

## Defining 'Ideology' - A Reformulation<sup>(1)</sup>

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### I. Origins and introduction.

Oftimes it is better to start all over again. That is what I propose to do in this essay into the meaning(s) of « ideology ». Without intending any disrespect to the nineteenth and twentieth century discussions of the concept (of which, more later), it might be a good idea to start with the original meanings of the constituent parts of the word. This procedure recommends itself not only because the ancients had cultivated a now-neglected wisdom from which the concept derives, but also because in the evolution of human consciousness the primary ingredients of concepts were the most direct, immediate, axial, tangible phenomena encountered by our species.

Both ingredients of the word at hand — *idéa* and *lógos* — come out of Greek. Happily, this Indo-Aryan language is that of the inventors of philosophy; and, though we know little enough about their mentality, we do know some of their thinking during the transition from mythology to philosophy (BC 600-400), enough to support interesting speculations.

The word « idea » comes from the Greek preposition *éido*, meaning « into, within, inside », and thence the noun *idéa*, meaning « shape » and also « species, kind, form », the « within-ness » or structure of a thing. In light of the well-known pitfalls and confusions in later philosophy, it is best to understand *idéa* as referring to the « shape », structure, or « look » of a thing.

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(1) I am greatly indebted to our colleague Professor Leo Moulin, Bruxelles, for his elaborate, sage advice on the use of « ideology » in the French tradition. The references to French sources herein have all originated with him.

*Lógos* has an even more complex set of referents ; yet its earliest meaning was « computation ». A look at the unabridged Scott and Liddell dictionary will reveal how with time the idea of *lógos* deteriorated or broadened into : « accounting, measure, esteem, value, relation, proportion, explanation, statement, rule, formula, saying... ». For our purposes, it is best to take the term to mean « a statement » — where « statement » is used as it would be in the sentential calculi of modern logic. Thus, a « statement » is a minimal number of words about which it might be said that the utterance is true, false, or meaningless, either analytically, by definition, or by reference to some evidence outside the rules of language alone. A « syllogism » (*syn-lógos*) is nothing more than the addition or juxtaposition of apparently connected statements ; and a « logic » in the modern sense is a set of universal, formal statements that can be made about statements, calculations, or formuli.

This rendering of the *idéa* and *lógos* goes beyond the superficial examination of dictionary meanings. They lead into a muddle of meanings — « mind », « concept », « form », « reason » — which no one really understands too well. It is by looking historically for the core meanings of the terms, and more or less ignoring the later attenuations and vaguenesses, that I arrive at the statement : « Ideology » refers to an *account* of the kinds or species of things in the cosmos. Left at that, ideology would be no different from metaphysics ; and that was exactly the case for the ancients, who were convinced that out of a primal unity the world had differentiated itself into a recurrent flux (*phýsis*, flux, Nature) of species and specimens, each with its own limitations and « nature », mankind and the gods being no exceptions.

The first use of « ideology » in modern times, by Destutt de Tracy in 1796, came in reaction to the term « psychology » which, according to that *philosophe*, was tainted by the preconception that man has a soul (*psyche*) (2). The « science » of ideology was thus intended to be an exact science of *consciousness*, in the sense later taken up by Hegel ; and the *Dictionnaire politique* of 1842 still spoke somberly of the concept as « la première dans l'ordre des sciences exactes ». Long before Marx, it was Napoleon who, perhaps intimidated by the authority of the *philosophes*, after first encouraging them later ridiculed the « *idéologues* » for their ability to contemplate ideas without getting *engagée*. This particular debate continued in French letters for

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(2) Material in this paragraph was generously provided me by Professor Leo Moulin.

several decades after Napoleon's involuntary retirement, witness Block's *Dictionnaire de la politique* (1864).

Knowing of Marx's sojourns in France and the familiarity he had with the French sources, we must assume that that patrimony of ideas affected him as deeply as did Kant's « Nature as Artist » and Hegel's « cunning of Reason ». Indeed, given the impact of Rousseau for example on Marx's father (3), it is fair to suppose that the radical egalitarianism and sensibility of Jean-Jacques' citizen had something to do with Karl Marx's conception of the « proletariat » and of « ideology ».

