

## chapter 1

### The Splitting

In the ordinary language of everyday life, as in the extraordinary language of sociology (be it academic sociology or Marxist), "ideology" is stigmatized as a pathological object. It is seen as irrational cognition; as defective discourse; as false consciousness; as bad sociology. That low opinion was one (not the most important, but *one*) reason why some scholars prematurely celebrated "The End of Ideology." As the subsequent history of the 1960s demonstrated, the rumors of the death of ideology were much exaggerated.\* The truth, of course, is that ever since Auguste Comte's critique of "metaphysics," sociologists have been cheerfully celebrating such a death.

#### 1

Sociology's perspective on ideology, holds S. N. Eisenstadt, \*\* was shaped by "the strongly a-religious or anti-religious thrust of much of the Enlightenment, of rationalism . . . which tended to belittle the significance of non-rational or non-scientific ideas." But this, of course, is not so much a confession by sociology as an accusation against ideology, equating ideology as it does with the "non-rational." Eisenstadt's point, however, tacitly expresses one paradox of the sociological tradition: it acknowledges (and sometimes even insists on) cognitive distortions derivative of religious convictions, even for sociologists. Since Comte, sociology has felt free to express distaste for religion, as E. A. Shils has correctly observed. Nonetheless, sociology does not seriously acknowledge those different cognitive *distortions* that may result from other, "extrascientific," involvements such as, say, class membership and privilege. The everyday life of normal sociology is contradictory, for there is no good reason why one should guard sociology against religious bias but not from distorting economic interests. [3/4]

It is as if sociologists can admit to being biased only by "higher" spiritual commitments, but feel constrained to deny the biasing effects of economic interests because these are morally "base." But the low moral position of an "interest" does not make it any the less distorting than high moral passions. An excess of religious zeal or of atheistic piety can surely cripple a thinker, but this is sometimes viewed as at least manifesting his high moral character.

In the view of social science, as well as of respectable common sense, ideology's social "dysfunctions" are commonly held to be those that might just as well be realized by numerous other "adaptive" responses to cultural "strain": alcoholism, psychosomatic symptoms, and nail-chewing. It is in judgment of ideology's *cognitive* functions, however, that one discerns a certain Manichean dualism. As cognition, ideology is cast in the role of ideology the force of darkness, the nonrational.

When speaking of ideology, sociology loses its hushed voice and opaque language; its technical language suddenly joins forces with blunt and lively common parlance. It characterizes ideology as the mind-inflaming realm of the doctrinaire, the dogmatic, the impassioned, the dehumanizing, the false, the irrational and, of course, the "extremist" consciousness. Without doubt, there are ideologies that fully deserve these characterizations. But would one really want to characterize *vegetarianism* with such violent adjectives? Prohibitionism? Liberalism? The nonviolent movement for Black rights? All versions of Women's Liberation? Gumperism? The Movement for Universal Manhood Suffrage? Anti-Monarchical beliefs in England or Holland? Psychoanalysis? Even if all are "ideological," surely some of these views are better reckoned eccentric than demonic. The readiness with which social science declares ideology *non compos mentis*, seems to manifest a self-serving one-sidedness. That, at any rate, is the view I propose to explore.

#### 1.1

The conventional social-science view of ideology fails on three counts: first, it manifests one-sidedness. If, as Hegel said, the truth is the whole, then the normal social-science view of ideology is untrue. Secondly, the conventional view also fails because it is lacking in historical seriousness. The historical perspective on ideology commonly used by sociologists is largely a prudent nod of conformity to the formal requirements of historical analysis. In other words: the historicism of sociologists commonly verges on the ritualistic. Third, I will suggest that the conventional social-science view of ideology fails because it is not reflexive. It glimpses, but never really grasps, the way it *itself* is ideologized because of its own structural situation.

Discussions of ideology by social science often take place with the prosecutory haranguing of an adversary proceeding. Social-science views of [4/5] ideology are vulnerable to distortion by reason of the contestful relation between the two. The claims of social science thus deserve to be scrutinized closely, for their own "disinterestedness" is scarcely above suspicion.

#### 2

Academic sociology and Marxism each begin in a similar manner. Each starts in part by affirming that it wishes to extend the method of the exact sciences into a new area that requires it, the study of human relations. Positivistic sociology certainly does that overtly.

Marxism, too, occasionally defines itself as a science of society, searching for laws as other sciences do. There were occasions when Marx enjoyed taken for a scientist. But the self-defining acts of both Marxism and positivism are not confined to indicating the paradigm

they wish to emulate; each also defines itself specifying what it *rejects*, by stigmatizing certain cognitive enterprises as *negative* paradigms.

Marxism constitutes itself by developing a critique of "ideologies"; by setting itself over and apart from what it calls "ideology." Early Comteian positivism proceeds in a manner that is structurally similar. It begins not simply by affirming Newtonian mechanics as a paradigm, but by drawing a *line* between itself and other modes of cognition that it holds to be defective religion, metaphysics, and the work of "publicists" (who perhaps correspond most closely to the "ideologues" denounced by Marx).

Saint-Simon, Auguste Comte's protean mentor and the creative genius whose work he selectively systematized, had argued in his 1813 "Essay on the Science of Man" that psychology must "rid itself of the religious assumptions on which it had hitherto been based." (22) He stressed (elsewhere) that all the sciences had been able to advance by reason of "the weakening of belief in God . . . and that the idea of God should not be used in the physical sciences." (19, 20) On this matter, Heidegger and Saint-Simon complement one another.) Saint-Simon's followers, "Saint-Simonians" such as Père Bazard, while having a more sophisticated epistemology than Comte, agreed that they must set themselves apart from philosophers who juggle a "few historical events" with some "old metaphysical notions," as well as from publicists with their "contradictory theories."

