

threat to the objectivity of science - as Bacon already anticipated in his exhortation to beware of the various 'idols', including those introduced through the language employed. Yet, as the argument so far has revealed, scientism can be overcome only in the recognition of the hermeneutic dimension in science itself.

Post-Popperian philosophy of science and hermeneutic philosophy have arrived at similar insights about the process and status of science, even though they proceeded from different intellectual traditions. The startling congruence of the results of their investigations may, perhaps, be due to their common approach to metascientific problems: the preference for a description - phenomenological or historical - of what actually happens, as opposed to the 'philosophical' prescriptions characteristic of the Logic of Science approach and its concern with the logic of verification rather than that of discovery. The reconstruction of the possibility of science has uncovered the historic, social and psychological conditions for the growth of knowledge, i.e. the pragmatic dimension in addition to the mainly semantic and syntactic analyses of the previously dominant approach, and it has given rise to the new philosophy of science.

Kuhn's notion of 'paradigms' underlying the work of scientists redirected the focus from the internal development of the cumulative growth of knowledge towards the socio-historical embeddedness of science and the occurrence of gestalt-switches which underlie major redirections in the conceptualization and investigation of the object of science. New conceptual frames form different language-games which allow not only the discovery of new facts but also the re-interpretation of previously established ones. New theories do not 'speak the same language'²⁴ as previous ones and contain different standards of rationality. The normative function of paradigms precludes the possibility of judging their relative superiority from the outside since that would only constitute the unwarranted application of external standards originating in a different language-game.

This view could be expressed in hermeneutic terminology as a confirmation of the universality of the hermeneutic dimension, i.e. of language and communication as the basis of the growth of science.

2 THE RISE OF A SCIENCE OF SOCIETY AND ITS NORMATIVE PRESUPPOSITIONS

With the evident success of science as a mode of knowledge-acquisition it comes as no surprise to find its rationality extending on to spheres other than the natural. Weber's reference to the 'disenchantment' of the world attending the rationalization of cultural and social processes describes this development well. Concomitant with it the study of society also hoped to reach the 'secure path of science' through adopting the methods of the natural sciences - once social processes came to be seen as important topics of research and being qualitatively similar to natural ones.

The Enlightenment saw the emergence of a 'social physics' at a stage of economic and socio-political development which made it possible to conceive of society in mechanistic terms as propelled by ascertainable laws which could themselves be brought under rational control on the basis of sound knowledge. The realization that society itself could be re-established on a rational basis provided the impetus for a thorough critique of existing institutions which did not conform to rationalist conceptions - as they found expression in the entrepreneurial stress on wealth-creation and self-determination in opposition to the parasitism and authoritarianism of the feudal establishment. Philosophers gathered around the 'encyclopédie' articulated this new way of seeing which placed rational and active man at the centre of the historical stage. They could consider themselves as the teachers of society.

The elitism inherent in such an educational programme fore-shadows the role of sociologists as the new 'priests' of society and the 'experts' in the technocratic steering of society.¹ This tendency towards a new form of dogmatism, exemplified by sociology replacing theology as the 'queen of the sciences', became manifest in post-revolutionary France as positivist thinkers attempted to weld together an emphasis on certain and constructive knowledge and a socio-political programme that envisaged the reconstruction of society along sound and harmonious lines. It is therefore in the programme of Positivism that a characteristic unity between a normatively oriented theory and a technocratically oriented practice is achieved which is underpinned by a focus on scientific rationality.

Sociology replaced the normatively oriented critique of political philosophers in an epoch in which the upheaval associated with the industrial and political revolutions called for the attempt to