The peculiarity of the Marxian definition of « ideology » is perhaps lost on American readers, for whom an « interest-bound » view of life and consciousness appears so obvious that its alternatives are scarcely imaginable. Hence the suggestions in *German Ideology* and *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, that philosophy and other stages of consciousness arise out of social reality and specifically in relations to the means of production, may seem to some contemporary readers a feckless tautology: because such determination would wholly account for all forms of consciousness and would therefore rule out the possibility of « false » consciousness. Yet to put the best face on Marx's position, it is not merely that some belief-systems are « partial » by virtue of a lack of comprehensibility for him, but rather that all classes or standings in society *except* the proletariat are blinded or misled by their need, in defending their *status quo* privileges and properties, to think of the *status quo* as somehow holy. The proletariat, consisting of those without property, are free to see things as they really are, *except for the fact* that they too are alienated from thinking straight by the anxiety-producing sanctions directed at them on the part of vested interests.

By this interpretation, the possibility of a *non-ideological* viewpoint exists for those who, by some fluke, escape *both* the anxieties of protecting investments and privileges in thought and deed, *and* who overcome the pandemic fear of thinking holistically about concrete human existence. The best candidates for this accident were, according to Marx, the proletariat and alienated intellectuals.

Evaluation of this sort of definition of « ideology » appears to be less a matter of logical analysis than of complex empirical testing; and hence, except for two additional observations, I leave the Marxian definition(s) to the sociologists or to those who know how to measure

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(3) David McLELLAN, *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx*, 1969.

the relative authenticity and fraudulence of consciousness *per se*. The addenda are :

1. « Ideology », and not only in Marxian formulations, is often defined to mean a *shared* set of ideas. Empirically speaking, what is in fact shared may be nothing more than the *illusion* of being in agreement, inasmuch as the very *generality* of political ideas or slogans can like rotting meat attract a great variety of interested parties (4). Nonetheless it is this tendency to distinguish « personal » beliefs from ideologies that permits the latter to be characterized as a shared nebulousness (« une nébuleuse collective ») or as public vaguenesses (« la pauvreté intellectuelle massifiée ») (5). The logico-empirical problem that arises here is whether ideologies as scholars conceive of them are actually believed in by any one or more persons, and if so, how we know so.

2. The other remaining difficulty, also raised by professor Moulin, is whether the « a-historical » quality of a belief-system is an adequate marker of its « ideological » nature. The paradox is this : false-conscious viewpoints parade as statements about the true and/or basic and/or invariant nature of mankind (ere being veils for historically transient class interests); yet positions purporting to comprehend the general trend of social change also claim to be exempt from the charge of onesidedness, even where (as with Hegel or Marx) they aver the probability that they cannot clearly see the future and claim « only » (!) to understand the (invariant) rules by which people chronically misunderstand the historical limitedness of their own philosophies. Maybe this difficulty would go away if one could prove definitively Spinoza's belief that « history » is the illusion that the future still contains significant news. On top of that, one should have to demonstrate the superiority of one's own account of the human condition ; for there is nothing to say that even the most disinterested and property-less of sagemen cannot get fragments of the story wrong.

## II. Extension.

What may at first appear to be a gratuitous intellectual exercise, the search for a proper formal definition of something already intuitively understandable, is on the contrary a very practical task, because

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(4) See, for example, D. STRICKLAND, *Scientists in Politics*, 1968.

(5) L. MOULIN, personal communication.

we cannot cope adequately with what we feel we understand until it is brought to a higher level of consciousness and precision. Hence, this seemingly unfair and nit-picking approach to other people's definitions of « ideology » should not imply that those definitions are senseless; just the opposite: it is because of their intuitive weight that one wants to pursue farther *exactly* the sense(s) in which they are *true* (6).

The conceptualization of the world from the standpoint of man entails necessarily the category « action » — man being, on the most basic and uninteresting level, a free-ranging terrestrial mammal subject to recurrent hunger, enthusiasm, tension, fatigue, boredom, heat and cold, accident, and disease, and, eventually, death. On these grounds alone we are justified in asking, in slight contrast to the ancients, and following Sartori, what it is that political ideologies do *not* include. In asking such a question we may recall with admiration the statement of Aristotle that politics ultimately includes all topics and touches all knowledge, inasmuch as anything *might* somehow or some day interfere with the well-ordering of human social life.

Most of the time, however, ideology in the modern sense (that is, « political ideology ») does *not* refer to: 1° description of no evident relevance to human conduct (e.g., astronomy); 2° fate, or things about which so far as one knows nothing at all can be done that would affect them (e.g., the past as such); 3° the major processes of Nature, such as the winds and the seasons, which are studied by natural science and are not usually (or were not formerly) targets of public policy; 4° beliefs about the prehistoric origins of man and the fate of persons after death.

