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Occasional Paper No. 21

THINKING ABOUT IDEOLOGY

In Search of an Analytical Framework

PARTHA CHATTERJEE

November, 1978

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CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES, CALCUTTA

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Centre For Studies In Social Sciences, Calcutta.
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Calcutta-700 029

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THINKING ABOUT IDEOLOGY :
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"Intervals of dreaming help us to
stand up under days of work"

- Pablo Neruda, Memoirs

PRELIMINARY DEFINITIONS

We begin by considering the entire range of things we think we know. That is to say, we do not at this stage ask questions about whether we really know all that we think we know. Within this whole range, we distinguish between two kinds of "knowledge" : one kind is scientific knowledge, the other is not.

Scientific Knowledge includes all knowledge claims formulated in terms of concepts located within a larger theoretical framework seeking to objectify natural or social processes, whose descriptive implications are testable in principle, and which are accepted in accordance with commonly recognised procedures of confirmation as reasonably satisfactory in their explanatory logic and reasonably reliable in their predictive ability. Beyond this, more specific

* I have benefited immensely from discussions with Sanjit Bose, Arup Mallik, A.P. Rao and my colleagues at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.

ontological or epistemological questions about the nature of scientific knowledge and how it is obtained need not arise at this stage; we will return to these questions later. However, I hasten to add two clarifications. Firstly, the use of concepts located within a larger theoretical framework implies a general theoretical scheme which connects man's relations with nature and in society into an integral explanatory unity. This becomes possible in a scientific sense only if natural phenomena and human relations are sought to be comprehended in the context of society as an ongoing historical process.¹ Secondly, commonly recognised procedures of reasonable confirmation are themselves products of a historical process - in the history of science - and intimately related to changing social structures. On the other hand, it also needs to be noted that such knowledge, because it is based upon a set of theoretical explanations where logical connections and objective conditions are explicitly understood and continuously tested, corroborated and refined, offers us the most reliable and sound basis for action.

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1. It is beyond the scope of this paper to show that this is not possible within the confines of either the positivist method or the distinctly 'presuppositionless' phenomenological approach, i.e. minus the Marxian appendages as in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology or some other process-explanation of 'the historical sedimentation of consciousness' (Habermas's view of the increasing rationalisation and bureaucratisation of social institutions and consciousness, for example). I have discussed some of these issues in Partha Chatterjee, "On the Scientific Study of Politics : A Review of the Positivist Method" in S. Kaviraj, P. Chatterjee, S.K. Chaube and S. Datta Gupta, The State of Political Theory : Some Marxist Essays (Calcutta : Research India, 1978), pp.36-65.

But, it must be recognised that if we were to rely solely on well-confirmed scientific knowledge, we would not get very far, even in everyday life, for at least one simple reason, viz., the concrete scientific knowledge which we now possess covers only a very inadequate portion of the entire range and complexity of problems we have to face in our relations both with nature and with other men. Yet, the need to act forces us to make certain practical judgements and decisions, based on suppositions which cannot be strictly characterised as scientific knowledge. Such beliefs are non-scientific (although, until scientifically proved to be false, they are not necessarily unscientific).²

Men hold non-scientific beliefs for two reasons: (1) where adequate scientific knowledge does not exist, or (2) where scientific knowledge exists but is not known or not believed in by some people.

In both cases, non-scientific beliefs consist of some mix of certain general praxiological principles derived from or informed by what is known scientifically (although the strict boundaries of science are thereby transgressed), certain empirical trial-and-error principles carried through in traditional or customary thinking and ways of living and doing, and certain unifying conceptions ascribing ontological significance to the world of nature and of men.

2. If one accepts Polanyi's distinction between "contradictory" and "agnostic" doubt, one would characterise non-scientific beliefs as those subject to one or the other kind of doubt in relation to currently accepted scientific knowledge. Michael Polanyi, Personal Knowledge (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. 269-98. There is, of course, the ever-present possibility of currently accepted scientific knowledge becoming subject to doubt at some later stage. We will return to this problem in the last section of this paper.

BELIEFS IN SOCIETY

The above definitions are, in a sense, formal, and do not distinguish between individual and social beliefs. However, as Mannheim has shown,³ individual beliefs cannot be meaningfully understood except in relation to beliefs shared collectively.⁴ It is possible in individual cases to investigate the source of particular beliefs or modes of behaviour in terms of its genesis in the individual's life-experience, which is the approach of the psychoanalyst; however, as a method of analysing beliefs in society and "modes of behaviour of social significance", the psychoanalytic method is largely inadequate.⁵

3. Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, tr. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (New York : Harcourt, Brace and World, 1936), pp.3-4.
4. "Strictly speaking it is incorrect to say that the single individual thinks. Rather it is more correct to insist that he participates in thinking further what other men have thought before him. He finds himself in an inherited situation with patterns of thought which are appropriate to this situation and attempts to elaborate further the inherited modes of response or to substitute others for them in order to deal more adequately with the new challenges which have arisen out of the shifts and changes in his situation. Every individual is therefore in a two-fold sense predetermined by the fact of growing up in a society : on the one hand he finds a ready-made situation and on the other he finds in that situation preformed patterns of thought and of conduct". Ibid., p.3. I quote Mannheim, but up to this point the position would be largely accepted by sociologists following some variant of the phenomenological approach (Merleau-Ponty, Schutz, Habermas, Garfinkel or Berger & Luckmann, for example) as well as by Marxists. On the other hand, this perspective is in sharp contrast to the non-cognitive liberal moral philosophy of, say, R.M. Hare, since adopted by a whole tribe of welfare economists and collective choice theorists, where fundamental beliefs are treated as a matter of individual taste or "preference" and left at that. Polanyi's "personal knowledge" and "commitment" are conceptions of much the same sort.
5. Ideology and Utopia, pp.26-88. I am aware of attempts in the field of social psychology to investigate social beliefs and behaviour by extending and adapting the methods of psychoanalysis to make them suitable for application to social groups, small groups in particular. On the whole, the results have seemed to me rather disappointing from a theoretical point of view, although quite often they are extremely revealing in a purely empirical sense. Among some important exceptions one must, however, mention Wilhelm Reich's remarkable The Mass Psychology of Fascism, tr. V.R. Carfagno (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976).

We define a society by certain social activities (as distinguished from purely personal activities) ordered by certain social rules commonly accepted at least among those engaging in that activity.⁶ These activities and rules generate certain social relations amongst men in society (among various individuals, or, at a higher level of relations, among the various groups themselves constituted by more primary relations). Definite patterns among such relations make it possible to identify social structures. The reproduction of such ordered activities over time defines an instituted social process.

The most basic human activity is living itself. More extended social activities enter the sphere of creation of the conditions of life. The crucial difference lies in the availability, and the quantum, of a social surplus. Where social activity consists predominantly in living itself, i.e. subsistence, and the social process consists almost exclusively in the reproduction of life, the society is a "natural" one. (I use the quotes in order to distinguish this from any unhistorical and metaphysical connotations of the notion of natural society as, for example, in Rousseau.) As social activity becomes more complex and constitutes processes of reproduction of the conditions of life, society moves further and further away from its "natural" state.

6. Although adequate for our purposes here, the concept of social rules is admittedly much too general for concrete analysis of relations and structures. It is precisely the concrete and historical specification of these rules that is the task of economic, political, anthropological and other social scientific theories.

Analytically, it is convenient to distinguish between man-object relationships and man-man relationships.

It is now possible to delineate in a preliminary schematic form the succession of types of social beliefs as society develops from the archaic "natural" state.

Where activities are at a stage of direct "natural" production and consumption for the purposes essentially of subsistence, man-object relationships are also predominantly "natural". Practical knowledge guiding man's attempt to gain control over nature is at the level of extremely elementary techne.⁷ However, since natural processes are still not subject to rational comprehension, they remain essentially mysterious and control over them precariously uncertain. Consequently, there are beliefs in the magical properties of objects or rites. The precariousness of human existence in an enormously larger, incomprehensible and hostile natural environment also induces the belief in the mystical powers of certain specially endowed individuals - the shaman - persons who can, in sensory terms, transcend the temporal

7. I adopt here the distinction made by Habermas between techne, which consists of "rules of experience" of, say, artisans, "proven in the tradition of their trade", and technology which "extends and rationalizes our power of technical control over the objects or ... objectified processes of nature and society" on the basis of the theoretical knowledge provided by the positive sciences. See Jurgen Habermas, Theory and Practice (London : Heinemann, 1974), translation extracted in Paul Connerton, ed., Critical Sociology (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1976), pp.330-47.

and historical human condition.⁸ Man-man relationships are also at elementary and primordial levels of organisation, with the family as the basic institution ordered by rules of kinship and marriage. The boundaries of society and its simple internal structure are defined as a community,⁹ a close-knit unity where "the whole is considered to be more real than the part".¹⁰ These relationships of man with nature and with other men, characterised by the mysteriousness of natural processes and the organic unity of community (exemplified,

8. "... mystical ecstasy is a return to Paradise; that is, it is expressed as an annulment of Time and History (of the Fall), and a recovery of the situation of primordial man ... the mythical remembrance of a non-historical happiness has haunted humanity from the moment when man first became aware of his situation in the Cosmos". Mircea Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, tr. Philip Mairet (London : Collins-Fontana, 1968), pp.69. It is also important to mention here that such beliefs are of necessity social beliefs, unlike dreams, for instance. "There is no myth which is not the unveiling of a 'mystery', the revelation of a primordial event which inaugurated either a constituent structure of reality or a kind of human behaviour. Thence it follows that because of its own mode of being, the myth cannot be particular, private or personal". Ibid., p.17-8.

9. I use the classic gemeinschaft-gesellschaft distinction of Tönnies. See Ferdinand Tönnies, Community and Association, tr. Charles P. Loomis (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955).

10. "Real is in the first place the family tree; it is considered more real than its branches, twigs and leaves; real is the stream of life, the ongoing society, rather than the individual persons in which it finds incidental and ephemeral expression and incarnation". Werner Stark, The Sociology of Religion : A Study of Christendom, Vol.5 (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p.1.

for instance, in the blood-feud), tend to produce "an inclusive mentality", "a pervasive tendency to see and find coherence everywhere, in nature no less than in human life".¹¹ Such inclusive beliefs about natural and human life and behaviour, giving meaning and coherence to human existence as a whole, are provided by religion.¹²

As man-object relationships move away from the stage of "natural" production and consumption, techné becomes more complicated, involving manufacture with more complex instruments of labour¹³ and

11. Such as in the great creation myths. "The philosophical implication is plain : our senses show us a far-flung diversity, but in the depths of being the manifold is truly one. Multiplicity is but phenomenal, appearance; unity alone is noumenal, real". Stark, *ibid.*, pp.23-4. The elementary state of techné is clearly not conducive to analytical reasoning.
12. "... the mind formed in the matrix of community is referred back to the origin of things : ... it finds itself ultimately up against mystery, against the root-problems of all religion - where do we all come from? how have we been created? and why have we been created? what is the meaning of our existence, and what is the meaning of the suffering which our existence entails? ... the societies which we call communities will therefore develop a metaphysical and mystical bent. Totemism was a fruit of community, and so was Christianity". Stark, *ibid.*, p.1. "Every religion, even the most elementary, is an ontology : it reveals the being of the sacred things and the divine Figures, it shows forth that which really is, and in doing so establishes a World which is no longer evanescent and incomprehensible...." Eliade, *op.cit.*, p.19.
13. "Instruments of labour not only supply a standard of the degree of development to which human labour has attained but they are also indicators of the social conditions under which that labour is carried on". Karl Marx, Capital, Vol.1, tr. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (Moscow : Progress Publishers, 1971), pp.175-6. Labour now truly becomes a process "in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature in order to appropriate Nature's productions in a form adapted to his own wants". *ibid.*, p.173.

a social division of labour (involving, say, the detail labourer and his implements); such knowledge and organisation, however, still remains at the level of techné.¹⁴ The natural universe continues to remain essentially mysterious; the associated beliefs in myth and magic, consequently, persist. The simple structure of man-man relationships, ordered in "primitive" societies by rules of kinship and marriage, become more extended and elaborate as a result of the social division of labour.¹⁵ Production, especially agricultural production, on an extensive scale is ordered by elaborate rules defining rights (property) and necessitates the legal institutions of the state. Society retains the organic character of community, and religion, now itself more institutionalised, provides unity, coherence and legitimacy to social institutions and rules.