Comteianism and positivistic sociology began by separating themselves from traditional religion and metaphysics. This is a paradoxical beginning, to say the least, for this beginning could *not* have been grounded in the very method of "observation" that positivism's program proclaimed as the basis of its own authority. The separation of positivistic sociology from metaphysics then was a *philosophical* act, not a scientific one. It was, in Gaston Bachelard's (and Louis Althusser's) terms a *coupure épistemologique*, an [5/6] epistemological break. Yet, as Jürgen Habermas has noted, positivism really had no epistemological argument against the beliefs it stigmatized, and none was given. They are taken as having a *prima facie* weakness that needed no demonstration.

Why is this so? In some part, this happened because the old metaphysics had been an *other*-grounded belief system; it was grounded hierarchically, from above, by traditional authorities, clerical and aristocratic, whose authority had deteriorated. In France, at any rate, the rejected "metaphysical" standpoints were grounded in institutions and social classes that had been defeated historically; their views, therefore, did not command the credit commonly given to powerful establishments.

To have "credit" is to be believed in *advance* of demonstration; without demonstration; or with only loose demonstration. Intellectuals and intellectual products have "credit" when they are associated with prestigious and powerful social forces, or are media-sponsored. For example, professors from great universities are taken more seriously (and take themselves more seriously) than those who are not. Theorists associated with successful revolutions—for example, Lenin and Mao—are read more widely and more carefully than those whose revolutions failed. Who now reads Sukharno, Nkrumah or, alas, Allende?

I am not saying that "might makes right." I am saying that viewpoints grounded in powerful social forces are taken more seriously than they might otherwise. In short, they are *credited*. Metaphysics and religion in France were associated, after 1789, with the past and with the defeated. They had entailed a reliance upon authorities whose authority had been undermined. Science was associated with the forces that had defeated them; with industry, with the new professions, with the future. That is why Comte never had to *justify* his rejection of metaphysics and epistemology, for they had already been *defeated* historically.

## 2.1

Marx's critique of "ideology" emerges sharply in his critique of the leading social science of his time, political economy, and which he by no means rejects *in toto*. But Marxism does not constitute itself by drawing a line only between itself and ideology; it also places on the other side of the dividing line it draws, in a manner akin to Comteian positivism (I say akin, not identical), both religion and philosophy or metaphysics, whose cognitive failures it specifies and condemns as "mystifications" and ideological "inversions." In both positivism and Marxism, philosophy has come upon hard times. In the former, it is banished from the provinces of "modern" social theory; in the latter, it has become suspect. [6/7]

One might add parenthetically that Marx's critiques of "inversion" and "mystification" focus on knowledge and knowing. His critique of ideology, however, focalizes the failure of the *knower*, the ideologue, grounding cognitive failure in the social situation of the knowing subject, in his relation to the larger society. The concept of ideology in Marx thus manifests the fuller surfacing of his materialism, in which the knower is seen not as the self-grounding actor autonomously producing truth, but as an *object* itself shaped by class forces and social interests, as the spoken as well as the speaker.

## 2.2

The split between the new social sciences and ideology was a one-sided break, emerging largely from the initiatives of would-be social science rather than from the new ideologies. At any rate, after Napoleon made "ideology" a disparaged symbol, few wished to define themselves as ideologists, preferring the garb of the new sciences. To that extent, the development of science conditioned the development of modern ideology.

The rise and development of modern ideologies was shaped by the rise of modern science, by the growing prestige of technology and new modes of production, and by the development of publics whose favorable judgment of modern science was rooted in the decline of older authority-referencing discourse. Science became the prestigious and focally visible paradigm of the new mode of discourse; it was this mode of discourse, which diffuses the seen-but-unnoticed set of background assumptions, on which science itself was tacitly grounded.

The connection between science and ideology was well, but often tacitly, understood by Marx. This is implicit in the fact that his sharpest

attacks against "ideology" are mounted against belief systems that present themselves in a specific way, as *science*—witness, for example, his critique of classical political economy and most especially of "vulgar" political economy. It is belief systems about society that present themselves as sciences that are most *problematic* to him and most forcibly criticized as ideology.

Marx, we might say, "inherits" (from Ludwig Feuerbach and David Strauss) the essential parts of his critique of religion, especially Christianity: an understanding of it as a projective belief system grounded unconsciously in man's alienated social condition. For Marx, this is one of the essential *givens* of his analytic strategy. For Marx, this inherited critique of religion is then creatively generalized into a critique of philosophy, a critique that sees philosophy as the continuation of religion "by other means." In this, however, philosophy is not seen as essentially religious in character but, rather, as rooted ultimately in certain social and class conditions, as religion itself was [7/8] held to be. From this extension of the critique of religion to a critique of philosophy, which he shares with other Left Hegelians, Marx then moved to a critique of political economy as an ideology and, particularly, to a critique of the "vulgar" economists.

## 2.3

There is one way in which Marx's critique of political economy as ideology is particularly justified. For political economy took its own intellectual autonomy for granted. As belief systems "evolved" from religion to philosophy to science, the claim to *self-grounding* autonomy was increasingly built into them. Christianity had traditionally seen itself as a revealed religion, and philosophy and theology were long interlinked; they were institutionally separated only during the eighteenth century; only modern, post-Cartesian philosophy begins to conceive itself as self-grounded. It is with Newton's mechanics that science's characteristic claim to intellectual autonomy is made in a nondefiant, unpolemical way.

Marx's critique of the "ideological," meaning specifically that the thinker falsely thinks himself *autonomous*, was, in a way, *least* applicable to classical Christianity, for that of course defined itself as created by, rather than autonomous from, God. The charge of "ideology" is *most* applicable to would-be social science which paradoxically, held (and holds) itself not only autonomous from God, but even more emphatically from society as well. Sociology paradoxically affirms, at one and the same time, the vast penetrating power of society and its own escape from that power.

The new social science's claim to intellectual autonomy, then, was astonishingly self-contradictory; it embodied a pretentiousness that fully justified the critique of ideology that Marx levelled against it so forcibly. For the charge of "ideology," in Marx's lexicon, aimed centrally to refute nineteenth century social science's claim to be a science, itself free of the influence of the very object that it had discovered and whose importance it affirmed. In this sense, to speak against "ideology" was a critique of intellectual pride. These latent implications of Marx's notion are plainly indicated in his position on romanticism. Romanticism was, of all nineteenth century outlooks, most *antiscientific* and was, indeed, most *anti-Enlightenment*, at least in its extreme versions. Nonetheless, it was *not* the most romantic views that Marx characteristically labels as "ideological" but, rather, the beliefs that romantic views had themselves most *opposed*. In a way, Marx would not have been altogether consistent, in speaking of a "*Romantic* ideology."

The entire notion of ideology then, *as Marx used it*, was most crucially *a critique of the scientific pretensions of the new social science*. That Marx [8/9] extended "ideology" to embrace metaphysics and religion alike, derived from the fact that his analytic attention was focused elsewhere, on the economic *infrastructure*. In comparison with this infrastructure, differences among different belief systems were merely residual issues. But if one attends to the structure of Marx's argument on "ideology," and the specific *uses* to which he puts this concept, it may be seen that he directs it most forcibly against beliefs about society that make scientific claims, claims he holds to be unjustified.

The Hegelian tradition from which Marx had emerged had attacked romanticism as soft-headed, sentimental, and intellectually befuddled; Hegelianism had sought to counterpose itself to romanticism as more rigorous, hard-edged, and intellectual. It was exactly because romanticism never paraded as science that it was not the main target of Marx's critique of "ideology." The modern interest in "ideology" thus emerges as a Marxist category whose underlying, latent paradigm is: *a belief system that makes pretentious and unjustified claims to scientificity*. This solves a problem. It explains why Marx does not condemn Newtonian mechanics any more than Romantic poetry, in that theoretically special way, namely as *ideology*.

There is thus implicit in the Marxist concept of ideology an understanding of a very special way in which ideology and science, were mutually implicated; specifically, for Marx, ideology was failed science, not authentic science. Implicit in his critical rejection of ideology was an image of *true* science that was to be a standard. Those failing to measure up were "ideologies" and "ideologues."

Even for Marx, then, ideology was a residual category; for it implies that ideology is, in part, that which is *not* science. It is precisely this *residual* character of ideology, its negative definition, that allows Marx to call other belief systems—such as religion and metaphysics—"ideologies," for clearly they are *not* sciences, even though they are not for Marx the truly paradigmatic case of an ideology; to wit, a belief system with *pretensions* to science.

It is clear, then, that any historical view of social science and ideology must stress their historical connections—the reality and strength of their historical connectedness.

Sociology begins by stigmatizing certain modes of cognition, by asserting or developing a critique of them, and by proclaiming a *coupure épistémologique* from them, rather than simply by affirming its alliance with the exact sciences. It constitutes itself as a preferred method and authorizes its program by positing ideology and metaphysics as negative paradigms. It defines itself by identifying its enemies as well as its allies.

In raising the problem of "ideology" one is not simply raising a question about one of many possible objects that sociology might study. Unlike phenomena such as social classes, political parties, or property institutions, [9/10] which are indeed objects, objects of knowledge

for sociology, "ideology" is not just a cognitive object of sociology but is also its claimed *boundary*. Ideology is not therefore an out-there thing, to be clarified simply by careful observation, by researches, by empirical studies. Its ultimate significance brings us to the problem of the self-understanding, to the mandate, to the mission and the character of sociology. When the problem of ideology is placed on the agenda of sociology it has not simply set itself the task of researching another object but of defining and affirming its own purposes.

This boundary between ideology and sociology, then, is not some long-forgotten outpost that the march of intellectual empire has left behind unwatched. Ideology is not some acned condition that sociology outgrows in its maturity. It remains, rather, a boundary wall that is manned, watched, and recurrently repaired. When Talcott Parsons tells us that the "essential criteria of ideology" are to be found by contrasting it with science, and that ideology manifests itself as a "discrepancy between what is believed and what can be established as scientifically correct," it is clear that, in Parsons' view (as in positivism and in Marxism), ideology is boundary-defining for sociology. Clifford Geertz is, therefore, quite right in indicating that Parsons' view of this is essentially Comteian. [\\*\\*\\*](#)

Ideology, then, is as important as it ever was for understanding sociology. Indeed, one reason for exploring ideology is that it provides an occasion to deepen and extend an understanding of sociology itself and of what it might require for the development of its own rationality.

### 3

It has perhaps become clearer why it is dubious to define "ideology" simply as an out-there thing, a thing totally apart from sociology, that could, presumably become a topic of sociology. What sociologists are studying in studying ideology inevitably embodies their interests and commitments and is an object they themselves have participated in making.

In pursuing an understanding of ideology, then, we necessarily face a twofold task: to see it as an object in a theoretical region, and to see the region within which it is constituted as an object. It is thus escapably a study of both a social object (or world) and, also, a social theory. To conduct a study of social objects or worlds without simultaneous reflection on some social theory is to generate a false consciousness that believes that all that it is doing is mirroring passively an out-there world, and which fails to understand [10/11] how it itself has participated in constructing the very object it takes to be problematic.

Reflexive study, then, proceeds simultaneously with an interconnected study of social objects and of the enregioning social theory that defines their symbolic identity. If we need to understand how social theory and theorists are always implicated in the objects they study, we also need to comprehend how these objects are something apart from our speech, how they are a not-us, but an-Other. To ignore the first, our implication in things, is mindless empiricism. To ignore the second, the not-us character of the object, is an egoistic subjectivism whose ultimate fantasy is that we are all there is, or all that matters.

### 4

So far as we know, the term "ideology" was first used by Destutt de Tracy (Antoine Louis Claude Destutt de Tracy) in 1797. De Tracy used "ideology" in a eulogistic way, to name and recommend a new science—the science of ideas. This was to be a positive science that would not imply any "first causes"; that would eschew metaphysics; that had a sense of certainty (or of the positive) since "it does not hint of anything doubtful or unknown . . ."

As such, "ideology" would provide the intellectual grounding of society. Stripped of old, erroneous modes of thinking, and confidently rooted in the sure knowledge of a science, rather than in ancient and discredited metaphysics, ideology was also to be the grounding of the other sciences, accounting for the manner in which they too did and should develop their ideas.

In both cases, the new science was to sort out and separate false from true ideas primarily in terms of empirical considerations. Thus de Tracy rejected any doctrine of innate ideas, doing so as part of a secularizing critique of religious assumptions concerning soul or mind, rejecting them as invisibles that could not be justified by observation. The *idéologues*, as de Tracy's group came to be known, essentially continued the Enlightenment tradition that had premised changed ideas as the key to a reformed society, especially if changed in conformity with the indications of their new science, and if embodied in a reformed system of public education liberated from the errors of churchly superstitions.

One connection between sociology and ideology, then, is evident immediately even from this brief sketch: the *idéologues* are the grounding of both sociology and positivism, as these emerged in interconnection in post-Revolutionary France. There is scarcely an epistemological doctrine of the new positivistic sociology (formulated by Henri Saint-Simon and his one-time secretary, Isidore Auguste Marie François Comte) that is not clearly stated or [11/12] plainly implied in de Tracy. Comte's sociology and de Tracy's ideology also share a doctrine of social reconstruction, centering on the role of a scientifically transformed system of ideas, diffused by a reformed system of public education.

#### 4.1

For Comte, then, the intellectual vice against which he pits his own new science of sociology will be "metaphysics"; "ideology" will not be the central negative symbol for him that it became for Karl Marx (who, like Comte, also wished to transcend and "abolish" philosophy). Thus positivistic sociology and Marxism each begin with a *common* concern to overcome certain cognitive defects of social theory; but each has a somewhat different diagnosis of the nature of the cognitive deficiency it wishes to surmount. Comte's sociology sees the paradigm of cognitive vice as "metaphysics." It aims to overcome this by grounding itself in an *empirical* account of the world. It thus reduced cognitive deficiency to that which was not properly grounded *empirically*. Marx's, however sees the paradigm of cognitive deficiency as "ideology"—i.e. thinking that was grounded in the *economic interests* of the bourgeoisie and was distorted because of these interests.

The matter is also somewhat more complicated for Marx, because he views ideology itself as entailing a certain kind of metaphysics, thereby converging with Comte. For Marx, however, metaphysics is rejected as, and in part because it is, a *specific* metaphysics, an *idealist* metaphysics. There is, then, a certain ambiguity in the Marxian rejection of metaphysics. What is rejected, focally and polemically, is one specific type of metaphysics, idealism. At the same time, however, Marx also rejects metaphysics in *general*, partly as a secular disguise for (and sublimation of) religion; and partly as an ideology grounded in and sustaining an exploitive class system.

Although this generalized rejection of metaphysics *defocalized* in Marx, it is nonetheless there: particularly when Marx and Engels characterize it as having come to an end in Hegel's work; as needing to be "abolished"; and when they invidiously contrast this presumably outmoded form of thinking with the new, modern, and powerful *sciences* that are emerging. Comte and Marx thus converge on a critique of metaphysics that commonly identifies it with obsolescent and outmoded forms of thought.

Comte and Marx both invidiously counterpose metaphysics with the new, modern, mode of thought: science. But the epistemological problematic for each differs: for Comte and the sociologists following him, the epistemological [12/13] problematic becomes the *empirical* grounding of cognition. For Marx and Marxists, the epistemological problematic becomes the *class* grounding of cognition, being concerned with how social thinking is distorted by the class system and by the interests of the privileged in maintaining that system.

For the sociologists, then, the solution to the epistemological problem becomes proper "method"; for the Marxists, the solution is to change the world. For sociology, then, the cognitive problematic is not *ideology*, as it is to Marxism. Correspondingly, for Marxism the empirical *per se* is not the cognitively problematic.

## 4.2

For the *idéologues*, ideology was clearly a *positive* symbol. It was only after Napoleon's attack on their group as impractical, unworldly, and unrealistic theorists, that "ideology" came to be viewed negatively, as it was by Marxism and in subsequent usage. Our own juxtaposition of "ideology" on the one side, and of Marxism on the other, may be interpreted as, first, implying that Marxism is here viewed as an ideology—which it *is*—and, secondly, as seeking to attach to Marxism the public discredit commonly connected with ideology. However, speaking of Marxism as an ideology is not intended here as a discrediting dyslogism. Indeed, to term Marxism as ideology is scarcely my invention. Marxism, or "Marxism-Leninism," has been called an ideology by Marxists as different as Louis Althusser, Georg Lukács, and Nicolai Lenin.

It is true, however, that this is paradoxical, for Marx and Engels themselves had used "ideology" negatively. In *The German Ideology*, for example, they firmly broke with de Tracy's positive evaluation, and, instead, characterized ideology negatively. Marx and Engels emphatically condemned "ideology" as system of ideas made with a false consciousness that inverted social reality and that was subservient to the interests of the bourgeoisie, helping them to dominate society. To some extent, then, Marx and Engels' judgment on ideology was continuous with Napoleon's condemnation of it. It is, therefore, ironic that certain subsequent Marxists should have reversed Marx's usage, reverting to a view of ideology as positive, and, indeed, as almost synonymous with rational social theory or science.

Marx and Engels' break with de Tracy's positive evaluation of ideology was a great and profoundly important theoretical contribution, on the one side, and, on the other, it was the source of an ambiguous theoretical legacy. In either case, however, their transvaluation of ideology exhibits *the* central symbolic commitment of Marxism, its essential character-defining act, its movement from "idealism" to "materialism." [13/14]

## 4.3

Insofar as Marx's view of ideology entailed a critique resonating the Napoleonic contempt for theory's impracticality, it is vulnerable to philistine views deprecating the role of consciousness in practice and of reason in life. On the level of practice, this creates possible moorings within Marxism for an irrational politics. On the intellectual level, it creates an opening toward positivism. Suspecting philosophy as archaic, it provides no ground onto which one can step back to appraise the new science it proclaims. It therefore provides no basis in whose terms one can critically examine the assumptions of science itself; science—and social science—now become isolated from a larger, more encompassing view of reason.

One should bear in mind that this is no condemnation of "Marxism" *tout court*, if for no other reason than that Marxism itself (like all other social objects) contains internal contradictions, ambivalences, and ambiguities. We are speaking here only of *one* tendency in Marxism and have, for that reason, spoken of its vulnerabilities, not its "vices;" of the space it opens rather than of its thrust and drive. We have tried to intimate complexities requiring a careful exploration that will have to await later discussion.

If Marx's break with de Tracy's use of ideology held such dangers, it was also a major step forward for social theory. For by this break, Marx resisted the powerful momentum of the Enlightenment consensus which seemed to advance a naively optimistic view of reason, ideas, and consciousness, which premised that reasonable argument and discussion alone sufficed to change the world, or were the decisive agents for doing so. Clearly there was a tacit theory of social change built into this view of reason. In breaking with the *idéologues*, Marx broke with a view that had obscured the *limits* on reason.

In affirming that ideologies and social consciousness were not autonomous but, instead, were grounded in "social being," Marx affirms that there are *limits* on reason and rational discourse; he insists that these limits are not a matter of an eternal human nature, but are grounded in the historical nature of the society, its class conflicts, and in the speakers' relationship to these. This is a momentous and historically consequential advance in social theory (even though it builds on the prior work of Henri Saint-Simon, and of Saint-Simonians such as *les pères* Enfantin and Bazard).

From this point, there were several different ways forward for Marxist theory. In one of these, Marx could have taken (and largely did) the optimistic stance that, since social consciousness is determined by social being, the defects of [14/15] the old (bourgeois) consciousness and social theory would be removed as the bourgeois conditions determining them were themselves overthrown. From this standpoint, there was no need for a special analysis of ideologies and consciousness; attention had, instead, to be focused on the social conditions producing them and on revolutionizing these conditions. Never for a moment does Marx simply regard himself as the merely curious, Olympian ethnographer of capitalism. In this respect Marxism adopts a critical position toward society. Here, the critical focus is on a specific and limited aspect of life—on the infrastructure, the economic institutions, and class system.

That, at any rate, was *one* way forward for Marxism after it had made its character-defining commitment to break with Enlightenment optimism, to affirm the limits of consciousness, and to make a *critique* of ideology rather than to propose a science of ideology.

Marxism's critique of ideology as such, however, focused primarily on sounding the alarm about the limits of ideology, dwelling on the negation of ideology's claims to autonomy and summoning the contrary, the imprisonment of consciousness in social structure: "social being determines social consciousness." Now *that* form of ideology critique had a curious, tacit, but consequential strain of positivism buried in it. Underneath the critique of ideology, underneath the exposure of its false claims, underneath the impulse to reject and transform it, the operating assumption was that one could take as given the transformation and the overcoming of ideology's limits.

The critical focus was on the distortions of a bourgeois consciousness derived from a society doomed by its own inescapable inner contradictions. As these unfold, capitalism will be replaced by socialism—either that or barbarism, said Marx—and, with this, there will be a new socialist consciousness.

Marxism's focus, then, was on the defective consciousness of *bourgeois* society, ideology; it problematized the historical *limits* of bourgeois consciousness. The factors limiting it are essentially taken to be known. Hence the question of *what* kind of social structure would strengthen and extend the role of consciousness and reason in life is never fully confronted with analytic clarity. The Marxist focus comes to be placed on transforming the capitalist infrastructure that determines consciousness.

Whether the newly emerging socialist society coincides with the specifiable requisites of a rational consciousness or discourse, whether the new social structure also imposes certain (even if different) *limits* on consciousness, and whether and how far these might be modified to protect and strengthen reason, is not made problematic.

The role of consciousness in the new society will, presumably, be what the new social structure allows; and *this*, seen only as an overcoming of the old bourgeois limits, rather than as the imposition of new limits, is fundamentally accepted and accommodated to, rather than itself being appraised critically. [15/16] There is a positivistic acceptance of the future consciousness. Assuming that what must be must also be *better*, this Enlightenment vein of optimism could allow certain Marxists to feel that "history was on our side" and they could thus submit to its inevitability without qualms. Indeed, this inevitability was the guarantee of fulfillment.

The "scientific Marxism" that developed, then, took subterranean strength from the optimistic structure of sentiments that was its legacy from the Enlightenment. In the modern period, however, that legacy has been expended. Optimism wanes as the promise of technological expansion is seen to have approaching ecological limits and when scientific achievements threaten a military peril of planetary proportions. Now, once-rosy optimism has greyed and gives way to a growing sense of being lost in history. There is no longer a sense of riding an upward drift and the dimming prospect reopens once-closed Malthusian issues.

This is true of the bourgeoisie and middle classes, many of whom begin to sense "an end to civilization as we know it." Pessimism spreads also, however, among certain Marxists, particularly those of "humanistic" bent. Looking at the first socialist societies, they begin to suggest that they are only the "dinosaurs" of socialism and that they are not really "Socialist." They see themselves as caught in a double historical failure: in the emergence of Stalinism and in the failure of the Soviet effort overcome it—the abortive "thaw." They begin to reconstruct the socialist timetable, putting off to a more distant future the hope for a true socialist fulfillment. A new whisper of millennialism is heard.