The objection might arise here that serious philosophers have always derived their political *Weltanschauungen* from their metaphysics. This is a weighty objection, to which I shall return. The argument of Socrates with the sophists as reflected, for example, in *Theaetetus*, reduces to the question whether humanism can mean anything without a precise (and antecedent) notion of what the great system of Nature is like apart from human societies and conventions, and how far human values

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(6) The following discussion assumes a familiarity with certain analyses of the cognitive and affective ingredients in most definitions of ideology, as in these essays and the bibliographies thereto: Giovanni SARTORI, *Politics, Ideology, and Belief Systems*, in *Amer. Pol. Sci. Rev.*, vol. 63, p. 398, 1969; Robert PUTNAM, *Studying Elite Political Culture: the Case of Ideology*, in *Amer. Pol. Sci. Rev.*, vol. 65, p. 651, 1971; H.M. DRUCKER, *Marx's Concept of Ideology*, in *Philosophy*, vol. 47, p. 152, 1972; Willard A. MULLINS, *On the Concept of Ideology in Political Science*, in *Amer. Pol. Sci. Rev.*, vol. 66, p. 498, 1972.

derive from Nature and cosmos, if indeed they do. If we may for a moment hold that question in abeyance, some more particular confusions about « ideology » can be cleared up.

Proceeding then as if we were ignorant of the grounding of ideologies in religion and philosophy, it may be allowed that there are narrow logical difficulties with the current ways of defining « ideology ».

1. The term cannot apply merely to « error », for if it did : *a*) it would embrace meanings (e.g. that the earth is flat) which are not intended by modern users of the term ; *b*) it would imply an agreed-upon standard for judging error, which is rarely if ever stated ; *c*) it would raise vastly fewer problems than it does in fact, inasmuch as all interested parties would concentrate on conclusive proofs and disproofs of theirs and others' claims.

2. The term could not refer merely to « inadvertance ». If that were so, clearly *too much* of human behavior would be included. Thus, when Engels (in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*) appears to define « ideology » as « thinking, the true motive of which remains unknown to the thinker », we are forced to wonder how little of human consciousness would be *exempt* from this definition. In one sense at least, the tying of the concept to knowledge/ignorance is unwise because it would entail a variety of impulsive, habituated, customary, or sub-cortical behavior that is not generally meant by the term. Short of poetry, we should not count the dreams of infants or the feeding behavior of insects « ideological ».

3. Owing to an equivocation in the previous paragraph, the possibility remains that the term « ideology » means a viewpoint based on facts *known* but forgotten or downgraded from consciousness. By this view an ideology is characterized not by the quantity of *mis*-information it contains but by omissions, by the forgetting, trivializing, or repressing of otherwise significant factors. It is that which « blinks » itself spontaneously in ways that, by contrast, science may not.

Although this argument is very close to the interpretation of the present essay, the trouble with it is that it is too question-begging a formulation : the question is how to tell an ideology from a non-ideology ; and *a*) to suggest that ideologies are not comprehensive would be to dismiss all sciences save philosophy as « ideological » ; *b*) even to dismiss the one, true cosmology on grounds that it is inconsistent with other (false) doctrines ; or *c*) to ignore an incontrovertible fact,

explicated by Thomas Kuhn (7), that belief-systems succeed one another across time, each founding itself credibly enough on the exaggerations of its predecessors, each in its time warranting the belief that *it at last* has avoided leaving out even one significant factor.

4. « Ideology » does not, finally, refer simply to a want of *clarity*.

a) Where « clarity » means « specificity », it is immediately obvious that no system of ideas can do without generalization and abstraction and, accordingly, no theory can give a « clear » rendition of particular cases in their detailed concreteness.

b) Where « clarity » means « unambiguous » and « resolute », the argument gives rise to antinomies: 1° mathematics, as about the least ambiguous system of ideas, seems intuitively to be the least ideological; yet mathematics is altogether void of empirical content; 2° numerous speculative systems, including paranoid-delusional schemes, can be shown to be well-defined and internally consistent; and 3° some of the most fruitful ideas in the history of science are known to have been articulated at first — like most ideological propositions — as indeterminate hunches or intuitions.