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14. "Whether complex or simple, each operation has to be done by hand, retains the character of a handicraft This narrow technical basis excludes a really scientific analysis of any definite process of industrial production, ...". Marx, Capital, Vol.1, p.320.
15. "... the convergence of fractional work into the life-calling of one man, corresponds to the tendency shown by earlier societies, to make trades hereditary; either to petrify them into castes, or whenever definite historical conditions beget in the individual a tendency to vary in a manner incompatible with the nature of castes, to ossify them into guilds. Castes and guilds arise from the action of the same natural law, that regulates the differentiation of plants and animals into species and varieties, except that, when a certain degree of development has been reached, the heredity of castes and the exclusiveness of guilds are ordained as a law of society". Marx, Capital, Vol.1, p.321.

There is a contrary social principle which makes its appearance and runs parallel throughout these stages of social development, although it fails to become the dominant principle of social organisation, viz. the principle of association. The associational principle arises out of an economic activity (ordered by the rule of money) of a specific kind, viz. making more money out of money. This is a capitalist process,¹⁶ represented at this stage in activities such as trade, usury and banking. Economic activities of the capitalist type centre around the individual and are, in general, inhibited by taboos and restrictions imposed by community loyalties. Capitalist economic activity also emphasises rational calculation and accounting. Associational principles begin to assert themselves in sectors of society influenced by economic activities of this type - in legal principles and thinking, or in sectarian religious movements - but remain subordinate to the overall character of society as a community.¹⁷

16. I am adopting here the conceptual framework proposed in Sanjit Bose and Arup Mallik, "What is Economics? A Process-view of the Subject" (mimeograph, Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta, 1978).

17. "The appearance of an individualistic element in the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas is but one of the indications, one of the proofs, of the fact that society was in his day undergoing a radical transformation : it was beginning to change into a consistently associational system, an order within which the individual would be strong and social coherence weak - in short, into that condition which, following Karl Marx, we have come to call capitalism". Stark, op.cit., p.231. Stark provides numerous examples of the rise of associational principles of social organisation and thought consequent upon trading and commercial activities in Hebrew and Hellenic society. *ibid.*, pp.232-47. These are also reflected in Roman law. Similar tendencies can also be seen in ancient India in the rise of religions such as Buddhism and Jainism and in the various Bhakti cults in medieval India.

The associational principle becomes central in society when the capitalist process enters the sphere of production. Man-nature relationships begin to be investigated and analysed in the theoretical terms of the positive sciences, and specific techniques of controlling nature for human purposes acquires the character of technology rather than techné. Man-man relationships, i.e. relations in society, begin to lose the character of community, based on kinship or ethnocentric unity, and are now based on the principle of association, i.e. a contract or covenant in which individuals agree to come together for mutual advantage (the liberal theories of society). The associational character of society places central emphasis on fixing individual rights and duties, and seeks to delimit the domains of social institutions such as the state and the church vis-a-vis the domain of individual relationships, i.e. civil society.¹⁸

Where non-scientific beliefs, sometimes in combination with scientific ones, are unified with apparent consistency into a total and universal system of beliefs, we have an ideology.¹⁹

IDEOLOGY AND INTERESTS

All societies with a division of labour in the organisation of production will contain within it sources of conflicting or

18. See Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law" and "On The Jewish Question" in Marx and Engels, Collected Works, Vol.3 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), pp.3-129 and 146-74.

19. Upto this point, the definition is similar to Mannheim's "total conception of ideology". Ideology and Utopia, pp.64-70.

contradictory interests. If definite relations of production have emerged, there will be contradictory class interests. In societies with a very complex division of labour, there may be conflicting interests within a class. Finally, with societies organised on community principles, there may be conflicts of a community as a whole with other communities lying outside the boundary of that society.

