestically, politics came to be articulated as "interest-group liberalism," as an activity involving the interactions of the acknowledged and legitimate leaders of major peak groups with each other, and with government. In the international arena, the political settlement that unfolded after 1945 was an imperial, "globalist," and militantly anti-Communist form of bipartisanship.³¹²

The average phase length in the Schlesinger Cycle runs about 16 years. In current cycle terminology the cycle is not complete until both phases, which Jon Alexander and Tom Darby postulate to be first conservative and then liberal, have

passed. In these terms, the full cycle length would average 32 years. The conservative phases have averaged 17.3 years, while the liberal phases have averaged 14.9 years. However, omitting the abnormal period of the Civil War and its aftermath (as Schlesinger recommended), they argue that the average change should be 14.4 years for conservatism and 16 for liberalism. Unable to predict the future, they nonetheless assume that the pattern, which had held with remarkable consistency throughout American history and therefore could not have been the result of chance, would in all likelihood continue to hold. Schlesinger noted that new directions in the national temper generally find effective expression at the midterm or during presidential elections, whichever comes first after or as the shift occurs. If the conservative phase that began in 1973 lasted 14.4 years, the shift could have occurred around 1987; if this phase lasted as long as 17.3 years, the shift would not have been manifest until April, 1990. It is clear that by 1992 the mood had sufficiently shifted toward liberalism to produce a far different regime under President Clinton as compared with that of Ronald Reagan.

2. The Schlesinger Cycle Explained

Arthur Schlesinger's explanation of the dynamics of the cycle he discovered was sketchy but essentially sound. He stresses that the phenomenon is most clearly seen in shifting alliances of voters rather than in the parties themselves – which he considers labels on empty bottles. The ascendancy of one faction over

another in either party or both was far more important, and this depended on the public mood. The public mood, furthermore, is a relative concept due to the long term liberalizing trend around which the oscillations have historically occurred:

These periodic shifts of opinion, some say, suggest the action of a pendulum. The analogy is faulty, however, in so far as it implies that the oscillations occur between fixed points.... In fine, liberalism grows constantly more liberal and by the same token conservatism grows constantly less conservative. For this reason a more appropriate figure than the pendulum is the spiral in which the alternation proceeds at successively higher levels.³¹³

The phases, Schlesinger understands, are due to the same freezing and thawing of the human mind that has characterized theology, imaginative literature and other fine arts, and the turning points of a wearing out of old ideas that gives rise to ennui and disillusionment, the yearning for something and someone different, the sense of having "had enough."³¹⁴ This process of alienation he says is embedded in human nature. It is also embedded in the natural wearing out of a public mandate:

Both conservatives and liberals take over the government in a spirit of zeal and dedication, convinced that truth crushed to earth has risen again . But neither group can stand more than a certain amount of success; thereafter the quality of their performance tends to deteriorate. The desire to continue in power encourages timidity and compromise; holding office as a means tapers off into holding office as an end.³¹⁵

Schlesinger notes that similar oscillations occur in both British and French political history, but he dismisses the idea of political generations because the

political generational theory of which he was aware was far too mechanistic to explain what he insists is a relativistic phenomenon whereby "A period of imaginative leadership, of experimentalism and democratic innovation, has been followed by one of sober reflection, of digestion of the gains and renewed vigilance for the rights of property."³¹⁶

3. The State of the Art

In the beginning there was only the simple recognition of a demographic fact, that three generations in a century was the average yield of the human lifestream's precarious flow through the ages. One generation is the time sons need to become fathers. Ancient Greek and Latin terms for generation all stem from a common root, the basic meaning of which is to come into existence. Throughout history the concept of generation maintains an ultimate relativity: the child at first forms a generation only with respect to his parents; later he himself becomes a parent and helps to form another generation. Seldom do more than three generations coexist for any socially meaningful length of time. Generation, then, is a reference point in ancient usage as well as today. Like the verb to be, generation requires an adjective of context, a predicate of relativity, before it takes on meaning. Generations mark subjective allegiances that help to define one's own as like, and otherness from the rest.³¹⁷ The Bible bases its chronology on generational measure, and the purely biological meaning persists until early modern times. Thomas

Jefferson was perhaps the first to sense that the American political system, like all others, has a rhythm of its own that is linked to the overall rhythm of human times. And it was on this intuitive basis that he recommended a renewal of the system every nineteen years. But it remained for nineteenth century philosophers, sociologists and historians to develop the first systematic theories of generational progression.³¹⁸

As early as 1809, French historian Jean-Louis Girard [pseud.: J. L. Soulavie] described political generations as having roughly a fifteen year periodicity, but the first systematic generational theory, published in 1839, is that of August Comte, which we discussed in Chapter Two. Comte takes the usual duration to be some thirty years, a two-phase rhythm of alternating conservative and innovative tendencies. Comte seemingly influenced John Stewart Mill, who observed in 1843 that generational change represents a succession of frozen states of the human mind. In 1860, Italian historian Giuseppe Ferrari noted that, as friends or enemies, the two politically active generations are in collaboration in the same undertakings. Every thirty years or so a new period and a new drama unfold, and some exceptional individuals are able to make the changes necessary in style, direction and inspiration to take part in two phases of the generational cycle. This is how, for example, in the twentieth century's last generation, some former liberals became neoconservative. For Ferrari, the fundamental fact is the interaction of contemporaneous generations, a fact that gives each generation a destiny or mission, that is, a historical reality.³¹⁹

In 1861 French political scientist Justin Dromel published an extensive empirical analysis. Having discovered a 15-16 year periodicity in French political history, he constructed the first theory of life stages.³²⁰ Dromel divides the population into five political generations, youth, apprenticeship, politically ascending, dominant but declining, and retired. He sees that the two fully active groups are locked in a great political debate whose dynamic balance shifts during a generation, that the ascending period (determining generational change) averages some fifteen or sixteen years, that succession is based on new ideas, that the controlling generation defends itself by trying – in an effort that eventually must usually fail – to remain open to innovation, and furthermore that generations tend to succeed and associate with each other in pairs, thus creating 30-32 year groups which follow essentially the same ideals and sense of progress.³²¹

The nineteenth century suffered a humanist and rationalist conceit, pretending that men's ideas derive more from their cerebral cortexes than their spleen, their gonads and their blood, and so for a time cyclical generational theory submerged in the undertow of the prevailing ideology of unilinear progress. Then from the 1880s onward, a new-found skepticism appears in every field, led by the followers of Karl Marx and then by Sigmund Freud, Henri Bergson, Emil Durkheim, Georges Sorel and Vilfredo Pareto. As modern social science formed it took shape around the idea that most human activity is due not to rational processes but to sentiments, sheer animal spirits, and that usually a man feels an urge and simply acts first; he invents his justifications mainly afterwards.

This is why Vilfredo Pareto's thought is important to the theory of generations. He sees that the circulation of elites is a continual process whereby the dominant class creams off potential leaders of the counter elite into its own ranks, but this process operates periodically, with each new elite generation arriving in a burst of unusual intellectual vigor. This law of elite rise and decline is a crucial key to explaining social change, and for Pareto the key to this alternation lies in the fact that elites and masses have different motivations, different highly permanent psychic states. As elites age they lose their idealism, conviction and willingness to use force faster than this is renewed by elite circulation, while masses lose faith and deference along a progressive learning curve as they are repeatedly mobilized, mystified and then despoiled by the elite. Each new vigorous elite generation eventually become effete, hidebound, bureaucratic and unadaptable, more satisfied with the present, less inclined to take thought for the future, less able to indoctrinate and mobilize the masses with new vision. As this occurs the social structure will fragment, with present individual and material interests coming to take precedence over future and communal interests. Folk must in fact be governed by their own prejudices, but over time these come to be out of phase with those of the elite.³²² The generational shift begins at the limit of tolerance, it ends at that point in time when a new equilibrium has emerged.