Marxist disorientation and pessimism began to be visible with the paradoxical success of the October revolution in the backward economy of Czarist Russia, and with the revolution's failure in the advanced industrial societies in Central Europe. It is in some part in response to the failure of Scientific Marxism's promise that it comes to be challenged increasingly within the Marxist community by another Marxism, a "Critical Marxism," that places a greater emphasis on the role of consciousness, will and, struggle and which is, which in different ways, exemplified by Fidel Castro's Cuba and by Mao's revolution in permanence.

## 5

Modern social theory—sociological or Marxist—begins, we might say, with epistemological anxiety. Marxism and normal, academic sociology come into conflict with and become structurally differentiated from one another, in some part, because of the different ways they seek to resolve their epistemological anxieties.

In speaking of an "anxiety," I intend no mere literary conceit, but to call [16/17] attention to the way epistemological concerns characterize the modern era. They are not simply the technical interests of a few academicians, but are grounded in a massive social transformation, in that great historical watershed that marks the decline of the "old regimes," of their once established system of authority, and consequently of the traditional culture of discourse by which they had been characterized and sustained.

This was a transitional period in which the old clerical and aristocratic authorities had lost their public credit and in which the new

bourgeoisie was still far from established. In a transitional era, the problem arises as to how, or on what, public discourse will ground itself, if the old authorities—on whom the old discourse had formerly relied to ground its assertions—were being discredited, and if new ones were not yet accepted. In effect, public discourse could no longer ground or justify itself on *authority* per se, as it once had done.

The epistemological anxiety of the era tokened the decline of an old culture of discourse and hastened the rise of new forms of discourse, the new ideologies and the new social "sciences." The transitional era then was an era of nothing less than profound linguistic change.

In this context, it is clear that both ideology and social science alike are post-traditional, modern symbol systems. Each seeks to solve the problem that the crisis in the authority system had generated for the old culture of discourse. Now discourse could less readily justify assertions by authority-supported references to tradition, or to the authoritative interpreters of tradition.

In contrast to the old mode of discourse, both the new ideologies and social sciences were part of the modern, rational culture. The new ideologies and social sciences shared modes of discourse in which the correctness of world-referencing assertions had become *problematic*, and in which these could not be justified by invoking the public authority of the speaker. This further undermined the old-regime authorities and it also fostered a situation in which even the new *bourgeois* authorities were now open to question.

*Vis-à-vis* the old traditionalism and the emerging bourgeoisie, the new positivistic sociology at first had a liberative and rational function. It brought into question the self-understanding of all elites, so far as these could not be given an "empirical" grounding. Definitions of social reality advanced by any of the elites, old or new, could now be subject to systematic questioning, to examination, to a demand for justification. *En principe*, pronouncements were no longer credited by virtue of being affirmed by persons of authority. The new sociology's empiricism might then question the most ancient traditionalism or the newest ideology's claims. A man's social position or political allegiance no longer sufficed to credit his discourse. And now all formerly authoritative definitions of social reality—the conventional, the sacred, or the privileged—came into tension with the new modes of discourse, with its new mode of justification. [17/18]

## 5.1

The ideologies then proliferating were, historically speaking, relatively rational modes of discourse. As modes of discourse, ideologies were akin to the new social "sciences" rather than simply being their contrasting foils. And as kin, the new ideologies and the new social sciences were, from the beginning, therefore, also competitors. From the standpoint of new positivistic sociology, the new ideologies were condemned as defective in their *empirical* grounding. Sociology proposed to resolve the babel of their competing tongues by examining their empirical credentials. In this, however, the new sociology gave its competitors short shrift, underestimating the ways in which ideologies themselves embodied new rational modes of discourse and overestimating its own emancipation both from metaphysics and from the society in which it existed.

The inescapable paradox of the new social science was this: sociology had set itself up as the study of society, stressing the profound power and influence of the objects it studied—society, groups, social structures—and then it proceeded to claim that its own researches were free of biases derived from these same powerful influences. One need not accept the Marxist counterclaim to see the logical contradiction in which positivistic sociology had placed itself. The more one believed the claims of sociology, the more one had to concede that it, too, must necessarily embody social limits on its cognition, which gave it no clear cognitive superiority to ideologies.

At the same time, however, simply to transform "social being," as the Marxists sought, simply to overthrow the old bourgeois limits on knowledge and consciousness, could surely not be taken to imply that any new belief about society that subsequently emerged was true. There still had to be some express set of criteria that one had to follow, including "empirical" standards, by which the validity of belief might be tested. Correspondingly, insofar as one held that theory and consciousness were grounded in and limited by social being, then the problem arose as to *which* social arrangements led to the acceptance of these criteria and encouraged their consistent application.

## 5.2

It is this last question that constitutes the farthest point toward which our study probes, establishing the vector of its ultimate interests. Clearly, however, from all that has been said before, we do not mean to allow our exploration to be confined to the usual polemic between ideology and sociology. We do not suppose that sociology as we know it can surmount the [18/19] limits of ideology as we know it, or that ideology is the sickness for which sociology is the remedy.

We had best remember that sociology and ideology are competitors—which means adversaries, and the arguments they invoke against one another will be limited by that. It is a central intention of our study of ideology to inhibit the conventional stereotypes that each has of the other; to inhibit sociology's view of ideology as primarily "dogmatic"; to inhibit ideology's critique of sociology as merely "academic," or as just a "bourgeois ideology"

We shall have to understand, however reluctantly, that sociology is substantially more ideological and far less scientific than it claims, and that ideology is often more rational and even scientific, than sociology conventionally grants. It will also be acknowledged that there are rational grounds for a *negative* critique of ideology.

If sociology is not all that it claims, neither is ideology. In short, there will be occasions to probe ideology's irrational side, seeking to clarify what it is and on what it rests. From this perspective, however, such irrationalities as ideology will be seen to have will no longer be a glib cliché grounded in a competitor's animus. If we see that ideology and social science both exhibit the new modes of rational discourse of the post-traditional era, then there is indeed a common basis for appraising the claims to which both must submit. We are

thus not necessarily faced with the relativism of incommensurable paradigms.

The study here is part of an effort to lay a basis for developing a third form of discourse that eludes the pretentiousness, false consciousness, and limits of both social science and ideology, as we have lived them historically. It is a probe toward a more transcending form of discourse that we might call reflexive rational social inquiry, toward a critical theory that wonders about itself and about the world.

## ***Bibliographical Note***

Bibliographies essentially have to do with "proof," and I had therefore better attempt to speak briefly about my epistemological "position" before presenting bibliographical notes.

Like many Americans, I have been much influenced by Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, which is congenial to sociologists in its stress on the role (and mechanisms) of consensual validation as the grounding of knowledge in science. Through Louis Althusser's work, I was also led to Gaston Bachelard's complementary interest in scientific and intellectual discontinuities—"revolutions" in [19/20] science. I have also been influenced, or at least much attentive to, the debate that Kuhn's work launched among philosophers of science: P. K. Feyerabend, I. Lakatos, and K. Popper. Apart from them, my epistemological concerns have been sharpened most by Jürgen Habermas, Michel Foucault, Gerard Radnitzky, and Alan Blum.

In the end, I remain most persuaded of the *fruitfulness* of Kuhn's insistence that the validity of some truth-claim is grounded in the consensus of some scholarly community. What science means by "truth" is the consensus of those it defines as competent and full members of its community. My own preference, however, is to think of this group consensus as a *mediation* and a continuing dialogue, rather than in the nature of a jury verdict.

At any rate, the consensus of the knowledgeable must be a *necessary* condition for believing some truth-claim to be valid. Since it is possible, however, that this consensus may be achieved in an "unreasonable" way, e.g. by political coercion, such consensus is not *sufficient*. More than anyone else, Habermas has seen the problem here clearly. Obviously then, the general *standards* employed in coming to consensus must be judged separately before a specific consensus it reaches can be accepted as reasonable. But how are the *standards* established if not, also, by some consensus of the same group?

There seems an infinite regress here, yet not entirely. For in the last analysis, the group must win acceptance of its procedures and conclusions by some *larger* group. The scientists' actions must be deemed reasonable by the larger community of nonspecialist scholars, because it conforms to some grammar of rationality or culture of critical discourse which it accepts and which cuts across the diverse paradigms within each science. There is, then, a place to "step back" onto and away from the each individual scholarly speciality, and in terms of which *certain* of its procedures may be judged.

There are language variants *shared* by scholars enabling a reasonable judgment to be made by outsiders of parts of technical work. There is a *culture of discourse* shared by scholars, scientists, and educated persons of no scholarly occupation, enabling them to make a reasonable judgment about *aspects* of specialized work. To that extent, then, scholars operating in some technical speciality are not a law unto themselves, even though, in the end, we have not escaped attending to the judgment of some group, albeit now a larger group.

What I am saying, saying, then, is that all the "artificial" or technical languages of science and scholarship are language variants—sociolects—of some shared language, some shared "elaborated" linguistic code, some shared grammar of rationality, some shared culture of critical discourse, so that, in the end, outsiders can speak about and judge, *in part*, the activity and intellectual work of even highly specialized physicists. Certain historians and philosophers of science do that quite competently without being physicists. (At this linguistic level, we come close to Feyerabend's position in his "Against Method," in vol. 4 of *Minnesota Studies in Philosophy of Science*, edited by Radner and Winokur, 1970.)

Discourse conducted across specialities and across technical languages is made possible by a commonly held culture of discourse which made it *reasonable*, for example, for *nonspecialists* to suspect Lysenko's genetic work. Science is distinguishable from, say, theology, which also produces consensus in churchly quarters, insofar as [20/21] science's world-referencing claims are accepted as having conformed with distinct standards deemed reasonable (to science's distinct objectives) by the larger community of nonspecialists sharing a common culture of discourse. Thus the mere consensus of certain *limited* groups of specialists need not be definable as validating certain kinds truth-claims.

But in the end, there is no escaping the judgment of *some* (albeit larger) group and there is no "truth" seen, spoken, and validated except in *some* language variant. Given this concern with the consensual groundings of truth-claims, it must also be acknowledged that, like any consensus of persons, those processes held to produce "truths" also have an inescapable political dimension. There is an unavoidable "politics of science," not only in the trivial sense of who gets to become a government's science advisor, but, in the more profound sense of how diverging views in the scientific community are brought to a consensus, when or if they are. This means that structures of domination will be found at the boundaries and *limits* even of a culture of rational discourse. The more this is denied or repressed, the more difficult it is to diminish their influence on, and prevent their subversion of, the grammar of rationality. The "friends of rationality," therefore, do not deny but must insist upon (and remain alert to) the political requisites of consensus, and especially domination, in the life of the mind. (At this point, the divergence from Feyerabend appears.)

Such validity as truth-claims possess, then, are to be understood as proposals and counterproposals in a dialogue in a community of the interested who share a culture of critical discourse. They are moments in an ongoing process of talk; response to what has been said before, as well as remarks about a world outside the speakers; addresses to others expected to be interested, understanding, and



ultimately responsive, and from whose collective work and talk a certain selection and rejection, agreement and disagreement, will in time emerge.

I do not then think of myself as having here done more than establish a reasonable case, that those interested in "ideology" should attend to and critically sift my discourse, accepting and using part of it, and changing or discarding other proposals. My concern is not to demonstrate that I have produced "truths" about ideology but to make a responsible contribution to the conversation of interested others, as well as making responsible reactions to their prior work.