Ideology as a unified system of beliefs seeks to provide ontological meaning to the natural world and to social institutions and praxiological guidelines on behaviour and action. Consequently, a particular ideology must provide social and practical justification for the activities, and hence the interests, of its believers.

In every society where conflicting interests exist, the dominant social ideology must provide, within a single, unified and apparently consistent belief-system, such justifications for every separate interest in society, including class interests. Such a unified ideological conception (such as a religion) can provide the necessary justification in the realm of belief or thought of the need to reproduce over time the particular pattern of social activities and relations and to ensure the continuance of the various instituted social processes.²⁰ The problem here relates to the investigation of

20. Such ideological justification is socially necessary even in situations where the emergence of a certain pattern of activities and social relations, or its continuance, is based on sheer force, as in a slave-owning society which requires a belief in the inherent inferiority of the slave, or in the primitive accumulation phase of capitalism where there are beliefs in the need to exercise force to establish a "natural" level of wages or a "just" proportion of pasture to arable land. See, for instance, the fantastic rationalisation of the enclosure movement by a certain Sir F.M. Eden in Marx, Capital, Vol.1, pp.680-1.

the processes by which rules become rules, i.e. the processes of legitimation of social rules.

When specific groups in society (such as classes) perceive their own interests as being not in harmony with the dominant social ideology, i.e. when contradictions are discovered in the purportedly consistent system of beliefs, there arises a challenge to the dominant ideology. In the ultimate analysis, such perceptions of conflicting interests and contradictions are related to changes brought about as a result of the objective processes of social development.²¹ The specific form of such conflicts and its outcome are, however, settled in the arena of politics, and depend upon how successfully the alienated interests are reunified within an alternative and apparently consistent belief-system which includes all the specific interests whose support is politically required.

IDEOLOGY AND TRANSITION

In transition, a new ideology must develop in dialectical relationship with the existing ideology (or ideologies).

21. "... the material life-conditions of the persons inside whose heads this thought process goes on in the last resort determines the course of this process...". Frederick Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy. There is an ontological priority involved in the relation: the material world is prior in the sense that it can exist without consciousness. In the historical process, the relation between the two is dialectical. The most concise statement of this position in Marxist literature is in Mao Tse-tung, "On Practice", Selected Works, Vol.1 (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), pp.295-310.

In analysing this, it is important to discover how a dominant social ideology seeks to reproduce itself in the belief-systems of successive generations. It is true, at one level of analysis, that such ideological conceptions are related to basic social activities, the specific rules which order such activities, and the structure of relations produced by the process of reproduction of such activities; these material social processes sustain the associated ideological conceptions which, in turn, are consistent with the conditions required for the continuation of the material processes. However, there are distinct and concrete processes by which such beliefs themselves are reproduced over successive generations, through religious rituals and practices, relations within the family, schools and the educational system, the media of communication, art, culture, etc. These themselves constitute distinct instituted social processes, with distinct rules of ordering, and enjoy a status of relative autonomy with respect to other social activities, rules and structures.²²

When new ideologies make their appearance - the result of new and discordant interests emerging in society in course of changes

22. Althusser has called such institutions the "ideological state apparatus". Louis Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, tr. Ben Brewster (London : New Left Books, 1970), pp.123-73. It, however, needs to be examined whether they can all be necessarily categorised under the term "state apparatus".

in material structures and processes²³ they will operate on these instituted processes of reproduction of ideologies to disrupt them and/or create parallel institutional processes.

It is possible, now, to use the above framework to show how, let us say, in the transition from feudalism to capitalism, contradictions were discovered in the older dominant ideology of Catholicism and a new religious ideology of Protestantism was created which, disrupting the older ideological institutions of the Catholic Church and creating new institutions (the new national church, secular schools, etc.), ordered in a new way the respective activities and domains of the individual, the church and the state. It is also possible to show how, after the transition, the now established capitalist process requires for its reproduction a new dominant ideology - liberalism - which frees the sphere of economic activity

23. "... it is primarily the intensification of social mobility which destroys the earlier illusion, prevalent in a static society, that all things can change, but thought remains eternally the same." Especially, "Vertical mobility is the decisive factor in making persons uncertain and sceptical of their traditional view of the world". Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, p.7. Historical materialism, one could add, theoretically enables us to be more specific in locating processes of change such as "vertical mobility". Further, it is invalid to ask, as in the Durkheim-Cassirer debate on the origin of myths, or the Weber-Tawney debate on the role of Protestantism in the origins of capitalism, which causes the other. The two comprise a single dialectical process. Since society can only be properly characterised in terms of activities, rules, relations and processes, social change or transition must mean fundamental changes in the basic material structure formed by these constitutive elements - this is the meaning of Engels's "determination in the last resort" - and ideological systems will seek to ascribe meaning and consistency to these elements within a unified structure of beliefs. Only a mechanistic unidimensional notion of causality will produce questions such as "which caused the other".

from all primordial or communal fetters, enables the sphere of economic activity to operate among "free" and "equal" individuals and restricts the domain of the state to the functions of a "neutral" guarantor of the rules governing these activities.

Again, it is possible in this framework to investigate how deep the associational principles, and the corresponding ideology of liberalism, can penetrate into social belief systems. It can be shown, for instance, that the liberal ideology can hold sway when the capitalist process of production can truly operate with a free and unfettered labour and capital market (as, for instance, in the classical case of England) and thus "demonstrate" the apparent consistency of its ideological principles. Where the capitalist process comes to dominate the production economy with the aid and support of the open, forcible and discriminatory intervention of the state (as, for instance, in Bismarckian Germany), the consistency of liberal principles cannot be so "demonstrated" and use must be made of ideological elements rooted in community loyalties (say, the German volk). A reemergence of older community-centred beliefs may also appear in capitalist systems in crisis (the revival of symbols from Nordic mythology or the myth of the Aryan race in Nazi Germany or the revival of Scottish and Welsh nationalism in post-war

Britain).²⁴ And in general, capitalist economy in crisis reflects a crisis of liberal ideology as well, so that one gets the phenomenon of a "multiplicity of ways of thinking", which is Mannheim's central problem.²⁵

Similar mixes of community and associational ideological principles can also be investigated in the various "third world" nationalisms.

THE PROBLEM OF FALSE CONSCIOUSNESS

It would be apparent by now that it is only from the perspective of scientific knowledge that any belief or belief-system can be characterised as "ideology" by showing the non-scientific character of its explanations or praxiological guidelines. (This characterisation also includes, in most cases, a stronger demonstration of at least

24. For example : "without ... a special life-situation compelling and tending toward industrialization, a mode of life which is devoid of collective myths is scarcely bearable. The merchant, the entrepreneur, the intellectual, each in his own way occupies a position which requires rational decisions concerning the tasks set by everyday life. In arriving at these decisions, it is always necessary for the individual to free his judgements from those of others and to think through certain issues in a rational way from the point of view of his own interests. This is not true for peasants of the older type nor for the recently emerged mass of subordinate white-collar workers who hold positions requiring little initiative, and no foresight of a speculative kind. Their modes of behaviour are regulated to a certain extent on the basis of myths, traditions or mass-faith in a leader". Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, p.35.

25. Ideology and Utopia.

some of those ideological explanations as unscientific, i.e. scientifically false.) It should also be understandable that the characterisation of belief-systems as ideologies is, therefore, only possible with the development of the theoretical sciences, i.e. in the era of capitalism (as distinct from the philosophical or theological controversies of earlier times).²⁶

Now, the scientific analysis of society enables us to impute an ideology to a particular social group (a class, for instance) in accordance with its position and interests in the objectified process of social development, i.e. in accordance with our scientific knowledge of this process. The actual beliefs or outlook of specific members of this group at any given time may well be at variance with this imputed ideology.²⁷

When the extant beliefs of a particular social group (say, the beliefs which underlie the political programme of a particular group) are not in accordance with its objective position and interests in the objectified social process, i.e. is not consistent with its imputed ideology, there is an ideological distortion :

26. Indicative of this is the fact that the origin of the term "ideology" as ideas intended to mislead or deceive is usually traced back to Napoleon Bonaparte's attack on the philosophers of the French Enlightenment. See Raymond Williams, Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (London; Fontana, 1976), pp.126-30.

