

# Marie Jahoda in England<sup>1)2)</sup>

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### Themenschwerpunkt Demenz

#### Abstract

Countless words have been devoted, in the English-speaking world at least, to the explication of Marie Jahoda's extraordinary life and work in Vienna, and of her work on unemployment and health in general and her Marienthal investigation in particular (Fryer, 2008) but, in this paper, I focus instead on Marie Jahoda's generally less well-known work in England, referring to her work in Austria and in the USA, only when absolutely necessary. I start with Marie Jahoda's extraordinary appointment at the University of Sussex in Brighton, England, and then work back in time to explain it and to explicate her work in England. I close by reflecting upon her legacy as a practitioner of consummate real-life praxis outside the ivory tower.

#### Zusammenfassung

Vieles ist schon gesagt worden, zumindest in der englischsprachigen Welt, um Marie Jahodas außergewöhnliches Leben und Werk in Wien, ihre Arbeit über Arbeitslosigkeit und Gesundheit im Allgemeinen und ihre Marienthal-Untersuchung im Besonderen zu erläutern (Fryer, 2008). In diesem Beitrag aber konzentriere ich mich stattdessen auf Marie Jahodas weniger bekannte Arbeit in England. Auf ihre Arbeit in Österreich und in den USA wird nur dann Bezug genommen, wenn es unbedingt notwendig ist. Ich beginne mit Marie Jahodas außergewöhnlicher Berufung an die University of Sussex in Brighton in England, und arbeite mich dann in der Zeit zurück, um sie und ihre Arbeit in England zu erklären. Ich schließe mit einer Reflexion über ihr Vermächtnis als Praktikerin im realen Alltag außerhalb des Elfenbeinturms.

*"I am very much convinced that, whether we admit it or not, extra-scientific factors influence virtually everybody's thinking, particularly in the social sciences."*

(Fryer, 1986, pp. 115-116) (Marie Jahoda to David Fryer).

In 1965, Marie Jahoda was appointed Foundation Professor of Social Psychology in the School of Social Studies at the University of Sussex from which she professed, practiced and taught a progressive, emancipatory, social psychology dedicated to making a real difference to real people in real communities experiencing real oppression by addressing real world problems.

Marie Jahoda acted consistently with this dedication throughout her whole working life. She recalled, in a personal communication, a salutary event which happened when she was still at school. Marie Jahoda, chairperson of the organisation of socialist school students, invited leading socialist speakers to address organisation members. One of them, Zoltan Rouai<sup>4)</sup>, led a seminar on Austro Marxism. Marie Jahoda recalled that when Rouai claimed to have demonstrated from occupational data that one of Marx's theories was incorrect, she had asked whether Rouai abandoned a theory simply because some facts did not fit it and she remembered being chastened by his evident shock at such disregard for the real world. Marie Jahoda emphasised the influence of psychoanalytic approaches to reality on her thinking about employment and unemployment, mental health and prejudice, writing: "I was helped by an almost casual remark which Freud made in a footnote in *Civilization and its Discontents*", continuing "He said that work is man's strongest tie to reality" (Jahoda, 1966, p. 623), whilst in *Current Concepts of Positive Mental Health* (Jahoda, 1958), Marie Jahoda claimed that reality orientation has been positioned as essential to an individual's mental health more often than any other criterion.

In 1972, Marie Jahoda relocated from the School of Social Studies to the Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU),