WHAT IS IDEOLOGY?

NobOdy has yet come up with a single adequate definition of ideology, and this book will be no exception. This is not because workers in the field are remarkable for their low intelligence, but because the term 'ideology' has a whole range of useful meanings, not all of which are compatible with each other. To try to compress this wealth of meaning into a single comprehensive definition would thus be unhelpful even if it were possible. The word 'ideology', one might say, is a text, woven of a whole tissue of different conceptual strands; it is traced through by divergent histories, and it is probably more important to assess what is valuable or can be discarded in each of these lineages than to merge them forcibly into some Grand Global Theory.

To indicate this variety of meaning, let me list more or less at random some definitions of ideology currently in circulation:

(a) the process of production of meanings, signs and values in social life;
(b) a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class;
(c) ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power;
(d) false ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power;
(e) systematically distorted communication;
(f) that which offers a position for a subject;
(g) forms of thought motivated by social interests;
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(h) identity thinking;
(i) socially necessary illusion;
(j) the conjuncture of discourse and power;
(k) the medium in which conscious social actors make sense of their world;
(l) action-oriented sets of beliefs;
(m) the confusion of linguistic and phenomenal reality;
(n) semiotic closure;
(o) the indispensable medium in which individuals live out their relations to a social structure;
(p) the process whereby social life is converted to a natural reality.¹

There are several points to be noted about this list. First, not all of these formulations are compatible with one another. If, for example, ideology means any set of beliefs motivated by social interests, then it cannot simply signify the dominant forms of thought in a society. Others of these definitions may be mutually compatible, but with some interesting implications: if ideology is both illusion and the medium in which social actors make sense of their world, then this tells us something rather depressing about our routine modes of sense-making. Secondly, we may note that some of these formulations are pejorative, others ambiguously so, and some not pejorative at all. On several of these definitions, nobody would claim that their own thinking was ideological, just as nobody would habitually refer to themselves as Fatso. Ideology, like halitosis, is in this sense what the other person has. It is part of what we mean by claiming that human beings are somewhat rational that we would be puzzled to encounter someone who held convictions which they acknowledged to be illusory. Some of these definitions, however, are neutral in this respect - 'a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class', for example - and to this extent one might well term one's own views ideological without any implication that they were false or chimerical.

Thirdly, we can note that some of these formulations involve epistemological questions - questions concerned with our knowledge of the world - while others are silent on this score. Some of them involve a sense of not seeing reality properly, whereas a definition like 'action-oriented sets of beliefs' leaves this issue open. This distinction, as we shall see, is an important bone of contention in the theory of ideology, and reflects a dissonance between two of the mainstream traditions we find inscribed
within the term. Roughly speaking, one central lineage, from Hegel and Marx to Georg Lukács and some later Marxist thinkers, has been much preoccupied with ideas of true and false cognition, with ideology as illusion, distortion and mystification; whereas an alternative tradition of thought has been less epistemological than sociological, concerned more with the function of ideas within social life than with their reality or unreality. The Marxist heritage has itself straddled these two intellectual currents, and that both of them have something interesting to tell us will be one of the contents of this book.

Whenever one is pondering the meaning of some specialized term, it is always useful to get a sense of how it would be used by the person-in-the-street, if it is used there at all. This is not to claim such usage as some final court of appeal, a gesture which many would view as itself ideological; but consulting the person-in-the-street nonetheless has its uses. What, then, would be meant if somebody remarked in the course of a pub conversation: 'Oh, that's just ideological!' Not, presumably, that what had just been said was simply false, though this might be implied; if that was what was meant, why not just say so? It is also unlikely that people in a pub would mean something like 'That's a fine specimen of semiotic closure!' or hotly accuse one another of confusing linguistic and phenomenal reality. To claim in ordinary conversation that someone is speaking ideologically is surely to hold that they are judging a particular issue through some rigid framework of preconceived ideas which distorts their understanding. I view things as they really are; you squint at them though a tunnel vision imposed by some extraneous system of doctrine. There is usually a suggestion that this involves an oversimplifying view of the world - that to speak or judge 'ideologically' is to do so schematically, stereotypically, and perhaps with the faintest hint of fanaticism. The opposite of ideology here, then, would be less 'absolute truth' than 'empirical' or 'pragmatic'. This view, the person-in-the-street might be gratified to hear, has the august support of the sociologist Emile Durkheim, who characterized the 'ideological method' as consisting in 'the use of notions to govern the collation of facts rather than deriving notions from them.'2

It is surely not hard to show what is wrong with such a case. Most people would not concede that without preconceptions of some kind - what the philosopher Martin Heidegger calls 'pre-understandings' - we would not even be able to identify an issue or situation, let alone pass judgement upon it. There is no such thing as presuppositionless thought, and to this extent all
of our thinking might be said to be ideological. Perhaps rigid preconceptions makes the difference: I presume that Paul McCartney has eaten in the last three months, which is not particularly ideological, whereas you presuppose that he is one of the forty thousand elect who will be saved on the Day of Judgement. But one person's rigidity is, notoriously, another's open-mindedness. His thought is red-neck, yours is doctrinal, and mine is deliciously supple. There are certainly forms of thought which simply 'read off' a particular situation from certain pre-established general principles, and the style of thinking we call 'rationalist' has in general been guilty of this error. But it remains to be seen whether all that we call ideological is in this sense rationalistic.

Some of the most vociferous persons-in-the-street are known as American sociologists. The belief that ideology is a schematic, inflexible way of seeing the world, as against some more modest, piecemeal, pragmatic wisdom, was elevated in the post-war period from a piece of popular wisdom to an elaborate sociological theory. For the American political theorist Edward Shils, ideologies are explicit, closed, resistant to innovation, promulgated with a great deal of affectivity and require total adherence from their devotees. What this comes down to is that the Soviet Union is in the grip of ideology while the United States sees things as they really are. This, as the reader will appreciate, is not in itself an ideological viewpoint. To seek some humble, pragmatic political goal, such as bringing down the democratically elected government of Chile, is a question of adapting oneself realistically to the facts; to send one's tanks into Czechoslovakia is an instance of ideological fanaticism.

An interesting feature of this 'end-of-ideology' ideology is that it tends to view ideology in two quite contradictory ways, as at once blindly irrational and excessively rationalistic. On the one hand, ideologies are passionate, rhetorical, impelled by some benighted pseudo-religious faith which the sober technocratic world of modern capitalism has thankfully outgrown; on the other hand they are arid conceptual systems which seek to reconstruct society from the ground up in accordance with some bloodless blueprint. As Alvin Gouldner sardonically encapsulates these ambivalences, ideology is 'the mind-inflaming realm of the doctrine, the dogmatic, the impassioned, the dehumanising, the false, the irrational, and, of course, the "extremist" consciousness'. From the standpoint of an empiricist social engineering, ideologies have at once too much heart and too little, and so can be condemned in the same breath as lurid fantasy and straitjacketing
dogma. They attract, in other words, the ambiguous response traditionally accorded to intellectuals, who are scorned for their visionary dreaming at the very moment they are being censured for their clinical remoteness from common affections. It is a choice irony that in seeking to replace an impassioned fanaticism with an austerely technocratic approach to social problems, the end-of-ideology theorists unwittingly re-enact the gesture of those who invented the term 'ideology' in the first place, the ideologues of the French Enlightenment.

An objection to the case that ideology consists in peculiarly rigid sets of ideas is that not every rigid set of ideas is ideological. I may have unusually inflexible beliefs about how to brush my teeth, submitting each individual tooth to an exact number of strokes and favouring mauve toothbrushes only, but it would seem strange in most circumstances to call such views ideological. ('Pathological' might be rather more accurate.) It is true that people sometimes use the word ideology to refer to systematic belief in general, as when someone says that they abstain from eating meat 'for practical rather than ideological reasons'. 'Ideology' here is more or less synonymous with the broad sense of the term 'philosophy', as in the phrase 'The President has no philosophy', which was spoken approvingly about Richard Nixon by one of his aides. But ideology is surely often felt to entail more than just this. If I am obsessional about brushing my teeth because if the British do not keep in good health then the Soviets will walk all over our flabby, toothless nation, or if I make a fetish of physical health because I belong to a society which can exert technological dominion over just about everything but death, then it might make more sense to describe my behaviour as ideologically motivated. The term ideology, in other words, would seem to make reference not only to belief systems, but to questions of power.

What kind of reference, though? Perhaps the most common answer is to claim that ideology has to do with legitimating the power of a dominant social group or class. 'To study ideology', writes John B. Thompson, '... is to study the ways in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination.' This is probably the single most widely accepted definition of ideology; and the process of legitimation would seem to involve at least six different strategies. A dominant power may legitimate itself by promoting beliefs and values congenial to it; naturalizing and universalizing such beliefs so as to render them self-evident and apparently inevitable; denigrating ideas which might challenge it; excluding rival forms of thought, perhaps by some unspoken but systematic logic; and obscuring social reality in ways convenient
to itself. Such 'mystification', as it is commonly known, frequently takes the form of masking or suppressing social conflicts, from which arises the conception of ideology as an imaginary resolution of real contradictions. In any actual ideological formation, all six of these strategies are likely to interact in complex ways.

There are, however, at least two major difficulties with this otherwise persuasive definition of ideology. For one thing, not every body of belief which people commonly term ideological is associated with a dominant political power. The political left, in particular, tends almost instinctively to think of such dominant modes when it considers the topic of ideology; but what then do we call the beliefs of the Levellers, Diggers, Narodniks and Suffragettes, which were certainly not the governing value systems of their day? Are socialism and feminism ideologies, and if not why not? Are they non-ideological when in political opposition but ideological when they come to power? If what the Diggers and Suffragettes believed is 'ideological', as a good deal of common usage would suggest, then by no means all ideologies are oppressive and spuriously legitimating. Indeed the right-wing political theorist Kenneth Minogue holds, astoundingly, that all ideologies are politically oppositional, sterile totalizing schemes as opposed to the ruling practical wisdom: 'Ideologies can be specified in terms of a shared hostility to modernity: to liberalism in politics, individualism in moral practice, and the market in economics.' On this view, supporters of socialism are ideological whereas defenders of capitalism are not. The extent to which one is prepared to use the term ideology of one's own political views is a reliable index of the nature of one's political ideology. Generally speaking, conservatives like Minogue are nervous of the concept in their own case, since to dub their own beliefs ideological would be to risk turning them into objects of contestation.

Does this mean, then, that socialists, feminists and other radicals should come clean about the ideological nature of their own values? If the term ideology is confined to dominant forms of social thought, such a move would be inaccurate and needlessly confusing; but it may be felt that there is need here for a broader definition of ideology, as any kind of intersection between belief systems and political power. And such a definition would be neutral on the question of whether this intersection challenged or confirmed a particular social order. The political philosopher Martin Seliger argues for just such a formulation, defining ideology as 'sets of ideas by which men [sic] posit, explain and justify ends and means of organised social action, and
specifically political action, irrespective of whether such action aims to preserve, amend, uproot or rebuild a given social order. On this formation, it would make perfect sense to speak of 'socialist ideology', as it would not (at least in the West) if ideology meant just ruling belief systems, and as it would not, at least for a socialist, if ideology referred inescapably to illusion, mystification and false consciousness.

To widen the scope of the term ideology in this style has the advantage of staying faithful to much common usage, and thus of resolving the apparent dilemma of why, say, fascism should be an ideology but feminism should not be. It carries, however, the disadvantage of appearing to jettison from the concept of ideology a number of elements which many radical theorists have assumed to be central to it: the obscuring and 'naturalizing' of social reality, the specious resolution of real contradictions, and so on. My own view is that both the wider and narrower senses of ideology have their uses, and that their mutual incompatibility, descending as they do from divergent political and conceptual histories, must be simply acknowledged. This view has the advantage of remaining loyal to the implicit slogan of Bertolt Brecht - 'Use what you can!' - and the disadvantage of excessive charity.

Such charity is a fault because it risks broadening the concept of ideology to the point where it becomes politically toothless; and this is the second problem with the 'ideology as legitimation' thesis, one which concerns the nature of power itself. On the view of Michel Foucault and his acolytes, power is not something confined to armies and parliaments: it is, rather, a pervasive, intangible network of force which weaves itself into our slightest gestures and most intimate utterances. On this theory, to limit the idea of power to its more obvious political manifestations would itself be an ideological move, obscuring the complex diffuseness of its operations. That we should think of power as imprinting our personal relations and routine activities is a clear political gain, as feminists, for instance, have not been slow to recognize; but it carries with it a problem for the meaning of ideology. For if there are no values and beliefs not bound up with power, then the term ideology threatens to expand to vanishing point. Any word which covers everything loses its cutting edge and dwindles to an empty sound. For a term to have meaning, it must be possible to specify what, in particular circumstances, would count as the other of it - which doesn't necessarily mean specifying something which would be always and everywhere the other of it. If power, like the Almighty himself, is omnipresent, then the word ideology ceases to single out anything in particular and becomes

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wholly uninformative - just as if any piece of human behaviour whatsoever, including torture, could count as an instance of compassion, the word compassion shrinks to an empty signifier.

Faithful to this logic, Foucault and his followers effectively abandon the concept of ideology altogether, replacing it with the more capacious 'discourse'. But this may be to relinquish too quickly a useful distinction. The force of the term ideology lies in its capacity to discriminate between those power struggles which are somehow central to a whole form of social life, and those which are not. A breakfast-time quarrel between husband and wife over who exactly allowed the toast to turn that grotesque shade of black need not be ideological; it becomes so when, for example, it begins to engage questions of sexual power, beliefs about gender roles and so on. To say that this sort of contention is ideological makes a difference, tells us something informative, as the more 'expansionistic' senses of the word do not. Those radicals who hold that 'everything is ideological' or 'everything is political' seem not to realize that they are in danger of cutting the ground from beneath their own feet. Such slogans may valuably challenge an excessively narrow definition of politics and ideology, one convenient for a ruling power intent on depoliticizing whole sectors of social life. But to stretch these terms to the point where they become coextensive with everything is simply to empty them of force, which is equally congenial to the ruling order. It is perfectly possible to agree with Nietzsche and Foucault that power is everywhere, while wanting for certain practical purposes to distinguish between more and less central instances of it.

There are those on the political left, however, who feel uneasy about this whole business of deciding between the more and less central. Isn't this merely a surreptitious attempt to marginalize certain power struggles which have been unduly neglected? Do we really want to draw up a hierarchy of such conflicts, thus reproducing a typically conservative habit of thought? If someone actually believes that a squabble between two children over a ball is as important as the El Salvador liberation movement, then you simply have to ask them whether they are joking. Perhaps by dint of sufficient ridicule you might persuade them to become properly hierarchical thinkers. Political radicals are quite as dedicated to the concept of privilege as their opponents: they believe, for example, that the level of food supplies in Mozambique is a weightier issue than the love life of Mickey Mouse. To claim that one kind of conflict is more important than another involves, of course, arguing for this priority and being open to disapproval; but nobody actually believes that

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'power is everywhere' in the sense that any manifestation of it is as significant as any other. On this issue, as perhaps on all others, nobody is in fact a relativist, whatever they may rhetorically assert.

Not everything, then, may usefully be said to be ideological. If there is nothing which is not ideological, then the term cancels all the way through and drops out of sight. To say this does not commit one to believing that there is a kind of discourse which is inherently non-ideological; it just means that in any particular situation you must be able to point to what counts as non-ideological for the term to have meaning. Equally, however, one might claim that there is no piece of discourse which could not be ideological, given the appropriate conditions. 'Have you put the cat out yet?' could be an ideological utterance, if (for example) it carried the unspoken implication: 'Or are you being your usual shiftless proletarian self?' Conversely, the statement 'men are superior to women' need not be ideological (in the sense of supporting a dominant power); delivered in a suitably sardonic tone, it might be a way of subverting sexist ideology.

A way of putting this point is to suggest that ideology is a matter of 'discourse' rather than 'language'. It concerns the actual uses of language between particular human subjects for the production of specific effects. You could not decide whether a statement was ideological or not by inspecting it in isolation from its discursive context, any more than you could decide in this way whether a piece of writing was a work of literary art. Ideology is less a matter of the inherent linguistic properties of a pronouncement than a question of who is saying what to whom for what purposes. This isn't to deny that there are particular ideological 'idioms': the language of fascism, for example. Fascism tends to have its own peculiar lexicon (Lebensraum, sacrifice, blood and soil), but what is primarily ideological about these terms is the power-interests they serve and the political effects they generate. The general point, then, is that exactly the same piece of language may be ideological in one context and not in another; ideology is a function of the relation of an utterance to its social context.

Similar problems to those of the 'pan-powerist' case arise if we define ideology as any discourse bound up with specific social interests. For, once again, what discourse isn't? Many people outside right-wing academia would nowadays suspect the notion of some wholly disinterested language; and if they are right then it would seem pointless to define ideology as 'socially interested' utterances, since this covers absolutely anything. (The very word 'interest', incidentally, is of ideological interest: as Raymond
Williams points out in *Keywords*, it is significant that 'our most general word for attraction or involvement should have developed from a formal objective term in property and finance . . . this now central word for attraction, attention and concern is saturated with the experience of a society based on money relationships'. Perhaps we could try to distinguish here between 'social' and purely 'individual' kinds of interest, so that the word ideology would denote the interests of specific social groups rather than, say, someone's insatiable hankering for haddock. But the dividing line between social and individual is notoriously problematic, and 'social interests' is in any case so broad a category as to risk emptying the concept of ideology once more of meaning.

It may be useful, even so, to discriminate between two 'levels' of interest, one of which might be said to be ideological and the other not. Human beings have certain 'deep' interests generated by the nature of their bodies: interests in eating, communicating with one another, understanding and controlling their environment and so on. There seems no very useful sense in which these kinds of interest can be dubbed ideological, as opposed, for example, to having an interest in bringing down the government or laying on more childcare. Postmodernist thought, under the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche, has typically conflated these different sorts of interests in an illicit way, fashioning a homogeneous universe in which everything from tying one's shoelaces to toppling dictatorships is levelled to a matter of 'interests'. The political effect of this move is to blur the specificity of certain forms of social conflict, grossly inflating the whole category of 'interests' to the point where it picks out nothing in particular. To describe ideology as 'interested' discourse, then, calls for the same qualification as characterizing it as a question of power. In both cases, the term is forceful and informative only if it helps us to distinguish between those interests and power conflicts which at any given time are fairly central to a whole social order, and those which are not.

None of the argument so far casts much light on the epistemological issues involved in the theory of ideology - on the question, for example, of whether ideology can be usefully viewed as 'false consciousness'. This is a fairly unpopular notion of ideology nowadays, for a number of reasons. For one thing, epistemology itself is at the moment somewhat out of fashion, and the assumption that some of our ideas 'match' or 'correspond to' the way things are, while others do not, is felt by some to be a naive, discreditable
theory of knowledge. For another thing, the idea of false consciousness can
be taken as implying the possibility of some unequivocally correct way of
viewing the world, which is today under deep suspicion. Moreover, the
belief that a minority of theorists monopolize a scientifically grounded
knowledge of how society is, while the rest of us blunder around in some fog
of false consciousness, does not particularly endear itself to the democratic
sensibility. A novel version of this elitism has arisen in the work of the
philosopher Richard Rorty, in whose ideal society the intellectuals will be
'ironists', practising a suitably cavalier, laid-back attitude to their own
beliefs, while the masses, for whom such self-ironizing might prove too
subversive a weapon, will continue to salute the flag and take life seriously.12

In this situation, it seems simpler to some theorists of ideology to drop
the epistemological issue altogether, favouring instead a more political or
sociological sense of ideology as the medium in which men and women
fight out their social and political battles at the level of signs, meanings and
representations. Even as orthodox a Marxist as Alex Callinicos urges us to
scrap the epistemological elements in Marx's own theory of ideology,13 while
Göran Therborn is equally emphatic that ideas of false and true conscious-
ness should be rejected 'explicitly and decisively, once and for all'.14 Martin
Seliger wants to discard this negative or pejorative meaning of ideology
altogether,15 while Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, writing in a period when
the 'false consciousness' thesis was at the height of its unpopularity,
peremptorily dismiss the idea as 'ludicrous'.16

To argue for a 'political' rather than 'epistemological' definition of
ideology is not of course to claim that politics and ideology are identical.
One way one might think of distinguishing them is to suggest that politics
refers to the power processes by which social orders are sustained or
challenged, whereas ideology denotes the ways in which these power
processes get caught up in the realm of signification. This won't quite do,
however, since politics has its own sort of signification, which need not
necessarily be ideological. To state that there is a constitutional monarchy in
Britain is a political pronouncement; it becomes ideological only when it
begins to involve beliefs - when, for example, it carries the implicit rider
'and a good thing too'. Since this usually only needs to be said when there are
people around who consider it a bad thing, we can suggest that ideology
concerns less signification than conflicts within the field of signification. If
the members of a dissident political group say to each other, 'We can bring
down the government', this is a piece of political discourse; if they say it to
the government it becomes instantly ideological (in the expanded sense of the term), since the utterance has now entered into the arena of discursive struggle.

There are several reasons why the 'false consciousness' view of ideology seems unconvincing. One of them has to do with what we might call the moderate rationality of human beings in general, and is perhaps more the expression of a political faith than a conclusive argument. Aristotle held that there was an element of truth in most beliefs; and though we have witnessed enough pathological irrationalism in the politics of our own century to be nervous of any too sanguine trust in some robust human rationality, it is surely hard to credit that whole masses of human beings would hold over some extensive historical period ideas and beliefs which were simply nonsensical. Deeply persistent beliefs have to be supported to some extent, however meagrely, by the world our practical activity discloses to us; and to believe that immense numbers of people would live and sometimes die in the name of ideas which were absolutely vacuous and absurd is to take up an unpleasantly demeaning attitude towards ordinary men and women. It is a typically conservative estimate of human beings to see them as sunk in irrational prejudice, incapable of reasoning coherently; and it is a more radical attitude to hold that while we may indeed be afflicted by all sorts of mystifications, some of which might even be endemic to the mind itself, we nevertheless have some capacity for making sense of our world in a moderately cogent way. If human beings really were gullible and benighted enough to place their faith in great numbers in ideas which were utterly void of meaning, then we might reasonably ask whether such people were worth politically supporting at all. If they are that credulous, how could they ever hope to emancipate themselves?