In this way we arrive at the doctrine of error. We arrive there now, because whatever else « ideology » means, it has something to do with distortion and wrong-headedness. To repeat, we are forced to abandon a « neutral » account of the term *à la* the original *idéologues* (8), for the plain reason that modern usage does not admit of the possibility that *all* sensible propositions about ideas are « ideological » statements. Hence, we arrive, to put it mildly, at the position that some beliefs are « mere opinions », others truths. Since Plato, the notion of « opinion » (*doxa*) has referred to something not only false but, as it were, super-false in that it is *apparently true*. For example, the assertion «  $2 \times 2$  yields 22 » is blatantly false; however, to say that the earth is flat is on the face of it quite plausible, and indeed makes more sense to an unreflective person than the claim that people elsewhere in the world are, whilst lying prone, parallel to a person standing upright hereabouts.

The doctrine of errors has to be able to explain why people misconceive the world, just insofar as they do. That is harder to explain than is the truth or falsity of a particular assertion within understood rules of language or conduct. Of course, if there is no way of arriving at a system of ideas which is demonstrably « truer » than its com-

(7) *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 1962.

(8) See especially A. DE STUTT de TRACY, *Eléments d'Idéologie*, 1801-1815.

petitors, there is no reason to treat « ideology » as better than vain rhetoric, and serious people would scarce want to retain the word in their vocabularies any more. For these reasons, there is no avoiding a short excursus into the doctrine of errors.

### III. Falsity.

St. Paul in a rare reflective moment declared (speaking perhaps of God) : « For now we see through a glass, darkly ; but then face to face... » (I Cor. 13.12). It is amazing how much of the rhetoric of truth and error relates to *vision* : the blind are made to see ; the murky becomes clear ; the forces of darkness are dispelled ; and doubters come to confront evidences and revelations.

Generally speaking, an opinion, belief, statement, or perception is denominated « false » for one or more of the following reasons.

1. It predicts poorly (e.g., « Eating lettuce is the best remedy for melancholy »).
2. It leaves out significant factors (e.g., « Gandhi was a lawyer »).
3. It confounds entities (e.g., « Jupiter is the planet nearest the sun »).
4. It fails to discriminate part and whole (e.g., « By that point, she was all eyes »).
5. It is indistinct and vague (e.g., « We must wage war to prove our uncompromising love of peace »).

Analogies and metaphors as such are left off this list, since they are susceptible to fairly precise and « accurate » usage.

Note that some of these type-errors are matters of degree, others not, or not always. Thus, to some degree, serious human beings will probably disagree forevermore about what are the most precise statements that can be made on a topic, about the choice of topics, about the « significance » of attributes, and about the fundamental entities as distinct from their parts and their incidents. On the other hand, the cases of simple « correspondence » error — such as wrong predictions, confusions of reference, or assertions that just do not jibe with extrinsic evidence — are characterized by qualitative error. Even with correspondence-error, however, there is a quantitative side : consider that we would normally ascribe *degrees* of falsity in the following sequence : 1° « France is East of the Urals » ; 2° « France is to the



East of Dresden » ; 3° « France is equidistant from England and Belgium » ; 4° « France is a democracy » ; 5° « France is a confederacy » and 6° « France is a slave-state ».

Perhaps this merely means that the most straight-forward of True-False judgements can be marginally invaded by vagueness and by ambiguity. In addition, I should argue, it means that the potential *scope or importance* of all errors lead us to regard them as matters of degree. Otherwise there would not have to be an elaborate inquiry called « ethics ».

The « scope or importance » of an error refers to the number of its ramifications and also to the value of each impact to the person or persons affected. Obviously, for example, a « trivial » miscalculation or oversight by the ruler is of great pith and moment to me if it is going to cost me life or limb. Perhaps this is why « error » in Hegel's formulation includes the notion of estrangement, inauthenticity, not feeling right about it, discomfort. From here it is a small step to claiming either: 1° that the *standard* of truth is untutored feeling, or 2° that the evaluation of truth and error is ultimately and necessarily made by living persons and varies by degrees and contexts.

Where « ideology » is concerned, the degree of error is of course relative to better and worse accounts of the same phenomena. Far from wanting to call ideologies simply false distorted, and sciences true, I should like to call any statement about the relation of ideas « ideological » *solely to the extent that it exists and is believed in, in preference to a better one*. By a « better » statement we shall want to understand both: a) one more complete in explaining all known and relevant observations; b) one that is more satisfying. I shall leave « satisfying » aside, as a primitive term, for all the well-known philosophical reasons; yet it does need to be said that errors, including the most grotesque of logical inconsistencies and omissions, are perpetrated endlessly to satisfy the moral compulsions and fears of persons confronted with better statements.