27. "As soon as the total conception of ideology is used, we attempt to reconstruct the whole outlook of a social group, and neither the concrete individuals nor the abstract sum of them can legitimately be considered as bearers of this ideological thought-system as a whole". Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, p.59.

one kind of false consciousness. This distortion itself has a history, which can be analysed in terms of the concrete historical position of this group in the social process, especially in relation to the specific process by which social beliefs are created and instituted in social, especially political, action.

The other kind of false consciousness occurs when the imputed ideology of a group (class) is itself not consistent with the direction of change of the objectified process of social development, i.e. the objective position and interests of this group are contradictory to the direction of development of the social process. This group cannot, therefore, accept a set of social beliefs consistent with the direction of change of the objectified social process without forsaking or liquidating its own distinct existence as a group. Consciousness of this sort is necessarily false.²⁸

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28. Mannheim discusses false consciousness under three types : (1) an antiquated ethical norm transformed into an ideology (e.g. the taboo on usury), (2) ideological distortion : "deifying, romanticizing or idealizing" the facts of human existence, "resorting to the device of escape from themselves or the world, and thereby conjuring up false interpretations of experience", and (3) ideology which "as a form of knowledge is no longer adequate for comprehending the actual world". He adds that "in the same historical epoch and in the same society there may be several distorted types of inner mental structure". Ideology and Utopia, pp. 95-7. All these are indeed examples of possible types of false consciousness. However, Mannheim's typology does not enable us to distinguish between the false consciousness that is due to a lack of rational understanding of the objective interests of a group from the false consciousness which is necessarily implied in the conscious recognition of one's objective interest.

If our knowledge of the processes of social development can establish that the objective position and interests of a particular class (the proletariat) is consistent with the objective potential for change in society, the consciousness we impute to this class in objective analytical terms cannot be false (unless, of course, our knowledge, i.e., our theory, is false). However, the prevalent beliefs of a concretely existent working class in a specific situation may well be at variance with this imputed "true" class consciousness; there is the possibility of ideological distortion.²⁹

29. Lukács in his essay on "Class Consciousness" also used the analytical tool of "imputing" a consciousness to a particular class: "By relating consciousness to the whole of society it becomes possible to infer the thoughts and feelings which men would have in a particular situation if they were able to assess both it and the interests arising from it in their impact on immediate action and on the whole structure of society ... class consciousness consists in fact of the appropriate and rational reactions 'imputed' to a particular typical position in the process of production". Georg Lukács. History and Class Consciousness, tr. Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p.51. However, in discussing proletarian class consciousness, Lukács seems to move away from using this tool: "... the proletariat", he insists, "always aspires towards the truth even in its 'false' consciousness and in its substantive errors", although he then adds, "But the aspiration only yields the possibility. The accomplishment can only be the fruit of the conscious deeds of the proletariat". Lukács then asserts: "... class consciousness is identical with neither the psychological consciousness of individual members of the proletariat, nor with the (mass-psychological) consciousness of the proletariat as a whole; but it is, on the contrary, the sense, become conscious, of the historical role of the class". *ibid.*, pp.72-3. Towards the end of the essay, Lukács again says, "... where consciousness already exists as an objective possibility, they indicate degrees of distance between the psychological class consciousness and the adequate understanding of the total situation. These gradations, however, can no longer be referred back to socio-economic causes. The objective theory of class consciousness is the theory of its objective possibility". *ibid.*, p.79;

SCIENCE AND IDEOLOGY

In the above, I have counterposed science to ideology. I do this out of faith in man's continuous and purposeful striving for greater and more reliable control over his natural and social environment and, to this end, for the progressive correction of 'falsehood' of various kinds in his theoretical understanding of objective processes.³⁰ This does not, however, mean, as positivists would argue, that there 'exists' outside of human consciousness a certain set of 'correct' methodological canons of scientific procedure, and the more the empirical world is investigated according to those canons, the greater the stock of reliable 'law-like generalisations' which cumulatively add up to our stock of scientific knowledge. This is