It follows from this view that if we come across a body of, say, magical or mythological or religious doctrine to which many people have committed themselves, we can often be reasonably sure that there is something in it. What that something is may not be, for sure, what the exponents of such creeds believe it to be; but it is unlikely to be a mere nonsense either. Simply on account of the pervasiveness and durability of such doctrines, we can generally assume that they encode, in however mystified a way, genuine needs and desires. It is false to believe that the sun moves round the earth, but it is not absurd; and neither is it absurd to hold that justice demands sending electric currents through the bodies of murderers. There is nothing ridiculous in claiming that some people are inferior to others, since it is
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obviously true. In certain definite respects, some individuals are indeed inferior to others: less good-tempered, more prone to envy, slower in the fifty-yard dash. It may be false and pernicious to generalize these particular inequalities to whole races or classes of people, but we can understand well enough the logic by which this comes about. It may be wrong to believe that the human race is in such a mess that it can be saved only by some transcendental power, but the feelings of impotence, guilt and utopian aspiration which such a dogma encapsulates are by no means illusory.

A further point can be made here. However widespread 'false consciousness' may be in social life, it can nevertheless be claimed that most of what people say most of the time about the world must in fact be true. This, for the philosopher Donald Davidson, is a logical rather than an empirical point. For unless, so Davidson argues, we are able to assume that most people's observations are most of the time accurate, there would be an insuperable difficulty in ever getting to understand their language. And the fact is that we do seem to be able to translate the languages of other cultures. As one of Davidson's commentators formulates this so-called principle of charity: 'If we think we understand what people say, we must also regard most of our observations about the world we live in as correct.'

Many of the utterances in question are of a fairly trivial sort, and we should not underestimate the power of common illusion: a recent opinion poll revealed that one in three Britons believes that the sun moves round the earth, and one in seven holds that the solar system is larger than the universe. As far as our routine social life goes, however, we just could not in Davidson's view be mistaken most of the time. Our practical knowledge must be mostly accurate, since otherwise our world would fall apart. Whether or not the solar system is bigger than the universe plays little part in our daily social activities, and so is a point on which we can afford to be mistaken. At a fairly low level, individuals who share the same social practices must most of the time understand one another correctly, even if a small minority of them in universities spend their time agonizing over the indeterminacy of discourse. Those who quite properly emphasize that language is a terrain of conflict sometimes forget that conflict presupposes a degree of mutual agreement: we are not politically conflicting if you hold that patriarchy is an objectionable social system and I hold that it is a small town in upper New York state. A certain practical solidarity is built into the structures of any shared language, however much that language may be traversed by the divisions of class, gender and race. Radicals who regard such a view as dangerously
sanguine, expressive of too naive a faith in ‘ordinary language’, forget that such practical solidarity and reliability of cognition are testimony to that basic realism and intelligence of popular life which is so unpalatable to the elitist.

What Davidson may be accused of overlooking, however, is that form of ‘systematically distorted communication’ which for Jürgen Habermas goes by the name of ideology. Davidson argues that when native speakers repeatedly point at a rabbit and utter a sound, this act of denotation must for most of the time be accurate, otherwise we could never come to learn the native word for rabbit, or - by extension - anything else in their language. Imagine, however, a society which uses the word ‘duty’ every time a man beats his wife. Or imagine an outside observer in our own culture who, having picked up our linguistic habits, was asked by his fellows on returning home for our word for domination, and replied ‘service’. Davidson’s theory fails to take account of these systematic deviations - though it does perhaps establish that in order to be able to decipher an ideological system of discourse, we must already be in possession of the normative, undistorted uses of terms. The wife-beating society must use the word ‘duty’ a sufficient number of times in an appropriate context for us to be able to spot an ideological ‘abuse’.

Even if it is true that most of the ideas by which people have lived are not simply nonsensical, it is not clear that this charitable stance is quite enough to dispose of the ‘false consciousness’ thesis. For those who hold that thesis do not need to deny that certain kinds of illusion can express real needs and desires. All they may be claiming is that it is false to believe that murderers should be executed, or that the Archangel Gabriel is preparing to put in an appearance next Tuesday, and that these falsehoods are significantly bound up with the reproduction of a dominant political power. There need be no implication that people do not regard themselves as having good grounds for holding these beliefs; the point may simply be that what they believe is manifestly not the case, and that this is a matter of relevance to political power.

Part of the opposition to the ‘false consciousness’ case stems from the accurate claim that, in order to be truly effective, ideologies must make at least some minimal sense of people’s experience, must conform to some degree with what they know of social reality from their practical interaction with it. As Jon Elster reminds us, ruling ideologies can actively shape the wants and desires of those subjected to them; but they must also engage
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significantly with the wants and desires that people already have, catching up genuine hopes and needs, reinflecting them in their own peculiar idiom, and feeding them back to their subjects in ways which render these ideologies plausible and attractive. They must be ‘real’ enough to provide the basis on which individuals can fashion a coherent identity, must furnish some solid motivations for effective action, and must make at least some feeble attempt to explain away their own more flagrant contradictions and incoherencies. In short, successful ideologies must be more than imposed illusions, and for all their inconsistencies must communicate to their subjects a version of social reality which is real and recognizable enough not to be simply rejected out of hand. They may, for example, be true enough in what they assert but false in what they deny, as John Stuart Mill considered almost all social theories to be. Any ruling ideology which failed altogether to mesh with its subjects’ lived experience would be extremely vulnerable, and its exponents would be well advised to trade it in for another. But none of this contradicts the fact that ideologies quite often contain important propositions which are absolutely false: that Jews are inferior beings, that women are less rational than men, that fornicators will be condemned to perpetual torment. If these views are not instances of false consciousness, then it is difficult to know what is; and those who dismiss the whole notion of false consciousness must be careful not to appear cavalier about the offensiveness of these opinions. If the ‘false consciousness’ case commits one to the view that ideology is simply unreal, a fantasy entirely disconnected from social reality, then it is difficult to know who, these days at least, actually subscribes to such a standpoint. If, on the other hand, it does no more than assert that there are some quite central ideological utterances which are manifestly false, then it is equally hard to see how anybody could deny this. The real question, perhaps, is not whether one denies this, but what role one ascribes to such falsehood in one’s theory of ideology as a whole. Are false representations of social reality somehow constitutive of ideology, or more contingent to it?

One reason why ideology would not seem to be a matter of false consciousness is that many statements which people might agree to be ideological are obviously true. ‘Prince Charles is a thoughtful, conscientious fellow, not hideously ugly’ is true, but most people who thought it worth saying would no doubt be using the statement in some way to buttress the power of royalty. ‘Prince Andrew is more intelligent than a hamster’ is also probably true, if somewhat more controversial; but the effect of such a
pronouncement (if one ignores the irony) is again likely to be ideological in the sense of helping to legitimate a dominant power. This, however, may not be enough to answer those who hold that ideology is in general falsifying. For it can always be argued that while such utterances are empirically true, they are false in some deeper, more fundamental way. It is true that Prince Charles is reasonably conscientious, but it is not true that royalty is a desirable institution. Imagine a management spokesperson announcing that 'If this strike continues, people will be dying in the streets for lack of ambulances.' This might well be true, as opposed to a claim that they will be dying of boredom for lack of newspapers; but a striking worker might nevertheless see the spokesperson as a twister, since the force of the observation is probably 'Get back to work', and there is no reason to assume that this, under the circumstances, would be the most reasonable thing to do. To say that the statement is ideological is then to claim that it is powered by an ulterior motive bound up with the legitimation of certain interests in a power struggle. We might say that the spokesperson's comment is true as a piece of language, but not as a piece of discourse. It describes a possible situation accurately enough; but as a rhetorical act aimed at producing certain effects it is false, and this in two senses. It is false because it involves a kind of deception - the spokesperson is not really saying what he or she means; and it carries with it an implication - that getting back to work would be the most constructive action to take - which may well not be the case.