The idea that propositions in the natural sciences may be said to be relatively ideological will not rest comfortably on the stomach of the intellect, unless it is remembered that present-day scientists denounce one another sometimes as « wrong-headed » and earlier generations of scientists as « superstitious » to boot. Aristotle's allegation, that rotting meat generates flies spontaneously, is scarcely less superstitious (from our present standpoint) than a belief in the efficacy of magic potions concocted from newts' eyes, earwigs, and the like. Again, it is a matter of degree.

By and large, *political* beliefs count for more in that they affect more of us. You may believe in the flatness of the world without frightening the neighbors too much; but if you fervently believe in genocide, socialism, peace, anarchism, etc., perhaps you had better not advertise it. The reason for the difference is that politics (by definition) is the realm of pure social choice, meaning the topic whose sole content is « what to do » about the human context; and therefore, because politics is one way and another inescapable, « ideology » in the ordinary sense is the anticipation of action free and clear of the *intrinsic limits* existing by nature for other topics (think of Anatomy). It follows that small errors of political judgment will be perceived as great ones, much as the tongue will magnify a hole in the tooth.

The constraints of language may be what have led us to speak about « error » in too clear-cut a fashion. That is, to attain intellectual clarity, it is usually necessary to isolate and exaggerate traits and attributes; and instead of saying « truer » we say « true ». No doubt the concept of « true » or « false » can be arrived at only through this merciless process of abstracting and simplifying. Yet the concept is not encountered in everyday experience itself; and to speak realistically about « ideology » we shall have to concede that ideologies exhibit a *degree* of error that is different from, say, mythologies, dreams, deliberate lies, or, at the other extreme, scientific laws.

To paraphrase an old joke, we might assert that my beliefs about the human condition are true, yours are ideological, and his are pure phantasy. In the myth of the cave (*Republic*, 514-520) Plato makes it clear that the phantasms to which primitive humanity respond are merely their environment *partially* understood; they have, so to say, adapted very nicely to an environmental niche; and, as with any niche-specific adaptation, it is painful if not ruinous for them to venture into places where they are disoriented and inexperienced. The philosopher as « midwife » assists in this painful and necessary voyage; to deny that it *is* necessary would be to claim that human beings are better off at the level of consciousness of the other mammals, and it is too late for that argument if only because higher levels of awareness are known to be quite essential to our material comfort and survivability.

Plato's reliance on « light » as the concept through which to illustrate the movement from opinion (*doxa*) to truth (*nous*) I should interpret to mean « comprehensibility » in the most basic sense, *viz.* taking hold of all the details and their relations with one another. Light is surely necessary for discriminating one thing and another; but we ought not be distracted by the metaphor, for the procedures

of analysis and synthesis might have been expressed in relation to some other sense. The *generic* distinction is part/whole. Hence, we might entertain the notion that ideologies are « partial » or, as used to be said, « biased ». Naturally each of us, generalizing on his particular environment and the peculiar sequence of his own experiences, arrives at a « partial » view of the world. To assert, however, that each of these viewpoints is simply true, is to deny the possibility of error, and thus the possibility of truth, and thus of knowledge.

Spinoza offered a resolution of this paradox which is more satisfying to me personally than the alternatives of which I am aware. By an apparent tautology he defined error as a deficiency of truth (9). The tautology disappears, though, if we leave off viewing « error/truth » as opposites and view them instead as compliments on a continuous scale: like « health/illness », truth and error could be thought of as reciprocals that vary by degrees, just as one is never « absolutely » healthy or « completely » ill (cf dead). Spinoza's concern with consistency and completeness is useful here, inasmuch as we might essay a definition of « ideology » founded on the *relative* want of comprehensibility, accuracy, and predictability of the belief-system.

The picture is still obscure where one emphasizes *political* ideologies; empirically they tend to be rationalizations of concrete social-economic loci, and it is not easy to see how in the struggle for scarce resources one is to choose among and between these contradictory justifications. On the other hand, if there be no way to reconcile or subsume all political ideologies, there cannot be any knowledge about politics, only conflicting opinions each deadly confident of its own validity. No serious person would accept the premise that there can be no political knowledge, not without first convincing himself about the reasons for believing that there can be *other* sorts of knowledge and not *this* sort.

With this puzzle in mind, let us turn to a discussion of some of the XIXth and XXth century definitions of the concept.

#### IV. Logistics.

Sartori's excellent analysis of the cognitive and shall we say « distributional » properties of ideologies (10), as well as the work of

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(9) B. SPINOZA, *Ethica*, prop. XXXV; see also the exquisite statement by Stuart HAMPSHIRE, *Spinoza*, 1951.