Contd. footnote 29.

italics in original. One could, it seems to me, argue with greater validity that the objective possibility is what is implied by our theoretical understanding of the processes of social development and the position and interests of particular classes in that process. This gives us an "objective theory" of proletarian class consciousness. The concrete state of proletarian consciousness in a specific situation, in so far as it deviates from this "objective" consciousness, can certainly be traced back to its concrete socio-economic roots; indeed, one could assert that it must be so traced back, if one is to make a conscious effort to attain in practice the objective possibility which exists theoretically. Such a line of argument would obviate the need for the sort of assertions that Lukács makes which do appear a trifle Hegelian in their idealistic obtuseness. I gather that Lukács undertook a reexamination of the entire problem of ideology and false consciousness in his unfinished work on the Ontology of Social Being which has been posthumously published in Hungarian and German versions. I have not yet come across an English translation of this portion of his work.

30. With all that has happened in the world since the eighteenth century, one cannot today be as naive as the philosophes. But, no matter how hardheaded we now are in our understanding of the tortuous course of history, do we not still share with Condorcet a faith in 'the infinite perfectability' of man?

not how science has progressed, because the creation of knowledge is itself a social process, a result of human endeavour in given natural and social circumstances, and is, therefore, intimately related to man's consciousness of himself and the world.

The counterposition of science and ideology, therefore, needs to be clarified. We have shown that the characterisation of a set of beliefs as ideology implies the demonstration that those beliefs are non-scientific, that at least some of them are unscientific, and that they represent rationalisations, i.e. the incorporation into the system of beliefs of solutions already conceived outside the supposedly 'theoretical' argument, of certain perceived interests (not necessarily objective interests) of a certain group occupying a specific position in the social structure. At the same time, we have also shown that the total stock of reasonably reliable concrete scientific knowledge which we now possess is quite inadequate to exclusively guide all practical activity which we find necessary to undertake, even in everyday life. Hence, non-scientific beliefs of some sort appear to be unavoidable.

The problem is to tie the creation of knowledge to purposeful human activity. Purpose cannot be determined solely by scientific knowledge. In any given historical situation, purpose will be found to be determined by interests, by ideology. On the other hand, the scientific analysis of processes of change - in the natural and social world - i.e. their objectification in theoretical terms, will reveal to us the range of objective possibilities, the potential for change in given circumstances. This 'theoretical' activity -

the production of theoretical knowledge - is itself not independent of purpose, for purpose affects the choice of problems, the formulation of problems, the assignment of priorities among alternative fields of research; purpose thereby influences methods, procedures, techniques of creation of scientific knowledge.

On the other hand, the actualisation of the objective possibilities revealed in theory is also the task of purposeful activity, of praxis. That there is an interactive, indeed a dialectical, relationship between the two - theory and practice - has been said very often. The task of keeping this dialectical relationship in mind in theoretical and political activity is not, however, easily accomplished. The inadequacy of available scientific knowledge means the continued prevalence of non-scientific beliefs of some sort; it often means the utilisation, indeed exaggeration, of such beliefs for political purposes. The task of consciously expanding the range of scientific thinking in popular belief-systems, of making the knowledge of science available and acceptable to wider sections of people, is a practical political task which can be taken up only by those classes that are conscious of their objective social strength in carrying forward the historical process of social development. On the other hand, if science is not to lapse into a mindless technocratic search for mere rationalisation and efficiency, only a vision of purpose can give it direction, purpose which can assess alternative objective possibilities and use the knowledge of science for the actualisation in history of this potential; only

purposive practice can sift the 'true' from the 'false'.³¹ The two challenges are inherent in the human and historical situation; indeed, if man ever does come to possess complete and true knowledge, science would become irrelevant and history come to an end.

31. It is revulsion from the horrors of a science in the service of mere rationalisation and efficiency that has led many philosophers to think of technology per se as something dehumanising, and even read this into the early writings of Marx.

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