The footnotes and bibliographical notes that follow are shaped by this sense of shared intellectual enterprise and are designed to indicate something about the dialogue, its present "state of play," its old or new concerns and foci, and where it has been and is going. The problem of producing a bibliography for a "topic" such as "ideology," is oppressive considering that, aside from works specifically making mention of "ideology," there are all manner of closely connected, overlapping areas of discussion of considerable relevance: the sociology of knowledge, the history of ideas, epistemology, the philosophy of science, the phenomenology of knowledge, the anthropology of belief-systems the new semiotics, and the older sociolinguistics, not to speak of communications studies and theory, and the philosophy of symbolism and communication. A systematic bibliography would require a book of its own, and I do not intend to provide it. I will instead use my footnotes and bibliographical remarks to indicate those contributions that I was, sometimes to my own surprise, influenced by, interested in, and responsive to, even though I may not at all agree with them. [21/22]

A useful small bibliography will be found at the end of Edward Shils' article on ideology in the appropriate volume of the *Encyclopedia of Social Science* published by the Free Press. Useful, although overlapping bibliographies, will also be found in H. M. Drucker's, *The Political Uses of Ideology*, Macmillan, London, 1974. This slim book's modesty of style hides its usefulness for certain historical problems in the development of ideology. David E. Apter's, *Ideology and Discontent*, Free Press, New York, 1964, also has a supplementary bibliography of value because of its sensitivity to some of the periodical literature; it also does some international scanning. Nigel Harris, *Beliefs in Society*, Pelican, 1971, also has an interesting bibliography which helpfully explores the literature in the recent Marxist tradition. Needless to say there are other things of considerable value in all these works in addition to their bibliographies.

Books that have actually influenced my thinking about ideology and which might be mentioned at this juncture are: the marvellously incisive book by Albrecht Wellmer, *Critical Theory of Society*, Herder and Herder, New York, 1971; the dark Heideggerian brilliance of Alan Blum's *Theorizing*, Heinemann, London 1974; one would also want to read France's Talcott Parsons, Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, New Left Books, London, 1971; the eloquent and erudite Rodney Needham's, *Belief, Language and Experience*, Basil Blackwell, London, 1972; *Aspects of Sociology*, Heinemann, 1973, which is a collective enterprise "by the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research"; the excellent selections in Chaim Waxman's (ed.) *End of Ideology Debate*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1968; and the lively *Knowledge and Belief in Politics*, edited by R. Benewick, R. N. Berki, and Bhikhu Parekh for Geo. Allen & Unwin, London, 1973. The "father of us all," fallen upon especially hard times since Theodor Adorno's biting but one-sided critique is, of course, Karl Mannheim's, *Ideology and Utopia*, Harcourt, Brace, and Co., New York, 1946, which reared the generation of post-World War II sociologists in the United States and which may be read with great profit with the critical commentaries of Robert K. Merton's *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1957. And the "grandfathers" of the problem of ideology, as conceived in a contemporary vein, are of course Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, International Press, New York, n.d. (with a foreword by R. Pascal). To reiterate, these are mentioned without any pretense of comprehensiveness or completeness. Recently published items were often of more influence on my thinking than their newness might seem to allow, because, in some cases, they were published previously in articles; sometimes I had the great fortune of being quartered back-to-back with the authors as they were writing their work; or to work for them as a junior colleague long before their work appeared or became known. My relation to the first generation of the Frankfurt School, for and with whom I worked while they were in exile in the United States, has been a lasting, if hybridized, influence.

\* One problem was that the "party" had been called two years earlier. By the time that it was held it was becoming clear, even to the celebrants, that the celebration might be ill-advised. But what could one do: the hall had been hired, the guests invited, the budget appropriated.

\*\* S. N. Eisenstadt, "Ideology and Social Change," in T. Parsons (ed.), *American Sociology*, Basic Books, New York, 1968.

\*\*\* See Talcott Parsons, "An Approach to the Sociology of Knowledge," *Transactions of the Fourth World Congress of Sociology*, Milan, 1959. See also, Clifford Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," in David E. Apter (ed.), *Ideology and Discontent*, Free Press, New York, 1964, p. 50.

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**SOURCE:** Gouldner, Alvin W. [The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology: The Origins, Grammar, and Future of Ideology](#). New York: Seabury Press, 1976. (The Dark Side of the Dialectic; v. 1) Chapter 1, The Splitting, pp. 3-22.

*Note:* Footnotes at bottom of pages in original, here converted to endnotes.

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Knowledge and Ideology - by Michael Morris November 2016.Â As sociology and the functional critique of ideology reveal the role that local interests and aims play in the formation of belief, we naturally seek some socially and historically abstracted form of cognition, one freed from all interests and local influences. However, as our conception of epistemology becomes increasingly rarified, its failure becomes more certain, and we face the evermore glaring divergence between our descriptive empirical accounts of actual belief formation and our ideal norms of justification. As our descriptive and normative accounts of thought diverge, we might attempt Ideology and the Communications Revolution. 1. The Splitting Bibliographical Note 2. Ideological Discourse as Rationality and False Consciousness Bibliographical Note 3. Surmounting the Tragic Vision: Generic Ideology as Idealism 4. The Communications Revolution: News, Public, and Ideology 5. From the Chicago School to the Frankfurt School 6. Toward a Media-Critical Politics Bibliographical Note 7. Ideology, the Cultural Apparatus, and the New Consciousness Industry 8. Ideology and the.Â This view is based on a dialectic that only knows thesis and antithesis, but forgets that the antithesis itself is the child of the very thing it opposes and therefore has certain of its parents' limits built into it. The very victory of an antithesis. xvi.

The dialectic of ideology and technology. A review. Authors. Authors and affiliations. Randall Collins. Article. 80 Downloads. Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976). This is a preview of subscription content, log in to check access. Preview. Unable to display preview. Dialectic or dialectics, also known as the dialectical method, is at base a discourse between two or more people holding different points of view about a subject but wishing to establish the truth through reasoned arguments. Dialectic resembles debate, but the concept excludes subjective elements such as emotional appeal and the modern pejorative sense of rhetoric. Dialectic may be contrasted with the didactic method, wherein one side of the conversation teaches the other. Dialectic is alternatively