Other types of ideological enunciation are true in what they affirm but false in what they exclude. 'This land of liberty', spoken by an American politician, may be true enough if one has in mind the freedom to practise one's religion or turn a fast buck, but not if one considers the freedom to live without the fear of being mugged or to announce on prime-time television that the president is a murderer. Other kinds of ideological statement involve falsity without either necessarily intending to deceive or being significantly exclusive: 'I'm British and proud of it', for example. Both parts of this observation may be true, but it implies that being British is a virtue in itself, which is false. Note that what is involved here is less deception than self-deception, or delusion. A comment like 'If we allow Pakistanis to live in our street, the house prices will fall' may well be true, but it may involve the assumption that Pakistanis are inferior beings, which is false.

It would seem, then, that some at least of what we call ideological discourse is true at one level but not at another: true in its empirical content
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but deceptive in its force, or true in its surface meaning but false in its underlying assumptions. And to this extent the 'false consciousness' thesis need not be significantly shaken by the recognition that not all ideological language characterizes the world in erroneous ways. To speak, however, of 'false assumptions' broaches a momentous topic. For someone might argue that a statement like 'Being British is a virtue in itself' is not false in the same sense that it is false to believe that Ghengis Khan is alive and well and running a boutique in the Bronx. Is not this just to confuse two different meanings of the word 'false'? I may happen not to believe that being British is a virtue in itself; but this is just my opinion, and is surely not on a level with declarations like 'Paris is the capital of Afghanistan', which everyone would agree to be factually untrue.

What side you take up in this debate depends on whether or not you are a moral realist. One kind of opponent of moral realism wants to hold that our discourse divides into two distinct kinds: those speech acts which aim to describe the way things are, which involve criteria of truth and falsity; and those which express evaluations and prescriptions, which do not. On this view, cognitive language is one thing and normative or prescriptive language quite another. A moral realist, by contrast, refuses this binary opposition of 'fact' and 'value' (which has in fact deep roots in bourgeois philosophical history), and 'denies that we can draw any intelligible distinction between those parts of assertoric discourse which do, and those which do not, genuinely describe reality'. On this theory, it is mistaken to think that our language separates out into steel-hard objectivism and soggy subjectivism, into a realm of indubitable physical facts and a sphere of precariously floating values. Moral judgements are as much candidates for rational argumentation as are the more obviously descriptive parts of our speech. For a realist, such normative statements purport to describe what is the case: there are 'moral facts' as well as physical ones, about which our judgements can be said to be either true or false. That Jews are inferior beings is quite as false as that Paris is the capital of Afghanistan; it isn't just a question of my private opinion or of some ethical posture I decide to assume towards the world. To declare that South Africa is a racist society is not just a more imposing way of saying that I happen not to like the set-up in South Africa.

One reason why moral judgements do not seem to us as solid as judgements about the physical world is that we live in a society where there are fundamental conflicts of value. Indeed the only moral case which the liberal pluralist would rule out is one which would interfere with this free market
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in values. Because we cannot agree at a fundamental level, it is tempting to believe that values are somehow free-floating — that moral judgements cannot be subject to criteria of truth and falsehood because these criteria are as a matter of fact in considerable disarray. We can be reasonably sure about whether Abraham Lincoln was taller than four feet, but not about whether there are circumstances in which it is permissible to kill. The fact that we cannot currently arrive at any consensus on this matter, however, is no reason to assume that it is just a question of some unarguable personal option or intuition. Whether or not one is a moral realist, then, will make a difference to one's assessment of how far ideological language involves falsehood. A moral realist will not be persuaded out of the 'false consciousness' case just because it can be shown that some ideological proposition is empirically true, since that proposition might always be shown to encode a normative claim that was in fact false.

All of this has a relevance to the widely influential theory of ideology proposed by the French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser. For Althusser, one can speak of descriptions or representations of the world as being either true or false; but ideology is not for him at root a matter of such descriptions at all, and criteria of truth and falsehood are thus largely irrelevant to it. Ideology for Althusser does indeed represent — but what it represents is the way I 'live' my relations to society as a whole, which cannot be said to be a question of truth or falsehood. Ideology for Althusser is a particular organization of signifying practices which goes to constitute human beings as social subjects, and which produces the lived relations by which such subjects are connected to the dominant relations of production in a society. As a term, it covers all the various political modalities of such relations, from an identification with the dominant power to an oppositional stance towards it. Though Althusser thus adopts the broader sense of ideology we have examined, his thinking about the topic, as we shall see later, is covertly constrained by an attention to the narrower sense of ideology as a dominant formation.

There is no doubt that Althusser strikes a lethal blow at any purely rationalistic theory of ideology — at the notion that it consists simply of a collection of distorting representations of reality and empirically false propositions. On the contrary, ideology for Althusser alludes in the main to our affective, unconscious relations with the world, to the ways in which we are pre-reflectively bound up in social reality. It is a matter of how that reality 'strikes' us in the form of apparently spontaneous experience, of the
ways in which human subjects are ceaselessly at stake in it, investing in their relations to social life as a crucial part of what it is to be themselves. One might say that ideology, rather like poetry for the literary critic I.A. Richards, is less a matter of propositions than of 'pseudo-propositions'. It appears often enough on its grammatical surface to be referential (descriptive of states of affairs) while being secretly 'emotive' (expressive of the lived reality of human subjects) or 'conative' (directed towards the achievement of certain effects). If this is so, then it would seem that there is a kind of slipperiness or duplicity built into ideological language, rather of the kind that Immanuel Kant thought he had discovered in the nature of aesthetic judgements. Ideology, Althusser claims, 'expresses a will, a hope or a nostalgia, rather than describing a reality'; it is fundamentally a matter of fearing and denouncing, reverencing and reviling, all of which then sometimes gets coded into a discourse which looks as though it is describing the way things actually are. It is thus, in the terms of the philosopher J.L. Austin, 'performative' rather than 'constative' language: it belongs to the class of speech acts which get something done (cursing, persuading, celebrating and so on) rather than to the discourse of description. A pronouncement like 'Black is beautiful', popular in the days of the American civil rights movement, looks on the surface as though it is characterizing a state of affairs, but is in fact of course a rhetorical act of defiance and self-affirmation.

Althusser tries to shift us, then, from a cognitive to an affective theory of ideology - which is not necessarily to deny that ideology contains certain cognitive elements, or to reduce it to the merely 'subjective'. It is certainly subjective in the sense of being subject-centred: its utterances are to be deciphered as expressive of a speaker's attitudes or lived relations to the world. But it is not a question of mere private whim. To assert that one doesn't like tinkers is unlikely to have the same force as asserting that one doesn't like tomatoes. The latter aversion may just be a private quirk; the former is likely to involve certain beliefs about the value of rootedness, self-discipline and the dignity of labour which are central to the reproduction of a particular social system. On the model of ideology we are examining, a statement like 'Tinkers are a flea-ridden, thieving bunch of layabouts' could be decoded into some such performative utterance as 'Down with tinkers!', and this in turn could be decoded into some such proposition as 'There are reasons connected with our relations to the dominant social order which make us want to denigrate these people.' It is worth noting, however, that if the speaker himself could effect the second decodement, he would already
be well on the way to overcoming his prejudice.