In modern mass democracies the rate of political elite circulation tends to be high, which gives the elite unusual vigor and capacity to maintain social control without force, through mass mobilization, mystification and cognitive domination

alone. Such political elites, serving the wealthy non-governing elites as well as themselves, govern with little concern for intrinsic truth or falsity by ideologically playing on emotionally coloured mass interests, beliefs and sentiments. Yet the mass learning curve assures that such manipulation loses effectiveness over time and that mass faith eventually yields to scepticism. For Pareto, ideology and propaganda are governing techniques that mask and rationalize human dispositions and urges. At the same time, ideology provides the elite itself with both a powerful focussing lens for viewing reality and a "political formula" by which the elite derives its authority over the governed. As faith yields to scepticism and unbelief, the old political formula governing the dominant generation becomes obsolescent and must be recast and modernized by the next rising generation – which changes its valences, projects its vision into the future, and innovates it to fit the current mass temperament so that once again scepticism yields place to faith.³²³

One of the first students of American politics to understand fully and emphasize the importance of changing rates of political change was V. O. Key, Jr. In 1955 Key wrote his seminal piece on the electorate's sudden, radical shifts in support for competing political elites.³²⁴ Four years later he published a second article in which he emphasized the importance of gradual demographic change and its incremental impact on mass opinions and behaviours.³²⁵

While Key focusses on electoral politics, his basic distinction between change that is steady and gradual and change that is episodic and sudden is applicable more generally to the study of opinions and behaviours. Sudden,

dramatic alterations in the established opinions and behaviours of a population are, of course, usually easy to detect and often quite interesting to study. It is, therefore, not surprising that most research on mass political behaviour tends to emphasize this type of change.³²⁶ Perhaps the best example of this kind of research is the work on critical elections (Key, 1955; Sundquist, 1973; Burnham, 1965; 1970). These studies concentrate on brief, intense periods during which fundamental shifts occur in mass support for particular elites and/or the advent of new issues that challenge established coalitions in particularly intense events (such as wars or depressions). Such an event will sometimes serve as a catalyst for the emergence of new political coalitions, agendas and opinions. One may consider such realignments periodic (Burnham) or coincidental (Sundquist), but those would be exceptions that help to define the rule. That is, they represent occasional adjustments to the political system that are both distinct from more normal patterns, and that ultimately help to define those patterns.³²⁷

4. Key's Critical Realignment and Critical Elections Theory

V. O. Key, Jr. described a political self-steering historical process in terms of the American party system, saying that although the political process is erratic, jerky, disorderly and accompanied by no little friction, there is an ideological self-steering historical force that pulls both parties toward a point between the extremes. The point of equilibrium or policy consensus is not fixed but moves as the parties

approach it, for the party system is more than institutional behaviour; it is also an historical process. At any one time a line between fundamentals (*vigencias*) not to be questioned and non-fundamentals, open to debates, exists, and it is within the limits of the arguable that the party battle occurs.

In the interaction between the parties over the span of history what seems to Key to occur is that to one party falls the lot of innovation. Its creative measures create dissent and bitterness among the minority, though their proponents often tone down their more extreme aspects in the process of enactment. To the extent that the innovations are both technically successful and evoke popular support, they become embedded in the consensus through the process of popular ratification in successive elections, the minority eventually recognizes and accepts the inevitable, and once contentious matters descend into the body of settled questions. At the point in time when this occurs wholesale, marking the victory of the newly controlling generation, the growing edge of the political system moves on to new fields where new problems await solution and invite conflict. One cannot of course neatly fit all American party history into this pattern of innovation, resistance to innovation, and reconciliation, Key argues, because each recurrence of a broad shift in the point of consensus has its peculiarities. Yet in each of the great episodes of U.S. party history, the political system has digested and absorbed into the consensus the consequences of far-reaching innovations. Because of this recurring cycle, the differences between the parties vary as the conversion of controversy into new consensus proceeds, and so does the significance of national

election outcomes.

It is sometimes possible to consider the minority party to be a formalized generation unit since it has the continuing function of reminding the majority that it is not without opposition and reminding the people that the government does indeed have its full share of crookedness, arbitrariness and sheer ineptitude. But Key emphasizes that the minority serves willy-nilly to promote within its ranks an acceptance of changes in the old order and to bring its followers into accord with the political community's dominant norms. A function that only becomes perceptible from a long range view of the political process is the party system's major role of not only carrying through the periodic thoroughgoing reorientation of the political order that circumstances and the national conscience demand, but also of so managing each reorientation that in the long run practically the entire society is carried along.³²⁸ This reorientation that is necessary to maintain the dualism in a moving consensus that Key calls a process of critical realignment whose ratification is recorded through critical elections.³²⁹ If the Schlesinger Cycle has been validly described and analyzed, these critical realignments and elections should nicely mark the generational breakpoints, and this is just what has happened throughout American political history, as we can see in figure 1.

According to the realignment model, the American party system consists characteristically of a majority party and a minority party, both oriented around a particular set of problems. In time, exigent new problems emerge. Issues that once galvanized the electorate fade into irrelevance. The new issues cut across party

lines, split each party internally and confront the established system with questions it struggles to dodge or ignore. The process culminates when a crucial event produces a fundamental shift in the pattern of voting and in the direction of national policy. The result is a new party system founded on a new lineup of political forces and a new rationale of party division.³³⁰ The realignment model was first launched, in effect, by political analyst Samuel Lubell in 1952 with a famous astronomical metaphor. The American political solar system, Lubell suggests, has been marked:

not by two equally competing suns, but by a sun and a moon. It is within the majority party that the issues of any particular period are found out; while the minority party shines in reflected radiance of the heat thus generated.... Each time one majority sun sets and a new sun arises, the drama of American politics is transformed. Figuratively and literally a new political era begins. For each new majority party brings its own orbit of conflict, its own peculiar rhythm of ethnic antagonisms, its own economic equilibrium, its own sectional balance.³³¹

As elaborated by political scientists, notably V. O. Key, James L. Sundquist and Walter Dean Burnham, the realignment model identifies five party systems or electoral eras in American political history. This alignment cycle theory assumes party to be the constitutive unit of American politics. But parties are not what they used to be. They no longer command the voters as they did in the nineteenth century. The operational premise of the realignment model is quite possibly defunct. Can either party really organize an enduring majority in the electronic age?³³²

Of course it is well recognized that the election of 1896 initiated a major realignment in the politics of the United States. Indeed, Key (1955) deems that

election “critical.” Thus, scaling confirms a generally accepted conclusion about the 1896 election and the subsequent restructuring of presidential politics.³³³ The future prospect is perhaps not realignment but de-alignment. Schlesinger wrote before Key coined the concept of critical realignment in 1955, and Schlesinger explicitly rejected a generational explanation for his cycle. Nonetheless, as Figure 1 on the next page shows, there has been a startlingly clear and consistent pattern throughout American party history whereby as each statist liberal generation’s new ideas are diffusing at their most rapid rate a critical realignment occurs each and every time at almost precisely the same point in the cycle. This pattern has been too regular and has been repeated too often for it to be reasonable to consider chance factors alone to have been responsible.³³⁴

The Key critical realignment theory claims that every so often the electorate will re-align itself and set up new problems with which the parties must try to cope. For example, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the new deal coalition which included Blacks, immigrants, blue collar workers, professors, etc., was the new grouping of political alliance in politics and thus formed the new entelechy. Key describes this new grouping’s entelechy, even though he is apparently not aware of this terminology. Although he shows that the critical realignment happens once every generation, he does not make this point because he does not conceive his theory to be one involving any generational phenomena. We can only speculate that had Key read Ortega, Key would have seen the generational connection very clearly.

Political sociologist Jon Alexander concludes that the rhythmic occurrence of critical realignments and their temporal relationship to the Schlesinger Cycle serve to validate a generational interpretation of the Schlesinger Cycle and to validate the cycle's existence as an actual historical process as well. Conversely, the Schlesinger Cycle should serve as the best tool we have for establishing the date of the last critical realignment (the most recent change is always the hardest to see), and forecasting future critical realignments. Looked at together, these independently discovered cycles turn out to be different manifestation of a single overall rhythmic phenomenon, because their coincidence is fully explainable in terms of generational diffusion theory.³³⁵ This discovery may permit us to say with reasonable precision what time of cycle it is in American electoral politics. Thus not only has the Schlesinger Cycle been both confirmed and explained. Also, we have a new light with which to illuminate the Key critical realignment cycle as well.

II Linking Generation with the Concepts Vigencias and Entelechy

What we may now call the Schlesinger-Key Model offers empirical and analytical evidence that can serve philosophers and social scientists alike, something that was up to now lacking in North American generational theories. The most thorough analysis, we think, can only come out of the history of the concepts under question here. The following discussion moves principally between three

planes of analysis: Ortega-Marias, the Mannheim and Easterlin connections, and now the Schlesinger-Key generational theory. Moreover, the concepts “vigencias” and “entelechy” can help to highlight this relationship.