(10) Giovanni SARTORI, *op. cit.*; see also the outstanding contribution of Robert PUTMAN, *op. cit.*

others on the empirical contents (11), historical usages (12), and psychology (13) of « ideology » — relieve us of the duty to trace out those dimensions. Consequently, what follows is a selective comment on a variety of definitions and protodefinitions since Marx.

With Hegel, Cieszkowski, Feuerbach and Marx, the intellectualism of the French *idéologues* came progressively to be scorned and particularized. The problem (notorious since Mannheim's formulation) undoubtedly remains, that the more X excoriates Y's ideas as partial, incomplete, self-deceptive, etc., the more X is claiming to know better; and either this degenerates in the direction of an infinite regress, or else there exists a standpoint, an intellectual statement, which truly is impartial, complete, self-conscious and so on. Anyway, by showing the absorption of people in their own historical times and values (*Geist*), Hegel repudiated the perhaps naive and arrogant timelessness of Voltaire and the *philosophes*, and in so doing strove for intellectual viewpoints which, if they could not foretell the convolutions of human experience in the future, could at least identify the critical corrective, i.e., could expose the manner and fashion in which thinkers, including oneself, chronically overgeneralize their own conclusions. The Hegelians, Marx among them, then tied this idea to the future as such, to religion and mythology, and to economic class interests (14). Deception and self-deception were seen as products of primitive fears and privatizing interests. Hence the recurrence of the term « unmasking » — both of false-hood disguised as fact, and of selfish interests concealed as the public interest. Yet Marx himself, it is well to remember, put his faith in education:

« The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing... forgets that it is men who change circumstances and that the educator himself needs to be educated » (15).

At all events, the rhetoric of vigorous « unmasking » — the emphasis being on the exposure of ignorance, concealment, and wrong-headedness, rather than on proof of a more enlightened viewpoint — continued

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(11) Philip E. CONVERSE, *The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics*, in Apter ed., *Ideology and Discontent*, 1964, p. 207; Robert LANE, *Political Ideology*, 1962; and David MINAR, *Ideology and Political Behavior*, in *Midwest J. Pol. Sci.*, vol. 5, p. 137, 1961.

(12) See, e.g., Arne Næss, *Democracy, Ideology and Objectivity*, 1956.

(13) E.g., Gabriel ALMOND, *The Appeals of Communism*, 1954; Edward SHILS, *The Torments of Secrecy*, 1956; Leon FESTINGER, et al., *When Prophecy Fails*, Milton ROKEACH, *The Open and Closed Mind*, 1960.

(14) See D. A. STRICKLAND and Kyriakos KONTOPOULOS, « Ideology and Praxis, Fichte to Marx », unpublished ms.

(15) Karl MARX, *Theses on Feuerbach*, 1845.

with Engels and others through the closing years of the century. Lichtheim's work (16) records the history of these convolutions, culminating in Sorel's various enthusiasms and the tendentious, confusing position of Karl Mannheim (17) years later.

Since Weber and the sociologists-of-knowledge did not, in my view, advance the analysis of false-consciousness — indeed, like Marx, by stressing interaction-effects Weber arrived at a fancy tautology: values are an unspecifiable « joint product » of all the major social factors — now I shall turn to the efforts of contemporary thinkers to locate « ideology » with more particularity.

The risks of getting stranded on the reefs of truism really ought to be taken seriously where general, relational concepts about human behavior are concerned. To allege that two or more of the major dimensions of human existence are related, but not to tell how, is a bit of a tease. In tying many of his formulations to « relation to the means of production », Marx partly (though not altogether successfully, I think) avoided this objection. Later social-relational definitions of « ideology » — such as, that it is « the moulding of beliefs by social situations » (18) — leave us wondering: *a*) what that class of human experience does *not* include; *b*) whether the opposite, that ideology is the moulding of beliefs by *individual* experiences, or other possible opposites, is not a better or an equally good criterion.

Another line of thought has tried to locate « ideology » in amongst « ideas » (cf acts). The distinction then has to be made between « pure » ideas and ideas that are acted upon, so that « Ideologies are action-related systems of ideas » (19) or « ... the conversion of ideas into social levers... » (20). That may put you in mind of electrical engineering, ethnobotany, primitive totemism, or other action-related ideas. That the distinction will not bear examination is well-known ever since Dewey. Again, this sort of definition is remarkable for the fact that it *excludes* practically nothing in human experience — that is,

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(16) George LICHTHEIM, *The Concept of Ideology*, in *History and Theory*, vol. 4, 1965; see also his *Marxism*, 1961, and *George Lukacs*, 1970.