Ideological statements, then, would seem to be subjective but not private; and in this sense too they have an affinity with Kant's aesthetic judgements, which are at once subjective and universal. On the one hand, ideology is no mere set of abstract doctrines but the stuff which makes us uniquely what we are, constitutive of our very identities; on the other hand, it presents itself as an 'Everybody knows that', a kind of anonymous universal truth. (Whether all ideology universalizes in this way is a question we shall take up later.) Ideology is a set of viewpoints I happen to hold; yet that 'happen' is somehow more than just fortuitous, as happening to prefer parting my hair down the middle is probably not. It appears often enough as a ragbag of impersonal, subjectless tags and adages; yet these shop-soiled platitudes are deeply enough entwined with the roots of personal identity to impel us from time to time to murder or martyrdom. In the sphere of ideology, concrete particular and universal truth glide ceaselessly in and out of each other, by-passing the mediation of rational analysis.

If ideology is less a matter of representations of reality than of lived relations, does this finally put paid to the truth/falsehood issue? One reason to think that it might is that it is hard to see how someone could be mistaken about their lived experience. I may mistake Madonna for a minor deity, but can I be mistaken about the feelings of awe this inspires in me? The answer, surely, is that I can. There is no reason to believe in a post-Freudian era that our lived experience need be any less ambiguous than our ideas. I can be as mistaken about my feelings as I can be about anything else: 'I thought at the time I was angry, but looking back I see that I was afraid.' Perhaps my sensation of awe at the sight of Madonna is just a defence against my unconscious envy of her superior earning-power. That I am experiencing something can't be doubted, any more than I can doubt that I am in pain; but what precisely my 'lived relations' to the social order consist in may be a more problematical affair than the Althusserians sometimes seem to think. Perhaps it is a mistake to imagine that Althusser is speaking here primarily of conscious experience, since our lived relations to social reality are for him largely unconscious. But if our conscious experience is elusive and indeterminate - a point which those political radicals who appeal dogmatically to 'experience' as some sort of absolute fail to recognize - then our unconscious life is even more so.

There is another, rather different sense in which the categories of truth and falsehood may be said to apply to one's lived experience, which returns
us to the issue of moral realism. I really am furious that my teenage son has shaved off his hair and dyed his skull a flamboyant purple, but I retain enough shreds of rationality to acknowledge that this feeling is 'false' - in the sense of being, not illusory or a self-misinterpretation, but one based upon false values. My anger is motivated by the false belief that teenagers ought to appear in public like bank managers, that they should be socially conformist and so on. One's lived experience may be false in the sense of 'inauthentic', untrue to those values which can be held to be definitive of what it is for human beings in a particular situation to live well. For a moral realist of radical persuasion, someone who believes that the highest goal in life is to amass as much private wealth as possible, preferably by grinding others into the dust, is just as much in error as someone who believes that Henry Gibson is the name of a Norwegian playwright.

Althusser may be right that ideology is chiefly a question of 'lived relations'; but there are no such relations which do not tacitly involve a set of beliefs and assumptions, and these beliefs and assumptions may themselves be open to judgements of truth and falsehood. A racist is usually someone in the grip of fear, hatred and insecurity, rather than someone who has dispassionately arrived at certain intellectual judgements on other races, but even if his feelings are not motivated by such judgements, they are likely to be deeply entwined with them; and these judgements - that certain races are inferior to others, for example - are plainly false. Ideology may indeed be primarily a matter of performative utterances - of imperatives like 'Rule, Britannia!', of optatives like 'May Margaret Thatcher reign for another thousand years!', or interrogatives like 'Is not this nation blessed under heaven?' But each of these speech acts is bound up with thoroughly questionable assumptions: that British imperialism is an excellent thing, that another thousand years of Thatcher would have been a deeply desirable state of affairs, that there exists a supreme being with a particular interest in supervising the nation's progress.

The Althusserian case need not be taken as denying that judgements of truth and falsehood may be at some level applicable to ideological discourse; it may simply be arguing that within such discourse the affective typically outweighs the cognitive. Or - which is a somewhat different matter - that the 'practico-social' takes predominance over theoretical knowledge. Ideologies for Althusser do contain a kind of knowledge; but they are not primarily cognitive, and the knowledge in question is less theoretical (which is strictly speaking for Althusser the only kind of knowledge there is) than
pragmatic, one which orients the subject to its practical tasks in society. In fact, however, many apologists for this case have ended up effectively denying the relevance of truth and falsehood to ideology altogether. Paramount among such theorists in Britain has been the sociologist Paul Hirst, who argues that ideology cannot be a matter of false consciousness because it is indubitably real. 'Ideology ... is not illusion, it is not falsity, because how can something which has effects be false? ... It would be like saying that a black pudding is false, or a steamroller is false.'26 It is easy enough to see what kind of logical slide is taking place here. There is a confusion between 'false' as meaning 'untrue to what is the case', and 'false' as meaning 'unreal'. (As if someone were to say: 'Lying isn't a matter of falsehood; he really did lie to me!') It is quite possible to hold that ideology may sometimes be false in the first sense, but not in the second. Hirst simply collapses the epistemological questions at stake here into ontological ones. It may be that I really did experience a group of badgers in tartan trousers nibbling my toes the other evening, but this was probably because of those strange chemical substances the local vicar administered to me, not because they were actually there. On Hirst's view, one would have no way of distinguishing between dreams, hallucinations and reality, since all of them are actually experienced and all of them can have real effects. Hirst's manoeuvre here recalls the dodge of those aestheticians who, confronted with the knotty problem of how art relates to reality, solemnly remind us that art is indubitably real.

Rather than ditching the epistemological issues altogether à la Hirst, it might be more useful to ponder the suggestion that ideological discourse typically displays a certain ratio between empirical propositions and what we might roughly term a 'world view', in which the latter has the edge over the former. The closest analogy to this is perhaps a literary work. Most literary works contain empirical propositions; they may mention, for example, that there is a lot of snow in Greenland, or that human beings typically have two ears. But part of what is meant by 'fictionality' is that these statements are not usually present for their own sake; they act, rather, as 'supports' for the overall world view of the text itself. And the ways in which these empirical statements are selected and deployed is generally governed by this requirement. 'Constative' language, in other words, is harnessed to 'performative' ends; empirical truths are organized as components of an overall rhetoric. If that rhetoric seems to demand it, a particular empirical truth may be bent into falsehood: a historical novel may find it more convenient for its suasive strategies to have Lenin live on for another
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decade. Similarly, a racist who believes that Asians in Britain will outnumber whites by the year 1995 may well not be persuaded out of his racism if he can be shown that this assumption is empirically false, since the proposition is more likely to be a support for his racism than a reason for it. If the claim is disproved he may simply modify it, or replace it with another, true or false. It is possible, then, to think of ideological discourse as a complex network of empirical and normative elements, within which the nature and organization of the former is ultimately determined by the requirements of the latter. And this may be one sense in which an ideological formation is rather like a novel.

Once again, however, this may not be enough to dispose of the truth/falsity issue, relegating it to the relatively superficial level of empirical statements. For there is still the more fundamental question of whether a 'world view' may not itself be considered true or false. The anti-false-consciousness case would seem to hold that it is not possible to falsify an ideology, rather as some literary critics insist that it is not possible to falsify or verify the world view of a work of art. In both cases, we simply 'suspend our disbelief' and examine the proffered way of seeing on its own terms, grasping it as a symbolic expression of a certain way of 'living' one's world. In some senses, this is surely true. If a work of literature chooses to highlight images of human degradation, then it would seem futile to denounce this as somehow incorrect. But there are surely limits to this aesthetic charity. Literary critics do not always accept the world view of a text 'on its own terms'; they sometimes want to say that this vision of things is implausible, distorting, oversimplifying. If a literary work highlights images of disease and degradation to the point where it tacitly suggests that human life is entirely valueless, then a critic might well want to object that this is a drastically partial way of seeing. In this sense, a way of seeing, unlike a way of walking, is not necessarily immune to judgements of truth and falsehood, although some of its aspects are likely to be more immune than others. A world view will tend to exhibit a certain 'style' of perception, which cannot in itself be said to be either true or false. It is not false for Samuel Beckett to portray the world in spare, costive, minimalist terms. It will operate in accordance with a certain 'grammar', a system of rules for organizing its various elements, which again cannot usefully be spoken of in terms of truth or falsehood. But it will also typically contain other sorts of component, both normative and empirical, which may indeed sometimes be inspected for their truth or falsity.

Another suggestive analogy between literature and ideology may be
gleaned from the work of the literary theorist Paul de Man. For de Man, a piece of writing is specifically 'literary' when its 'constative' and 'performative' dimensions are somehow at odds with each other.27 Literary works, in de Man's view, tend to 'say' one thing and 'do' another. Thus, W.B. Yeats's line of poetry, 'How can we know the dancer from the dance?', read literally, asks about how we can draw the distinction in question; but its effect as a rhetorical or performative piece of discourse is to suggest that such a distinction cannot be drawn. Whether this will do as a general theory of the 'literary' is in my view distinctly dubious; but it can be coupled with a certain theory of the workings of ideology, one outlined by Denys Turner. Turner has argued that one notable problem in the theory of ideology turns on the puzzle of how ideological beliefs can be said to be both 'lived' and false. For our lived beliefs are in some sense internal to our social practices; and if they are thus constitutive of those practices, they can hardly be said to 'correspond' (or not correspond) to them. As Turner puts its: 'Since, therefore, there seems to be no epistemic space between what is socially lived and the social ideas of it, there seems to be no room for a false relationship between the two.28

This, surely, is one of the strongest points which the anti—false—consciousness case has going for it. There cannot be a merely external or contingent relation between our social practices and the ideas by which we 'live' them; so how can these ideas, or some of them, be said to be false? Turner's own answer to this problem resembles de Man's case about the literary text. He claims that ideology consists in a 'performative contradiction', in which what is said is at odds with the situation or act of utterance itself. When the middle class preaches universal freedom from a position of domination, or when a teacher hectors his students at tedious length about the perils of an authoritarian pedagogy, we have 'a contradiction between a meaning conveyed explicitly and a meaning conveyed by the act itself of conveying',29 which for Turner is the essential structure of all ideology. Whether this in fact covers all that we call ideological practice is perhaps as doubtful as whether de Man's case covers all that we call literature; but it is an illuminating account of a particular kind of ideological act.

So far we have been considering the role within ideology of what might be called epistemic falsehood. But as Raymond Geuss has argued, there are two other forms of falsity highly relevant to ideological consciousness, which can be termed functional and genetic.30 False consciousness may mean not that a body of ideas is actually untrue, but that these ideas are functional
for the maintenance of an oppressive power, and that those who hold them are ignorant of this fact. Similarly, a belief may not be false in itself, but may spring from some discreditable ulterior motive of which those who hold it are unaware. As Geuss summarizes the point: consciousness may be false because it 'incorporates beliefs which are false, or because it functions in a reprehensible way, or because it has a tainted origin'. Epistemic, functional and genetic forms of false consciousness may go together, as when a false belief which rationalizes some disreputable social motive proves useful in promoting the unjust interests of a dominant power; but other permutations are also possible. There may, for example, be no inherent connection between the falsity of a belief and its functionality for an oppressive power; a true belief might have done just as well. A set of ideas, whether true or false, may be ‘unconsciously’ motivated by the selfish interests of a ruling group, but may in fact prove dysfunctional for the promotion or legitimation of those interests. A fatalistic group of oppressed individuals may not recognize that their fatalism is an unconscious rationalization of their wretched conditions, but this fatalism may well not prove serviceable for their interests. It might, on the other hand, prove functional for the interests of their rulers, in which case a ‘genetic’ false consciousness on the part of one social class becomes functional for the interests of another. Beliefs functional for a social group, in other words, need not be motivated from within that group, but may, so to speak, just fall into its lap. Forms of consciousness functional for one social class may also prove functional for another whose interests are in conflict with it. As far as ‘genetic’ falsity goes, the fact that the true underlying motivation of a set of beliefs sometimes must be concealed from view is enough to cast doubt on its reputability; but to hold that the beliefs which disguise this motive must be false simply on account of their contaminated origin would be an instance of the genetic fallacy. From a radical political viewpoint, there may be positive kinds of unconscious motivation and positive forms of functionality: socialists will tend to approve of forms of consciousness which, however displacedly, express the underlying interests of the working class, or which actively help to promote those interests. The fact that a motivation is concealed, in other words, is not enough in itself to suggest falsity; the question is rather one of what sort of motivation it is, and whether it is of the kind that has to remain hidden from view. Finally, we can note that a body of beliefs may be false but rational, in the sense of internally coherent, consistent with the available evidence and held on what appear to be plausible grounds. The fact that ideology is not at
root a matter of reason does not license us to equate it with irrationality.

Let us take stock of some of the argument so far. Those who oppose the idea of ideology as false consciousness are right to see that ideology is no baseless illusion but a solid reality, an active material force which must have at least enough cognitive content to help organize the practical lives of human beings. It does not consist primarily in a set of propositions about the world; and many of the propositions it does advance are actually true. None of this, however, need be denied by those who hold that ideology often or typically involves falsity, distortion and mystification. Even if ideology is largely a matter of 'lived relations', those relations, at least in certain social conditions, would often seem to involve claims and beliefs which are untrue. As Tony Skillen scathingly inquires of those who reject this case: 'Sexist ideologies do not (distortingly) represent women as naturally inferior? Racist ideologies do not confine non-whites to perpetual savagery? Religious ideologies do not represent the world as the creation of gods?'

It does not follow from this, however, that all ideological language necessarily involves falsehood. It is quite possible for a ruling order to make pronouncements which are ideological in the sense of buttressing its own power, but which are in no sense false. And if we extend the term ideology to include oppositional political movements, then radicals at least would want to hold that many of their utterances, while ideological in the sense of promoting their power-interests, are nonetheless true. This is not to suggest that such movements may not also engage in distortion and mystification. 'Workers of the world, unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains' is in one sense obviously false; workers have a good deal to lose by political militancy, not least, in some cases, their lives. 'The West is a paper tiger', Mao's celebrated slogan, is dangerously misleading and triumphalist.