1. *Ortega and Marias' Relation to Cyclical Theory*

José Ortega y Gasset's thinking on the theme began in 1914 and had matured by 1933. Ortega insists that embedded in history and social structure is a “background” that frames how people experience and comprehend reality. He views social reality as a pre-formed yet malleable alloy between the perceiver and the perceived, one whose contours are forever reshaped through vital reason, through the inescapable interplay between living people and the circumstances in which they find themselves. These circumstances include the vigencias, the prevailing impersonal forces that form in the very fabric of social life and manifest themselves as established usages or binding customs and inarticulate basic premises accepted by virtually everyone. Vigencias are the conventional wisdom, the mores, folkways, clichés and commonplaces that we know or suppose to be “true” and accepted by virtually everyone, and that as a kind of collective unconscious exert tremendous impersonal control over thought and behaviour. Such ruling paradigms do not depend on the adherence of particular individuals but form the customs currently in force that do govern society, including its elite, constantly, ubiquitously and invisibly.³³⁶ This is a brief definition of the concept of vigencias to remind us of the

more extended discussion presented in Chapter Two.

From the elementary school through the university these vigencias are disseminated by teachers who may keep up to date in one or two fields but in all other respects typically live and teach in a spirit at least fifteen years behind the times. Since the circulation of teachers conforms to the circulation and alternation of elites generally, the length of the social lag they help to create and sustain is not a matter of chance. Most innovative creations in history – political, social or technological – have arisen from a pervasive mindset that, reflecting the spirit of the times, changes at rhythmic generational intervals. The spirit of a generation fills out gradually as its members come to occupy their society's command posts, including its educational institutions, and out of this spirit come new ideas, evaluations, innovations, paradigm shifts, etc. The imitators must wait until these have been formulated, that is, until the preceding generation has finished its creative work. When the imitators (the mass within the elite) adopt this spirit it is already in decline and a new generation is already making its reforms and inaugurating the regime of a new spirit. Each successive generation in domestic politics struggles for some fifteen years to establish itself, and its synthesis holds together another fifteen years or so, propounded by an establishment of increasingly imitative, inauthentic people drilling anachronisms and irrelevancies into the not wholly receptive minds of the young.³³⁷

Confronted with the society's vigencias, the individual may yield unthinkingly and so join the mass, or he may consciously confront and accept or reject them. If

he confronts them, in this act he interprets reality and so discovers that he “belongs” with others holding similar interpretations. In interpreting reality and so deciding what to believe and how to act, one may regard the present as a natural outgrowth of seeds already planted or as something in urgent need of radical reform. The root feelings that arise in the act of experiencing the raw sensations of existence constitute what Ortega calls “vital sensibility.” The historically decisive transformations in vital sensibility become humanly manifest as generational change. Such change by isolated individuals is historically unimportant. A generation is not merely one elite faction, nor simply a mass, but a new integration of the whole social body, including its select minorities and gross multitude, launched upon a project, a vital trajectory that defines the orbit of existence.³³⁸

A generation contains a multiple set of antipathies, between elite and mass, between elite and counter-elite, as well as between older and younger. The new synthesis scarcely emerges before it comes to be challenged once again. During a generation the elite “pros” and “antis” are locked in a dynamic struggle but share a tremendous mutuality that distinguishes this from the previous generation. Each generation must confront the forms created by the previous generation which have taken the guise of truth and reality itself come to dwell anonymously on earth. These forms are absorbed or transcended on the basis of the spontaneous sensibility that come with life and the absorption of raw experiences. A generation's overall spirit depends on the tenuously shifting balance it maintains between its social inheritance and the inner prompting of spontaneity. Political space for

spontaneity arises in work oriented toward the future, and in the problematic fissures or cracks, splits or voids that appear in the current system of vigencias. Prevailing conventions are imposed on men; their reaction to them is not. Because the world that we each experience is different at each moment, our collective vital sensitivity is always relative and always in a process of adjustment. This is one pivot for the movements of historical evolution.

The prevailing vigencias form a system that determines each age and gives it stability and duration. Men enter historical life while a system of vigencias is in force, some at the beginning, some at the middle, and some late, after the old system of vigencias has already begun to lose its hold. These last, if they consciously confront the vigencias at all, must consciously or unconsciously choose whether to respect the old or cast their lot with the new. These generational free floaters are crucial agents of change. Will they surrender to their inheritance, ignoring the prompting of spontaneity, or will they follow their innovative urges and defy the authority of the past? As the system of vigencias ages, more and more men and women opt for change and more and more defenders of the ancien regime retire or die off – until another threshold is reached. This is how eras of accommodation, in which the young coalesce with the old, come to alternate with eras of innovation and creative struggle.³³⁹ Generations do not come and go in single file like ducks in a shooting gallery but overlap, join, interlace and confront one another, and in this sense they are continuous. But the ebb and flow of systems of vigencias constitute the discontinuous element that provides generational

change with an historical rhythm that paces the political process in action.

2. Relating Mannheim's Entelechy to Ortega-Marias

Karl Mannheim explicitly addressed in 1927 the generational problem in terms of the sociology of knowledge. He notes that a rhythm in the sequence of generations is most apparent in free groupings such as literary circles, and least apparent in bureaucratic institutions whose structure stifles generational originality. The generation is to be found at the level of existence where social forces operate most freely, in the interplay between the natural or physical and the mental spheres. At any one time different generations are living subjectively in different eras to the extent that they, along with other members of that generation, experience events as happening in a different period of their lives. They may or may not possess a sense of shared existence and a shared inner aim or project – which Mannheim calls an entelechy.³⁴⁰ Generations resemble social classes in that both place their individual members in a common location within the social and historical process. This limits them to a specific range of potential experience and predisposes them toward characteristic modes of thought and of historically relevant action.

An entelechy, then, arises from *the stratification of experience* whereby a generation comes to be socially and politically established and effective as a unifying force. Entelechies form in a dynamic process of destabilization when old ideas become problematic due to simple entropy, a too rapid tempo of social

change, or change of too great a magnitude. Under such conditions the latent, continuous adaptation of traditional patterns of experience, thought and expression breaks down. This exposes people to a flood of realtime experience of raw data, a fresh contact with unmediated total existence that creates among generation members a social bond based upon a shared insight and a dramatic sense of participation in a common destiny.³⁴¹

Often the nucleus of attitudes particular to a new generation is first evolved and practised by older "frontrunners," but not all generations develop a unique generational style. Recall that within a generation those groups that work up the material of their common experience in different specific ways, such as liberals and conservatives, constitute what Mannheim calls separate generation units. These may be based on religion, ideology, occupation, class, schools of thought, etc. Together the generation units constitute a generation even though their relations are often antagonistic, simply because they are oriented toward each other. Opposing political orientations represent different attempts to work up and master the social and intellectual problems that go with a common destiny. The political spirit of an age, then, is the probabilistic product of a dynamic relationship of tension between would-be trends and actors. Polarized generation units appeal to the society as a whole for the vindication of their ideas and stance. Members of potential generations that have failed to achieve entelechies drift to the pole of the controlling generation or toward a younger generation evolving a newer form, for culturally unattached elements always find themselves being attracted to more

perfected configurations.³⁴²

For Mannheim this rule applies especially to the intellectuals (*hommes de lettres*, *literati*), who are free to vacillate, now joining one trend, now another. In doing this, the intellectuals create the impression that the ideas of the generation they have chosen to favour is wholly defining the spirit of the age. The intellectuals do endow a domestic political entelechy with real depth and form, but they are not decisive. In fact they do not normally determine the direction of domestic political evolution, for this is typically the function of the polarized generation units. "This wave-like rhythm in the change of the *Zeitgeist* is merely due to the fact that – according to the prevailing conditions – now one, and then the other pole succeeds in rallying an active youth which, then, carries the 'intermediary' generations and in particular the socially unattached individuals along."³⁴³

The relative strength and socially magnetic power of the challenging and the controlling generations' entelechies largely determine whether the younger generation of university students will identify with the powers that be or with the forces of change. Their being young and their freshness of contact with the world enable them to reorient any movement they embrace and adapt it to the total situation. But the common assumption that the student generation is always progressive while the adult generation is always conservative is often simply false. Whether student youth will be reactionary, conservative or progressive or radical depends primarily on how open the existing social structures are for the promotion of their own social and intellectual ends as marginal members of the elite. In

general, the more open the future, and the more rapid the circulation of elites, the more progressive the student generations will be.³⁴⁴ Much of the enduring appeal of the concept of generations, especially as Mannheim formulated it (1952), we can attribute to the fact that it shows us how to link collective character and life cycle with social events. For Mannheim, the formation of a historical generation was not simply the result the proximity of birth dates. Instead, historical generation must be understood, to borrow a phrase from C. Wright Mills (1959), in terms of the “intersection of biography and history.” Concretely, the formation of historical generations with their own distinct consciousness or *entelechy* is the result of the intersection of three types of location: location in life-cycle or age, location in space or geography, and location in time or history. Yet, despite Mannheim’s (1952) stress on the importance of these three types of location, studies of historical generations have devoted very little systematic attention to questions of spatial and temporal location.