(17) In *Ideology and Utopia* (Wirth-Shils trans). Mannheim describes the concept « ideology » at various points in his narrative as unreal, illusory, self-deluding, ineffectual, misleading, and untimely or in advance of the times. This is not an exhaustive list because he does not give a single, formal definition. Needless to say, each of these predicates is, logically and philosophically speaking, exceedingly slippery; nor is it clear to common sense how they fit together (intuitively or otherwise) in a way applicable to the things of life. See also DRUCKER, *op. cit.*

(18) Ben HALPERN, *Myth and Ideology in Modern Usage*, in *History and Theory*, vol. 1, p. 129, 1961.

(19) Carl J. FRIEDRICH, *Man and His Government*, 1963, p. 89.

(20) Daniel BELL, *The End of Ideology*, 1962, p. 400.

unless we are willing to assume that ideas are strangely divorced from the living brain, and all the more strangely converted into behavior by that very same organ.

Still another emphasis is in recent years to associate « ideology » with highly emotive beliefs and with beliefs not available to empirical testing (21). [This view is relevant to the sociological approaches to ideology as: *a*) internalized beliefs about appropriate social roles (22) and as *b*) relatively vehement reactions to status-loss or status inconsistencies (23).] Without mentioning religion as their prototype, such thinkers imply that more secular, « pragmatic », metaphysically neutral approaches to the world are *non-ideological* (24). Passing over the argument that any set (ex. def.) of ideas *has to be* in some sense « closed », it must be observed that the most down-to-earth, pragmatic approach is programmatic and is, therefore, in one of the ordinary-language senses of « ideology » about as ideological and exclusive as alternative styles.

The factor of emotional detachment is merely anomalous out of context. It too might be viewed as incidental to a stoical program, albeit mathematicians, astronomers, philosophers and psychiatrists can be found who are passionately attached to their own rationalism. If, however, we should want to set forth an arbitrary definition, I think it would be a small step forward to say « Henceforth, « ideology » shall refer to any set of ideas that is non-empirical and emotive *relative* to other sets of ideas », period.

Another kind of definition is predicated on « power ». [« All political ideologies, therefore, are essentially related to political power » (25).] The difficulty comes, as always in our profession in understanding what « power » refers to, and how « political power » is different, if at all, from other sorts of power.

Finally, in looking over some of the more diffuse and global definitions it is noteworthy that occasionally authors evade the problem by emphasizing the *political* (their italics) side of « ideology » — a tactic which shifts attention to the even more discouraging task of defining « politics » adequately — or by holding forth on the func-

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(21) Daniel BELL, *op. cit.*; SARTORI, *op. cit.*

(22) See, for instance, R. BROOKS, *Self and Political Role*, in *Sociol. Q.*, vol. 10, p. 22, 1969, and bibliography thereto.

(23) See Joseph GUSFIELD, *Symbolic Crusade*, 1963, and G. BUSH, *Status-inconsistency and Right-ing Extremism*, in *Amer. Soc. Rev.*, vol. 32, p. 86, 1967.

(24) Of course, it is the unique property of metaphysics that there can be no metaphysically neutral statement. Recall Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.

(25) K. LOEWENSTEIN, *Political Systems, Ideologies, and Institutions*, in *Western Pol. Q.*, vol. 6, p. 689, 1953.

tions (26) and attributes of the thing. In the latter case — since the « functions » of a high-order abstraction like « ideology » must be very remote, « subtile bodies » — anticipating where they may or may not have consequences is enough to stagger the mind permanently.

A weightier objection is that in the absence of a sufficient idea of « ideology » itself, any speculation about what ideologies *do* for people and social systems is at best a covert speculation about the causes of or consequences of belief-systems in general. And, if *all* belief systems are ideologies, we are back at objections dealt with near the beginning of this essay.

Sartori has proposed (*op. cit.*) an ingenious solution to some of these puzzles. It is that « ideology » be taken to refer to *beliefs* about *authority* — where a « belief » is specified as an idea that extends beyond one's information and experience, and « authority » is operationalized to mean the rules governing the choice of beliefs. Hence, « ideology » would relate to meta-beliefs, in particular to the belief-control system.