Carl Dassbach argues that historical generations cannot be assumed: they must be discovered and explained. Discovery entails identifying a distinct consciousness or *entelechy* associated with the generation. Adherents of the tradition Mannheim began have been adept at uncovering several instances of “generational consciousness” over the last two hundred years, but they have failed to explore and explain systematically the factors that have produced this consciousness. At best, their explanations have been *ad hoc*.³⁴⁵

Writing in 1949, Julian Marias attempts to refine Ortega's perspective, but the result is mechanistic, draining some of the dynamic vitalism from Ortega's thought. Marias says that life divides naturally into five roughly fifteen year periods. (1) In childhood the person is pure spontaneity, being moulded and guided toward a life endowed with substance, stability and form. The child's world is magical, safe and small. At about fifteen one begins to intuit the infinity of the universe and suddenly life expands to include the social world. (2) Now begins a new life feeling that anticipates the eventual overturn of the present situation, for youth is rebellion and impatience forced into a passive learning mode but beset by vital urges of awesome scope and power that demand frequent violation of vigencias.

(3) At around age thirty, another restless vitality wells up like a slow drum roll, a vague yet persistent sense of wanting to be something more, an urge to break out and achieve, culminating in a personal crisis that is resolved through passage into a different stage of life. Life becomes less provisional, more rational and orderly, and people become more earnest about climbing career ladders, modifying the inherited world, trying to impose their own innovations. This is the time of full initiation and especially of opposition during which people roughly between thirty and forty-five struggle with the dominant generation whose ideas and bodies stand in the way of social progress and personal advancement. Now intimations of mortality give the sense that time is running out, that the down side of life is at hand, and this produces a mid-life crisis involving violent swings of mood. These mood swings represent this shift of generational role. One loses the

sense that pretending to be less than one is can somehow insulate one from danger, failure, rejection, getting sick, dying. People gradually accept responsibility for how they really feel and generally restabilize at about forty-five.³⁴⁶ And the world they enter is their own.

(4) From forty-five or so to about sixty is the period of dominance, when the world one tried to begin in youth and fought for in opposition now prevails. The elite of this generation are “in power” and yet are already being challenged by the innovations proposed by the younger generations. Now the temporal horizon begins to take on fixed contours, and this time there are direct intuitions of impending death. Toward the end of this period people tend to begin to relax and ride the quickening currents of time.

(5) From around sixty to seventy-five and beyond, people become increasingly aloof from contemporary struggles though still willing to provide the voice of experience. The generation of senior citizens best understands the origin of the present situation. But it no longer has a full historical role to play – however tenaciously a few elder statesmen may cling to the pinnacle. When an old man says “in my day” he is referring not to the present in which he actually lives and speaks, but to the earlier time in which he felt most alive, when his generation’s entelechy was freshly forming or has just formed.

Focussing his attention on the age of greatest effectiveness, Marias said it usually divides naturally into two phases, the period of preparation and opposition,

and the period of control and dominance. If the dominant generation's entelechy leans to the political left, then the opposition generation's entelechy will tend to lean to the right. And so political generations alternate in a steady, stately rhythm.³⁴⁷ In fact this is the domestic policy cycle we have been calling the Schlesinger Cycle. It is one dynamic form of ideological change whose motive force is embedded in overall generational conflict, in the ongoing struggle of men, and now women, to seize total social power from their elders – vocationally, culturally, ideologically, artistically, scientifically and politically.

In its political form this is a struggle that ultimately yields domination by fostering belief through persuasion or providing proof through technology and political technique. Its motive force is that of politics everywhere: raw power, mediated through the stratification of experience. This power manifests itself as human intellect and energy-in-action, expressed as an undulating process that transforms raw power into the domination inherent in achieved status, and raw ambition into the shoring up and tearing down of barriers to social change.

Political force is an amalgam of restless energy and believed-in ideas, both of which lose potency along with their holders and must be recharged as generational change occurs. And yet within relativistic and probabilistic physical constraints, generational change is not wholly or even primarily a biological phenomenon. In a purely biological or an actuarial sense generational change occurs every day, predicated upon the inevitability of death and the superbly political fact, as P. T. Barnum memorably notes, that "there's one born every

minute.” In social terms generational change constitutes continual power struggle between a new generation rising into power on the backs of new ideas, and an old generation holding domination and struggling to retain its perquisites, prerogatives and authority despite the increasing obsolescence of its own once-new ideas. Birth, death, marriage, divorce, coming of age, and even biological maturation rates vary over time. And so does the rate at which human reality is being created. But the speed of the succession of political generations remains virtually constant, paced by the rate of human aging which controls the rate at which human social memory fades. This rate is the essential physical clock that determines for whom the bell tolls.

Despite the invention of writing, printing, electronic media, data processing and information retrieval, every human individual goes through essentially the same form of learning curve, *and the same form of forgetting curve*, both based upon the ever constant rate of human aging. In turn, the rate of human aging controls the forms of human yearning. In youth, the yearning is toward the future. In the prime of life – at the height of one’s times – the yearning is to make the present eternal. In old age, the yearning is to hold on to both past and future together, to the way of life one knows and to the life one knows is slipping away with seemingly ever-increasing velocity. The three historical moments in politics, then, are to obtain power, to use power, and to retain the power inexorably slipping away under pressure not of death but of life itself, the rising pressure of the next generation.

A political generation itself undergoes some change over time, but ideologically it lasts as long as the society's custodians of ideas share a critical mass of largely inarticulate basic premises about some general stance toward state action and social inequality. This mindset is not static; its very inner texture gels, hardens and sours in rhythm with the predominance of those who share it. They first contribute in their prime to general progress of the human spirit, but then cling to their predominance while becoming involuntarily increasingly hostile to later developments, to which they can no longer properly contribute and whose subtle essence therefore becomes increasingly alien. Human ages are, as Marias says, also historical ages, for age is the form that time takes to dwell within people. Typically, the historical horizon, like the visual, withdraws as one moves toward it, but when one has reached the height of one's time the horizon begins to take on a precise contour and one senses that time is running out. Now men live life with the future collapsed back onto the present, giving the "season" a definite style and inner structure.³⁴⁸ The subtle essence of each era changes relativistically and qualitatively due to the intrusion of new ideas, events and actors brought by the slow but unceasing circulation of the currently dominant elites – until finally a threshold of perception is reached, and then the old custodians of ideas realize what the newly rising generation already knows – that their now-sour ideas have been overthrown and another generation has taken possession of society. Before, the son took his ideas from the father, now the father comes to depend on the ideas and ambitions of the son.

In the current political science literature, the confusion between a generational phase and a generational cycle remains, for good reason. The United States, where such research is centered, has an extraordinary narrow political spectrum, a stable two party system, and a traditional and still operative commitment to liberalism's two variants we may call statist liberalism and libertarianism. Nowhere else is the generational rhythm so clear and seemingly so simple and mechanistic a phenomenon, and so American scholars (many of whom have little sense of the relativistic dynamics inherent to political generations) endlessly debate the proportional weight of life-cycle, generation and period effects. William Claggert has nicely summed up the current state of the art in American political science:

A life-cycle effect records the systematic change in a variable as individuals or cohorts age. A generation effect measures the degree to which individuals or cohorts entered the electorate with distinctive values on a variable which thereafter persists. A period effect reflects any temporary shift in a variable in response to the unique forces which exist at any given time. The debate over the dynamics of the strength component stems from different assessments of the relative role of these effects in producing the observed cross-sectional relationship and over the socialization and/or psychological processes which give rise to these effects.³⁴⁹

A principal tenet of the newly emerging scientific specialty known as the sociology of aging is that aging is not inevitably prescribed, that for individuals no pure process of aging exists, that the life course is not preordained but varies with social change in institutions, ideas, values and beliefs. The life course patterns of

successive cohorts are continually subject to change, are continually being altered as the society undergoes overall alteration. The perennial debates among students of society over how to disentangle once and for all the political effects of life-cycle, period and generational effects verge upon reification, because they generally ignore the relativistic context in which major social change occurs and affects every aspect of society, including political change.³⁵⁰ As major social change occurs: singular events happen, the general pace of life continually quickens, history moves on to alter the context of all human activity, and only the cybernetic rate of human aging remains ever constant, roughly defining the natural political space-time of a generational elite. This essentially self-steering context of bio-political life gives it structure and form through the kaleidoscopically changing but incorrigibly dialectical relationship between the elite and the mass. In this sense only is generation a quiet harbor in the tumultuous seas of change.