If find this definition most intriguing, but must confess that it threatens to disappear into « epistemology » in general, if only because the activity of rejecting believed-to-be-false or untenable beliefs has never been coterminous with what is normally meant by « politics ». Still and *all*, the possibility remains that philosophy *is* politics, or vice versa.

## V. Intensity.

Control is necessarily a quantitative affair. Even in the limiting cases — where *none* of something is included, or *any* of it is included — a judgment must be made that indeed a unit, or an instance, of that thing has appeared and occasions decision.

Mostly, human decisions have to do with maintaining something or other within certain levels or « tolerances ». And it is not too much to say that ideologies, in the sense that they are programs for maximizing values are, when all is said and done, just guages.

The concept « value » retains the ambiguity of : 1° a univocal dimension, and 2° variances in (1°). Hence, on the assumption that ideologies may be statements about value-tolerances, I advert to the dark question of what a « value » is.

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(26) For example, HALPERN, *op. cit.*, p. 136, declares that the function of ideology is to « segregate and consolidate competing groups around rival ideas ».

Attending to the origin of the word in OF *valoir*, we see that it conveys the common-sense notion « to count » or « to weigh », in the sense that A if it « counts for » more than B takes priority over B. We still say that so-and-so is a person « of no account » or a person « of great weight ». It is obvious that no such utterance can be made without an intuitive-or-better idea of the criteria of value ; and a basic understanding of the operation « measuring-something-against-some-criterion » provides enough for extrapolating, applying other criteria to that criterion, or using the original « something » in turn as the criterion for a separate measurement.

It follows that the above-mentioned definitions of « ideology » which center on the distinctively emotional or passionate quality of an « ideological » belief-system are themselves vacuous ; for the intensity of values cannot be measured without measures ; and by this account it is the ideology itself which is the reference system in reference to which any relevant measure could be made. Or, it may be said that any ideology may be classified *from the standpoint of any other* as uncommonly emotional or bland (albeit, without translating the values of the one into those of the other, such a statement were meaningless). Or, an ideology may be said to be more or less « emotionladen » as measured by the physiological arousal of its proponents — though again, such an utterance is quite meaningless and question-begging of what beliefs warrant passionate conviction, and which do not.

In view of Putnam's excellent analysis (*op. cit.*) of the intensity problem, it cannot any longer be maintained that the « obsessional » desire to reduce some factors to others, or to subordinate some values to others, or to down-grade the past in deference to a « programmatic » future, is *ipso facto* more or less ideological than the currently fashionable pragmatic or detached attitudes. By this reasoning, a definition of « ideology » as « a pattern of beliefs characterized by a variable degree of commitment regardless of the type of content » (27) dissipates under analysis, the reason being that « commitment », « content », and « degree of commitment » fit together into that logical circularity that makes up an actual ideology.

Taken from another direction and depending on the reference-system out of which our commentator speaks, it might make sense to say that a luke-warm Christian is no Christian at all, just as it might make sense to say that « Christianity » is defined by the articles of the faith and not by the fervidness with which they are believed or espoused.

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(27) R. SCHULZE, *Some Social-psychological and Political Functions of Ideology*, in *Sociol. Q.*, vol. 10, p. 72, 1969.



## VI. Conclusion.

The troubles explored herein are of the sort shown by Hampshire (28) to derive from asking for definitions — where « definition » means at least to set X apart from not-X — of concepts which though *they themselves* have identifiable ingredients, are too diffuse ever to be identified conclusively as ingredients of *something else* (namely, not-X). For instance, statements like « Capitalism is preferable to socialism » are useless if one does not know what « preferable » means in the statement. If it means simply « I prefer », then it is still meaningless unless and until some idea is offered as to *why* I prefer it, how, when, etc. If it means « It is objectively better than », then the statement is empty until the criteria of « better » are supplied. They rarely are.

The difficulties I have raised adhere to the efforts of extremely thoughtful and knowledgeable people. It follows that we are probably chasing after a will-o'-the-wisp. And tentatively I would suggest that the concept « ideology » be avoided so long as so much ambiguity cleaves to it.

Yet rather than conclude on a sour note, let me offer my definition, mysteriously derived from all this, and retrieving the factor of « purpose » which got lost along the way: « An ideology is a program of which says that if followed everyone will be better off, but which, if actually followed, will leave one or more persons worse off. A « political ideology » is such a program which, if followed, will contradict the misdirected wishes of some people who, on that account, will have to be put under duress ». I strongly suspect that this definition is subject to the kinds of objections raised above.

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(28) Stuart HAMPSHIRE, *Thought and Action*, 1959.