3. *Easterlin's Relation to Cyclical Theory*

Richard Easterlin is both an economic historian and a demographer, and it is the combination of these two disciplines and the fine balance between theory and experience that make his work empirically rigorous, refreshingly insightful and thoroughly worthwhile reading. More than 25 years ago, Easterlin first presented his basic argument: that swings in relative cohort size and the resulting changes in the levels of relative income among cohorts of child-bearing age produce the baby

boom, and then the baby bust. Initially concerned with describing demographic cycles (1961), his work followed with more developed statements (1968, 1971, 1973) that offer an original explanation of the baby boom and bust.

The Easterlin Effect thesis is that cyclical changes in demographic and social behaviour have been in part at least the result of fluctuations in birth rates and the resulting cohort sizes during the post-World War II period. A large cohort size, he argues, reduces the economic opportunities of its members and reduces their income relative to its smaller parental generation. Then, this relatively low economic status in turn leads to lower fertility, higher rates of female labor force participation, later marriage, higher divorce and illegitimacy, and increasing homicide, suicide, and alienation. Cycles in birth rates and cohort size suggested for Easterlin that the small baby bust cohorts entering adulthood in the 1990s would enjoy higher relative income, more traditional family structures, and lower levels of social disorganization. Of interest to economists and sociologists, the Easterlin effect has generated a large literature in the decades since he first proposed it.³⁵¹

Easterlin's theory of cohort competition suggests that individuals born during the baby boom are more likely to be poor than those born before or after them. A decomposition of poverty by age, period, cohort and household type shows that among whites, every successive generation of family heads born throughout the baby boom has faced an increasingly greater chance of being poor. Among blacks, the cohort effect is there but is not statistically significant. Contrary to Easterlin's initial prediction, it is white family heads born after the baby boom who face the

highest odds of poverty, but this is a mere glitch in an otherwise firm pattern.

The cohort effect is not due to recent changes in family structure, for which he controls. The “baby boom” generation refers to all those individuals born in the twenty years following World War II. During this period, the fertility rate soared, producing unusually large birth cohorts (Cherlin 1992). According to Easterlin (1987a), baby boomers confront greater competition for resources, which makes them more economically vulnerable than the smaller cohorts that precede and follow them. The result should be higher rates of poverty among families of the baby boom generation. From this perspective, the increase in poverty among families is actually more an effect of birth cohort placement than of age, and should diminish as the baby boomers grow older and the smaller cohorts of the post-baby boom enter adulthood and establish independent households (Easterlin 1987b).

Easterlin contends that the loss of earnings and employment among baby boomers translates into poverty both directly, through a reduction in income, and indirectly, through increasing the number of families headed by women. He argues that cohort competition has contributed to the sharp rise in the number of female-headed families because economic hardship among individuals leads to a greater incidence both of divorce and of unwed mothers (1987b). Although it is difficult to imagine just how to test Easterlin's claim about a cohort effect on household structure, there is ample evidence that the rise in female-headed households is indeed tightly linked to current trends in poverty. In what commentators have termed the feminization of poverty, women and children have become an expanding

proportion of the poverty-stricken population, and this is due at least in part to an increase in female-headed households – coupled with a decline in poverty rates among families headed by men. Easterlin's theory suggests that a simple focus on changes in family structure provides an incomplete explanation of impoverishment. Cohort competition affects male family heads as well as female family heads. His theory suggests a curvilinear pattern for cohort effects, with the baby boomers born around the peak year, 1957, facing the greatest jeopardy of being poor.³⁵²

The plausibility of the present argument does not rest simply on whether the analysis of each subject is exhaustive or the methodology the most advanced. Easterlin's dialectical analysis recognizes a whole that is more than the sums of its parts. What is striking to him is the way in which a variety of developments over the previous four decades form a coherent picture when approached from the present theoretical viewpoint.³⁵³ What is important to Easterlin is the different sizes of the generations, and he argues that these different sizes help to determine even the long wave economic cycle. Durkheim (discussed in Chapter Three), was an important source of inspiration for Easterlin.³⁵⁴ Recall Durkheim's claim: a small cohort will be a conservative one, bound by traditions, but a large cohort does not have enough elders to impose traditions effectively upon them. This generation then escapes relatively from the society's traditions, which then permits major changes to occur.

Easterlin argues that a small cohort will represent a return to tradition in the nature of change. There is a dialectical relationship between the fertility rate and

the ensuing generation's size, and the economic experience of that new generation. This is the motive force that drives the Easterlin Effect cycle. We would argue in this vein that a large cohort experiencing hard times will produce a distinctive vigencias. Although this argument carries us well beyond Easterlin's own work, it does appear a logical inference from his data. This is almost an academically perfect kind of dialectic, where one condition generates its own demise by producing antithetical conditions that resolve into a new synthesis.

The Baby Boomers are many, and they collectively generate considerable economic growth, which in turn helps to produce the economic opportunities the next generation will enjoy, yet the boomers themselves experience relative economic frustration because they are too many people pursuing not enough jobs. It is one of history's more delicious ironies that the generation that produces the long wave economic boom should consist of individuals who find themselves relatively immiserated in that very process. This ability to connect the macro with the micro in terms of how expected income plays off against actual income constitutes a long missing bridge between the levels of analysis and between the objective and the subjective as well. This contribution places Easterlin squarely in the middle between Ortega-Marias and Mannheim, with a virtual foot in each camp.

Although it would be good to see more comparative analysis of the Easterlin Effect in different countries, we think the evidence at hand is sufficient to permit this modest knowledge claim: without positing any simple or singular causation we may nonetheless view the Easterlin Effect as a basic motive force that helps to drive the

combined and unified generational political cycle that the literature now treats separately as the Schlesinger and Key cycles. Here we can see yet another piece of the generational puzzle falling finally into place.

The Schlesinger-Key Cycle concerns domestic electoral politics and national policy-making ideology, social class and, in the United States, democracy. It is impelled by political and economic innovation, and conducted in the public arena by polarized generation units. It operates by means of cognitive domination, moulded and moderated by generational entelechies. It is paced and modulated by the nearly constant rate of human aging, which controls adult social learning and forgetting curves, and by the pressures exerted by younger generations. This is the basic generational rhythm of the public national political system itself.

It is essentially a fairly simple and straightforward stress adaptive rhythm. Thus far, scholars have found similar political cycles in Germany, the former Soviet Union, Finland, Cuba, Israel and indeed globally as well as in the U.S.³⁵⁵ Alexander and Darby believe that every modern nation-state may in fact display such a rhythm, and that therefore this research field not only needs to be tilled but will eventually yield fruit, both in terms of country-specific research, and in general theory-making efforts. It is, in short, a newly opened paradigm richly suggesting problems that potentially social science research can in fact solve.

Each country has its own similar yet culturally and politically distinctive rhythm; most are probable more erratic than that of the Americans, whose country

was born modern, in Tocqueville's memorable phrase. Most can be studied and explained essentially in terms of domestic politics. And yet, as global communications systems expand and as the Westernization, homogenization and Americanization of the world proceeds, we may expect that an increasing number of these specifically national rhythms will come into phase with each other. Indeed this may become a cardinal characteristic of the coming transnational civilization. Already we have had a strong taste of this tendency in the international generational revolt that burst into global public consciousness around 1968. In a deep sense this is a sovereign rhythm, for spatially expanding nations must break the native rhythms of cognitively dominated people before they can effectively begin to be assimilated. Until this is done the dominated peoples will suffer only partial conquest.

Since this cycle is truly a space-time phenomenon, it must evolve over both space and time. Mannheim points out that there was no community of experience between youths in China and Germany around 1800. Marvin Rintola says:

Indeed such phenomena as the spread of nationalism and of industrialization indicate that the spatial barriers between generations may be breaking down, at the same time that more rapid change is increasing the importance of the temporal barriers between generations. The effect of the latter development is to make communication between different political generations more difficult, while the effect of the former development is to increase the world-wide significance of this decline in ability to communicate.³⁵⁶

Margaret Mead has made the related point that the continuity of all cultures

depends on the living presence of at least three generations. She explains: "The more intense the experience of generational change in the family and of social change through insurgent new groups [read : generation units], the more brittle the social system becomes and the less secure the individual is likely to be." Mead takes this anthropological insight to a strong conclusion:

Today, suddenly, because all the people of the world are part of one electronically based, intercommunicating network, young people everywhere share a kind of experience that none of the elders ever have had or will have. Conversely, the older generation will never see repeated in the lives of young people their own unprecedented experience of sequentially emerging change. This break between generations is wholly new; it is planetary and universal.³⁵⁷

As discussed, the intellectual work of Schlesinger, Key and Easterlin when interlinked with Ortega-Marias and Mannheim, enriches the literature and allows scholars to link various related theories. This chapter has tried to illustrate in some suggestive ways the interconnected relationships that one may posit as potentially existing between writers of diverse backgrounds, disciplines and perspectives. Moreover, this is only a start because this relationship could be extensively developed much further. This chapter's discussion merely suggests one way in which scholars can comparatively pursue some of the issues that comprise the problem of generations.

Chapter Six

CONCLUSION

Our life is at all times and before anything else the consciousness of what we can do.

José Ortega y Gasset,
Revolt of the Masses
(1930)

The purpose of this thesis has been to survey in brief compass some of the more interesting historical developments in thinking about generational change, and to subject the major writers who emerged from this survey to a critical analysis. The goal was to suggest some avenues through which scholars might wish to reassess critically the theory of generational change. We began by claiming that the scholarly literature on how generational change works is currently insufficient, at least as

North American followers of Karl Mannheim have been pursuing it, in part because they have largely ignored the potential contributions of Ortega and Marias.

We began by discussing how the concept of generation came in being. To do so required going all the way back to the originator of the modern idea of generations, Auguste Comte, whom we discussed in Chapter Two. Our research revealed that Comte's insights have inspired two subsequent and at least potentially complementary schools of thought, the multifaceted perspective developed together by Ortega and Marias, and the dualistic point of view of historical sociologist Karl Mannheim. Through a critical but not entirely unsympathetic comparative analysis, we found that both generational theories do stand up well to critical scrutiny – even though their premises are much different. Both enable us to understand not only what they are but also what we might call their “ontological location” (their sociological and historical vitality), and the mechanisms of their historical functioning. This scrutiny led us directly into, and forced us to try to come to grips with, some serious questions concerning the meaning of reality. In doing so we concluded that a generation has both an inner life and an outward manifestation, and that both perspectives are equally valid and potentially fruitful as approaches for study.

Secondly, we have observed in Chapter Four that a survey of how the corpus of literature has developed, particularly among Karl Mannheim's North American followers, reveals a strong inclination to treat the subject in rather narrow and highly circumscribed ways. This is true of both the scope and methods used. If the

generational concept has truly universal implications, then these are not at present being fully explored. This heuristic finding led us to suspect that a broader than usual field of inquiry might well prove fruitful. To be sure, overlaps and linkages usually exist among any set of academic fields, particularly among the sister disciplines that comprise the various social sciences. Skipping rather lightly over disciplinary boundaries, we have shown the uniqueness of each of the two major models examined, and how both seemingly allow for interconnected relationships to exist between them, that is, between Ortega-Marias and Mannheim, and among some contemporary North American theorists.

Finally, we then began a preliminary reconnaissance to explore how scholars might actually achieve the synthesis we found to have been missing, both empirically and analytically. The problem was to find some area of research that was well developed empirically but relatively underdeveloped synthetically. One promising arena has proven to consist of some major cyclical theories about American politics, and specifically about generational change within the American party system. By marshalling both empirical and analytical evidence, we tried to illustrate some unique and complementary ways through which the linkage we had posited as desirable might actually occur.

The so-called Schlesinger Cycle and V. O. Key's critical realignment and critical elections theory appear from a preliminary look quite promising in this regard. As discussed in Chapter Five, one may link some intellectual work by historian Arthur Schlesinger, Sr. and political scientist V. O. Key, Jr. with that of

sociologist Karl Mannheim and philosophers José Ortega y Gasset and Julian Marias. Such a juxtaposition, we felt, might help enrich the literature and demonstrate empirically, as well as analytically that this connection holds some promise. Therefore, our own eclectic analysis strives toward a synthesis of many ideas. Turning to questions of basic causation, we went still further afield from political science to explore, in a very limited and preliminary way, the connection of the Easterlin Effect from the field of economic demography with the cyclic theories already examined. This helps to justify our sensed need to escape occasionally from the good ship Political Science Enterprise and boldly seek in the wild blue scholarly yonder for means through which to find harmonization among theories of interest to political science.

There is of course much need for further research seeking to validate and expand upon the conclusions suggested in Chapter Five, where we examined some cyclic theories and tried to show their potential Easterlin connection. The extent to which the present work has argued convincingly that a synthetic connection is attainable only the reader can decide. We do hope that others will find these generational pathways sufficiently intriguing to warrant some followup work. We think this field is wide open for others to explore, and that such explorations could well break some new scholarly ground. For example, although it has been “done to death” within the narrow confines of political science proper, we believe that some fresh new thinking about V. O. Key’s critical realignment/critical elections theory is still both desirable and possible – simply by moving outside our conventional

boundaries. Such work would necessarily mean reinterpreting some earlier studies in a widened effort to shed some new light on their findings. Many other aspects of generational theory appear to us to be almost ripe for this kind of re-cycling. One could, for example, imagine that a juxtaposition of the Kondratieff Cycle in international economics and the progressive cycles of feminist political collective action in the United States is one such potentially fruitful area.

This research has been especially eye opening in that it has required a radical seeking to discover our subject's deepest roots. What Thomas Kuhn calls "normal science" is a very comfortable place to work, but when the benefits begin to dry up we should be willing to overthrow our everyday theories and seek once again to peer beneath the surface at the roots of the things we study. Looking at unfamiliar modes of thought in a widely disparate set of disciplines and approaches does have its moments of pained incomprehension and aghast incredulity. However, it has its rewards as well. It is good for us to remind ourselves again and again as time goes by just what is the nature of what we study, and what is the nature of those things we most easily take for granted. We need occasionally to do some mixed scanning to try to discover what important and influential scholars' works we have been excluding. In some cases our habitual exclusions may be hamstringing our own efforts to trace patterns in the sands of time. This discussion has presented yet one more such attempt, justified by a continuing lack of consensus on the matters being examined, and by the equally significant continuing failure to work out a satisfactory delimitation of the field's scope.

To expose the interior structure of our argument, we have chosen a triangle as a heuristic analytical tool, see Appendix A. Our thesis argument is dialectical, and so we divide this triangle into two parts, representing an assumed dualism. To buttress the first part of our argument, we began in Chapter 2 by discussing the originator of the conception of generation Auguste Comte (represented as A). As shown in Chapters 2 and 3, Comte's ideas about society led to two intellectually stimulating schools of thought, that of Ortega-Marias (B) and Karl Mannheim (C). We exposed features of each approach with emphasis on two concepts, "vigencia" and "entelechy". However, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, North American scholars are not making full use of the scholarly literature on generational phenomena, a void we represent by a dotted line. The first half of the triangle is connected with a dotted line versus a solid line (the bottom of the triangle), to indicate the missing contribution of Ortega and Marias (B) in the work of Mannheim and his followers among North American scholars. Most North American scholars have chosen the Mannheim's (C) generational model. Examples include Abramson, Ryder and many others (see Chapter 4). In contrast, very few scholars have chosen Ortega-Marias model. Noteworthy among these few are Alexander and Bentley (see Chapters 4 and 5) who have either discussed the Ortega-Marias (B) generational model separately, or in conjunction with Karl Mannheim (C).

The second half of the triangle illustrates the second component of our thesis argument. In Chapter 4 we compared and contrasted the two schools of thought (B & C), exposing their unique nature [multifaceted = Ortega-Marias (B) versus dualist

= Mannheim (C)]. Even with their differences, we have shown a potential connection between the Ortega-Marias (B) and Mannheim (C) models with those of North American scholars. We began by explaining the relationship between the Schlesinger Cycle and Key's Critical Realignment and Critical Elections theory (see Chapter 5 and Figure 1). Furthermore, we utilized the concepts "vigencia" and "entelechy" in Chapter 5 to illustrate a potential connection between Ortega-Marias (B) and the Schlesinger Cycle and Mannheim (C) and Key Critical Realignment and Critical Election theory. To help solidify the synthesis between Ortega-Marias (B) and Mannheim (C), we employed Richard Easterlin's postulated Easterlin's Effect (discussed in Chapter 5) to show the usefulness of B vis-a-vis C. Finally, we have tried to illustrate that a synthesis is possible by connecting the dots so to speak and thus, solidifying the connection between Ortega-Marias (B) and Mannheim (C). Thus, Appendix A helps the reader to visualize the inner structure of our thesis argument, which we hope will help to bring additional clarity and transparency to our discussion. Those seeking to delineate such patterns should try to make their use of language clear and transparent enough to avoid excessive reification. Synthesizing the works of Ortega-Marias with those of Mannheim enables us, at least vicariously, to experience a meaningful world that is unfolding generation by generation such that actual human beings naturally act out in everyday life the most abstruse trends our scholars can conceive. Rephrasing Durkheim, we argue that the synthesis we have been seeking does not merely add up to the sum of the individuals involved, but rather that the system formed by their association

represents a specific reality system that truly possesses its own characteristics. Undoubtedly no collective entity can endure if there are no individual consciousnesses. "I am" is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. In addition, these consciousness must be associated and combined, in a certain way to take account of "my circumstances." If Ortega taught us best how to situate ourselves within the currents of history, it was perhaps Durkheim who best taught us to take seriously the concept of "society."³⁵⁸

The limitations of traditional studies on generational phenomenon became apparent as we were conducting investigations beyond the confines of disciplinary boundaries. However, it would be foolish to disregard the claims made in the scholarly literature on generational change. A critical reassessment of both the Ortega-Marias and Mannheim generational theories showed that both theories do stand up well to critical scrutiny, even though their premise are different. According to James Coleman,³⁵⁹ one reason for this limitation is that social theory must constantly undergo change, even in the mature state. As social reality changes, due to such forces as inventions and the development of new processes, social theory must be elaborated or changed.³⁶⁰ Coleman tells us that this change adds up to an extraordinary transformation in social structure that has taken place over the last several centuries and most dramatically during the last century and a half. This is a change in the basic elements that, in a theory of social action, must be regarded as society's motive forces. This period, he argues has ushered in the growth of corporate actors of a new form, freestanding in society, without a fixed relation

either to natural persons or to other corporate actors. In recent years, these new corporate actors have become so pervasive that they threaten another structural element that has since prehistory constituted the basic building block of social structure - the family.³⁶¹

Coleman notes that the conflict between these two components of social structure is in itself an important development. What gives the conflict crucial importance is that one of the components, the family, is the unit within which members of the next generation of society are nurtured and brought into adulthood. The new corporate actors are specialized and narrow-purpose entities, constitutive of a structure marked by a higher division of labour and have scant place for child-rearing. Coleman raises the question of: How will society reproduce itself when this new component of the social structure becomes even more dominant?³⁶² Society has been undergoing an organizational revolutions: just as forests and fields in the physical environment are being replaced by streets and skyscrapers, the "primordial" institutions around which societies have developed are being replaced by "purposively" constructed social organization (see Coleman, *Foundations...* p. 3).

The creation of a purposive social structure, one that is independent of the family and its derivatives, has facilitated a movement of various activities out of the household and the family-based primordial social structure into the purposive structure.³⁶³ A prime example is the shift of activity from the household to the modern corporate structure. An impact comparable to that of the man's leaving the

household to go to an external workplace is being generated by women massively leaving the household to join the men there.³⁶⁴ As this occurs, the woman shifts her daytime locus of activity from the family's primordial structure, to the world of corporate actors' purposive structure.³⁶⁵

For Coleman, the former social structure was one in which persons formed the elements, and primordial ties formed the most basic social relations. In the new social structure, primordial relations are being driven to the periphery as the new corporate actors take over many formerly primordial functions. The old social structure constituted a natural social environment, and the new one in contrast is a constructed social environment.³⁶⁶

Auguste Comte was motivated as were nearly all early social theorists, by a desire to influence the course of society, as indicated in his famous statement "savoir pour prévoir, pour pourvoir."³⁶⁷ In contrast to other early social theory, however, for Coleman, Comte's philosophy of history contained a place for sociological knowledge.³⁶⁸ Comte believed that positive knowledge (as distinct from normative or ideologically inspired beliefs) about social functioning would provide the firmest basis for rational social planning (with social scientists as the guiding elite). However, as Coleman points out, today all this has changed. The conditions of human existence depend largely and increasingly on purposive actions taken by corporate persons. Actions based on knowledge and decisions have come to replace in an ever expanding range of areas. "Natural" events beyond human control within the constructed social environment are generated inadvertently by

purposive corporate actors and their agents without anyone willing this to happen, and these effects are coming to constitute an ever larger part of the social environment.³⁶⁹

The significance of all this is that this overall development may result in wholesale changes in the functioning of the intergenerational transmission of attitudes, values, beliefs and modes of action. In this case the work of both Ortega-Marias and Mannheim (who naturally assumed that the family's primordial importance in determining these effects) would remain unchallenged, could well require radical revision. This is quite possibly a significant limitation upon the whole approach treated here.

One final word remains to be said concerning the importance of the theories of generations. This perspective recommends itself for renewed study because it appears ripe to help us move toward the more encompassing perspectives that we need to advance our own particular social science. Generational theories can not only encourage an accentuated drive toward more and more theoretically encompassing perspectives. The essence of our view is that a true synthesis may provide an insightful and meaningful contribution to the literature on generations and therefore on how society actually works in those molecular spaces that lie so often undiscerned and unremarked between the physiological and the social realms. The reality of generations is essential to our understanding of the political

system. It points us firmly toward a clear-eyed view of the totality from which we have abstracted political elements for study. Although it is often studied quite narrowly, generational analysis can help to widen a student's perspectives in surprising and enlightening ways.

ENDNOTES

1. Julian Marias, *Generations: A Historical Method*. Harold C. Raley, trans. (Montgomery, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1967), p. 20.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
3. David Ashely and David Michael Orenstein, "(Isidore) Auguste Marie Francois-Xavier Comte - Ideas," *Sociological Theory: Classical Statements*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1990), pp. 74-75.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
7. Auguste Comte, "The Positive Philosophy and the Study of Society." Patrick Gardiner, ed. and trans. *Theories of History* (New York: Free Press, 1959), p. 74.
8. Comte made what he could by tutoring and sporadic journalism. The first volume of his main work, *Cours de philosophie positive*, appeared in English as the *Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte* (1830). The sixth, and last, volume was not published until twelve years later. During this time Comte became involved in a lengthy correspondence with John Stuart Mill. Mill was greatly impressed by Comte's sociological and historical ideas and did much to make them known to the English public in the *Westminster Review*. The extracts in this selection are taken from Auguste Comte. "The Positive Philosophy and the Study of Society," Gardiner, *op. cit.*, p. 73.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23. Marias quotes Comte's *Cours de philosophie positive*, 1830-42, Vol. IV [Fifty-first Lesson] (Paris, 1839), pp. 635-39.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- 11 According to Mancur Olson's (1965) theory of group behaviour, a long-standing tradition of thought took it as self-evident that groups and organizations

would act collectively in pursuit of their common interests. This argument was an elaboration of Comte's philosophy of society. Daniel Lite, *Varieties of Social Explanation: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Science* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1991), p. 59.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

13. Ashely and Orenstein, "(Isidore) Auguste Marie Francois-Xavier Comte - Ideas," *op. cit.*, p. 86.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

15 *Ibid.*

16. John T. Graham, *Theory of History in Ortega y Gasset: "The Dawn of Historical Reason,"* Vol. II (Columbia, Mo: University of Missouri Press, 1997). p. 45.

17. Michael Bentley, [review of] "Theory of History in Ortega y Gasset 'The Dawn of Historical Reason,'" *Historical English Review* (November 1998), Vol. 113, issue 454, p.1379.

18. Mary E. Giles, "Ortega y Gasset," *Great Thinkers of the Western World, Annual 1999* (New York: Harper Collins, 1999), p. 488.

19. Anton Donoso, *Julian Marias* (Boston, Mass.: Twayne Publishers, 1982), p. 56.

20. Marias, *Generations, op. cit.*, p. 96.

21. The term metaphysics apparently originated in Rome *circa* 70 BC, with the Greek peripatetic philosopher Andronicus of Rhodes' edition of Aristotle's works. Andronicus placed an essay, "First Philosophy," just after the essay on Physics. Hence, the First Philosophy came to be known as *meta (ta) physica*, or "following (the) Physics," later shortened to metaphysics. In popular usage, the word took on the connotation of matters transcending material reality. In philosophy, metaphysics applies to all reality and is distinguished from other forms of inquiry by its generality. On Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, see Elmer Sprague, *Metaphysical Thinking* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1978.,

22. Joseph L. Pappin III, "The Case for Burke's Metaphysics," *The Metaphysics of Edmund Burke* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1993), p. 53.

23. In other books, Marias explains Ortega's philosophy either in depth or in outline, and the reader desiring to go deeper into his thought may consult his works. An abbreviated explanation appears in Marias, *Generations*, *op. cit.*

24. Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

25. Marias, *Generations*, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

26. Donoso, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

28. Marias, *Generations*, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

29. Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 73. See an excerpt from German historian Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) revealing a historicist view of man, which probably influenced Ortega's formulation of the notion: "What Man is, Only his History Tells." See also Hans Meyerhoff, ed., *The Philosophy of History in Our Time: An Anthology Selected* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959), p. 43 (Dilthey); and "Man, in a Word, has No Nature; What He Has is . . . History" (Ortega). Meyerhoff saw these as an "existential thesis" (p. 37).

33. On "Historiological" perspectivism, Ortega states: "Let us not talk of human or universal life. One historiological theme, in fact, is to determine whether those two words, 'humanity' — in an ecumenical sense — and 'universality' or 'worldwideness,' are effective forms of historical reality or mere idealizations." See Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 272.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

36. Marias, *Generations*, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 78. See Philip Silver, *Ortega as Phenomenologist* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 160 on Ortega's own effort to "think together" the two expressions "life" and "reason" while vacillating between vital and historical reason, so as to capitulate neither to "Being" nor to "History."

39. Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

42. For his exposition of Ortega's theory of generations, mainly from *Man and Crisis* (trans. of *El Torno a Galileo*) (New York: Norton, 1958), Marias' *Generations* portrays accurately Ortega's "structure" and "mechanics."

43. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

44. *Ibid.*, see footnote number 6.

45. Donoso, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

46. In Ortega, "uses" include idea and "intellectual" convictions, or "beliefs," which for him are clearly the more basic forces. See Ortega's *Man and Crisis*, *op. cit.*, pp. 94, 101. Also see Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

47. Marias, *Generations*, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

48. Donoso, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

52. Graham, *op. cit.*

53. *Ibid.*, p. 230.

54. In his notes on Dilthey (1933-1934), Ortega says that this doctrine of "historical generation" and this "method of generations" were contained in his lectures of 1931 in Madrid. He developed his idea as his "authentic" experience of life. See *ibid.*

55. *Ibid.*, p. 232.

56. Marias, *op. cit.*, p.94.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

62. Donoso, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

63. *Ibid.*

64. Marias, *Generations, op. cit.*, p. 103.

65. *Ibid.*

66. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

67. Donoso, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-78.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

69. *Ibid.*

70. Marias, *Generations*, *op. cit.*, p. 185.
71. *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
73. Donoso, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
74. Marias, *Generations*, *op. cit.*, p. 107.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
76. Lillian E. Troll, "Issues in the Study of Generations," *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, Vol. 1 (1970), p. 200.
77. Nancy Whittier, *Feminist Generations: The Persistence of the Radical Women's Movement* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1995), p. 17.
78. Paul Allen Beck, "Young vs. Old in 1984: Generations and Life Stages in Presidential Nomination Politics," *Political Science: The State of The Discipline*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Summer 1984), p. 516.
79. Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, Paul Keckskementi, ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), p. 290.
80. *Ibid.*
81. *Ibid.*, p. 303.
82. *Ibid.*, pp. 276-279.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 276.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 278.
85. *Ibid.*

86. The earliest work of François Mentre is undoubtedly the most complete and informative, considering its 1920 date of publication. He was much influenced by Cournot. F. Mentre, *Les generations sociales*. (Paris: Editions Bossard, 1920).

87. *Ibid.*, p. 279.

88. Marias, *Generations*, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

89. Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

90. Marias, *Generations*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

91. David Ashley and David Michael Orenstein, "(David) Emile Durkheim," *Sociological Theory: Classical Statements* 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1990), pp. 108-109.

92. *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

95. Marias, *Generations*, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

96. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

97. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

98. Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," *Studying Aging and Social Change: Conceptual and Methodological Issues*, Melissa A. Hardy, ed. (Beverly Hills, Ca.: Sage, 1997), p. 27.

99. Marias, *Generations*, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

100. Mannheim, in Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

101. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

102. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

103. *Ibid.*
104. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
105. Marias, *Generations*, *op. cit.*, p. 114.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
108. Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, *op. cit.*, p. 284.
109. Mannheim, in Hardy, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.
110. Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, *op. cit.*, pp. 284-85.
111. Mannheim, in Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
113. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
114. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.
115. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
116. *Ibid.*
117. David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, E. F. Miller, ed. (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Classics, 1985), p. 476, (Orig. pub. 1777).
118. Mannheim, in Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
119. *Ibid.*
120. Mannheim's analysis has roots in Marxist and Nietzschean reflections. Marx's view of intellectual production was informed by the basic assumption that the ideas of the ruling class are ruling ideas of each age. In Marx's paradigm the class which acts as the ruling material force of society represents, at the same

time, the ruling intellectual force of society. Nietzsche interprets the origin of knowledge, even of language, as an expression of the power of rulers, who take possession of all objects and events by "sealing them off" with sounds and names. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, Samuel H. Beer, ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1955), p. 30; see also Friedrich Nietzsche, *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. XV (Munich: Musarion Verlag, 1920-1929), p. 284.

121. Gunter W. Remmling, *The Sociology of Karl Mannheim: with a Bibliographical Guide to the Sociology of Knowledge, Ideological Analysis and Social Planning* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1975), p. 43.

122. *Ibid.*

123. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

124. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

125. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

126. Mannheim, in Hardy, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-46.

127. Mannheim, *Essays in the Sociology of Knowledge*, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

128. Remmling, *Sociology of Karl Mannheim*, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

129. Mannheim, in Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

130. Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120. Mannheim stresses the concrete bonds formed in generation units by virtue of the intense interaction (pp. 120-123) and (inferentially) the integrative "personally acquired memories" uniting the individuals within the unit (p. 111).

131. Mannheim, in Hardy, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.

132. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

133. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

134. *Ibid.*

135. *Ibid.*

136. Melissa A. Hardy and Linda Waite, "Doing Time: Reconciling Biography with History in the Study of Social Change," *Studying Aging and Social Change*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

137. *Ibid.*, pp. 278-279.

138. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

139. *Ibid.*

140. *Ibid.*

141. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

142. *Ibid.*

143 Karl Mannheim, "Das Problem der Generationen." *Kölner Vierteljahrshefte für Soziologie*, 7. Jahrg., Hefte (1928), pp. 2-3.

144. See Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in Kecskemeti, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, *op. cit.*, pp. 277-320; Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977); and (for discussion of generational change in partisanship) Paul R. Abramson, *Generational Change in American Politics* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1975).

145. Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

146. Current political generation theory originates with Karl Mannheim's "Problem of Generations" essay, first published in 1926. Recent works include Vern L. Bengston, "Time, Aging and the Continuity of Social Structure: Themes and Issues in Generational Analysis," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (1974), pp. 1-29; Richard G. Braungart, "The Sociology of Generations and Student Politics: A Comparison of the Functionalist and Generation Unit Models," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (1974), pp. 31-54; Richard G. Braungart and Margaret M. Braungart, "Life Course and Generational Politics," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1984), pp. 1-8; and Schneider, "Political Generations" *op. cit.* These recent works emphasize

Mannheim's concept of the generation unit, a subset of an age group that shares both experiences and political allegiances.

147. Whittier, *Feminist Generations: op. cit.*, p. 16.

148. *Ibid.*

149. Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge, op. cit.*, pp. 297-98. A recent study of different age cohorts' collective memories of national or world events or changes provides support for this view. See Howard Schuman and Jacqueline Scott, "Generations and Collective Memories," *American Sociological Review* 54, (1989), pp. 359-381.

150. Whittier, *Feminist Generations, op. cit.*, p. 84.

151. Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," Eng. trans. reprinted in Philip G. Albach and Robert S. Laufer, eds. *The New Pilgrims* (New York: David McKay, 1972).

152. T. Allen Lambert, "Generations and Change: Toward a Theory of Generations as a Force in Historical Processes," *Youth and Society*, 4 (September 1972), pp. 21-46.

153. Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: Norton, 1968).

154. M. Kent Jennings and Richard G. Niemi, *Generations and Politics: A Panel Study of Young Adults and their Parents* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981).

155. Bernard Berelson, Paul F. Lazarsfeld and William McPhee, *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Election* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), p. 302.

156. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

157. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

158. Angus Campbell, Phillip Converse, Warren Miller and Donald Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1960).

159. *Ibid.*, pp. 357-358.

160. Paul R. Abramson, *Generational Change in American Politics* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1975), pp. 57-59.

161. Walter Dean Burham, *Critical Elections and the Mainstream of American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1970), Chapter Five.

162. Ronald Inglehart, "The Silent Revolution in Europe," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 63 (1971), p. 991.

163. Richard Hamilton and Maurice Pinard, "The Bases of Parti Quebecois Support in Recent Quebec Elections," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 9 (March 1976), pp. 11-12.

164. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

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Thesis Inner Logic

LEGEND

A = Auguste Comte- (Cp.2)

B = Ortega & Marias Generational Model - (Cp.2)

C = Karl Mannheim Generational Model - (Cp.3)

D = Discussed features of B+C including the concepts Vergencia + Entelechy (Cp. 2+3)

CC = Compared and contrasted the Multifaceted and Dualist Models (Cp.4)

SC = Schlesinger Cycle (Cp.5)

K = Key's Critical Realignment and Critical Election Theory (Cp.5)

RE = Richard Eastellin's Relation to Cyclical Theory (Cp. 5)

Alex = Alexander

B = Bentley