Nor is it the case that all commitment to the dominant social order involves some sort of delusion. Someone might have a perfectly adequate understanding of the mechanisms of capitalist exploitation, but conclude that this kind of society, while unjust and oppressive, is on the whole preferable to any likely alternative. From a socialist viewpoint, such a person is mistaken; but it is hard to call them deluded, in the sense of systematically misinterpreting the real situation. There is a difference between being mistaken and being deluded: if someone lifts a cucumber and announces his telephone number we may conclude that he has made a mistake, whereas if
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he spends long evenings chatting vivaciously into a cucumber we might have to draw different conclusions. There is also the case of the person who commits himself to the ruling social order on entirely cynical grounds. Someone who urges you to get rich quick may be promoting capitalist values; but he may not necessarily be legitimating these values. Perhaps he simply believes that in a corrupt world you might as well pursue your own self-interest along with everyone else. A man might appreciate the justice of the feminist cause, but simply refuse to surrender his male privilege. It is unwise, in other words, to assume that dominant groups are always victims of their own propaganda; there is the condition which Peter Sloterdijk calls 'enlightened false consciousness', which lives by false values but is ironically aware of doing so, and so which can hardly be said to be mystified in the traditional sense of the term.33

If dominant ideologies very often involve falsity, however, it is partly because most people are not in fact cynics. Imagine a society in which everybody was either a cynic or a masochist, or both. In such a situation there would be no need for ideology, in the sense of a set of discourses concealing or legitimating injustice, because the masochists would not mind their suffering and the cynics would feel no unease about inhabiting an exploitative social order. In fact, the majority of people have a fairly sharp eye to their own rights and interests, and most people feel uncomfortable at the thought of belonging to a seriously unjust form of life. Either, then, they must believe that these injustices are en route to being amended, or that they are counterbalanced by greater benefits, or that they are inevitable, or that they are not really injustices at all. It is part of the function of a dominant ideology to inculcate such beliefs. It can do this either by falsifying social reality, suppressing and excluding certain unwelcome features of it, or suggesting that these features cannot be avoided. This last strategy is of interest from the viewpoint of the truth/falsity problem. For it may be true of the present system that, say, a degree of unemployment is inevitable, but not of some future alternative. Ideological statements may be true to society as at present constituted, but false in so far as they thereby serve to block off the possibility of a transformed state of affairs. The very truth of such statements is also the falsehood of their implicit denial that anything better could be conceived.

If ideology is sometimes falsifying, then, it is for what are on the whole rather hopeful reasons: the fact that most people react strongly to being unjustly treated, and that most people would like to believe that they live in
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reasonably just social conditions. It is strange in this light for some radicals to argue that deception and concealment play no part in a dominant ideological discourse, since to be a political radical commits one to the view that the current social order is marked by serious injustices. And no ruling class concerned with preserving its credibility can afford to acknowledge that these injustices could only be rectified by a political transformation which would put it out of business. If, then, ideology sometimes involves distortion and mystification, it is less because of something inherent in ideological language than because of something inherent in the social structure to which that language belongs. There are certain kinds of interests which can secure their sway only by practising duplicity; but this is not to claim on the other hand that all of the statements used to promote those interests will be duplicitous. Ideology, in other words, is not inherently constituted by distortion, especially if we take the broader view of the concept as denoting any fairly central conjuncture between discourse and power. In an entirely just society, there would be no need for ideology in the pejorative sense since there would be nothing to explain away.

It is possible to define ideology in roughly six different ways, in a progressive sharpening of focus. We can mean by it, first, the general material process of production of ideas, beliefs and values in social life. Such a definition is both politically and epistemologically neutral, and is close to the broader meaning of the term ‘culture’. Ideology, or culture, would here denote the whole complex of signifying practices and symbolic processes in a particular society; it would allude to the way individuals ‘lived’ their social practices, rather than to those practices themselves, which would be the preserve of politics, economics, kinship theory and so on. This sense of ideology is wider than the sense of ‘culture’ which confines itself to artistic and intellectual work of agreed value, but narrower than the anthropological definition of culture, which would encompass all of the practices and institutions of a form of life. ‘Culture’ in this anthropological sense would include, for example, the financial infrastructure of sport, whereas ideology would concern itself more particularly with the signs, meanings and values encoded in sporting activities.

This most general of all meanings of ideology stresses the social determination of thought, thus providing a valuable antidote to idealism; but otherwise it would seem unworkably broad and suspiciously silent on the question of political conflict. Ideology means more than just, say, the signifying practices associated by a society with food; it involves the relations
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between these signs and processes of political power. It is not coextensive with the general field of 'culture', but lights up this field from a particular angle.

A second, slightly less general meaning of ideology turns on ideas and beliefs (whether true or false) which symbolize the conditions and life-experiences of a specific, socially significant group or class. The qualification 'socially significant' is needed here, since it would seem odd to speak of the ideas and beliefs of four regular drinking companions or of the Sixth Form at Manchester Grammar School as an ideology all of its own. 'Ideology' is here very close to the idea of a 'world view', though it can be claimed that world views are usually preoccupied with fundamental matters such as the meaning of death or humanity's place in the universe, whereas ideology might extend to such issues as which colour to paint the mail-boxes.

To see ideology as a kind of collective symbolic self-expression is not yet to see it in relational or conflictive terms; so there might seem to be a need for a third definition of the term, which attends to the promotion and legitimation of the interests of such social groups in the face of opposing interests. Not all such promotions of group interests are usually dubbed ideological: it is not particularly ideological for the army to request the Ministry of Defence to supply it on aesthetic grounds with flared trousers rather than with straight ones. The interests in question must have some relevance to the sustaining or challenging of a whole political form of life. Ideology can here be seen as a discursive field in which self-promoting social powers conflict and collide over questions central to the reproduction of social power as a whole. This definition may entail the assumption that ideology is a peculiarly 'action-oriented' discourse, in which contemplative cognition is generally subordinated to the futherance of 'arational' interests and desires. It is doubtless for this reason that to speak 'ideologically' has sometimes in the popular mind a ring of distasteful opportunism about it, suggesting a readiness to sacrifice truth to less reputable goals. Ideology appears here as a suasive or rhetorical rather than veridical kind of speech, concerned less with the situation 'as it is' than with the production of certain useful effects for political purposes. It is ironic, then, that ideology is regarded by some as too pragmatic and by others as not pragmatic enough, as too absolutist, otherworldly and inflexible.

A fourth meaning of ideology would retain this emphasis on the promotion and legitimation of sectoral interests, but confine it to the activities of a dominant social power. This may involve the assumption that such
dominant ideologies help to unify a social formation in ways convenient for its rulers; that it is not simply a matter of imposing ideas from above but of securing the complicity of subordinated classes and groups, and so on. We shall be examining these assumptions more closely later on. But this meaning of ideology is still epistemologically neutral and can thus be refined further into a fifth definition, in which ideology signifies ideas and beliefs which help to legitimate the interests of a ruling group or class specifically by distortion and dissimulation. Note that on these last two definitions, not all of the ideas of a ruling group need be said to be ideological, in that some of them may not particularly promote its interests, and some of them may not do so by the use of deception. Note also that on this last definition it is hard to know what to call a politically oppositional discourse which promotes and seeks to legitimate the interests of a subordinate group or class by such devices as the 'naturalizing', universalizing and cloaking of its real interests.

There is, finally, the possibility of a sixth meaning of ideology, which retains an emphasis on false or deceptive beliefs but regards such beliefs as arising not from the interests of a dominant class but from the material structure of society as a whole. The term ideology remains pejorative, but a class-genetic account of it is avoided. The most celebrated instance of this sense of ideology, as we shall see, is Marx's theory of the fetishism of commodities.

We can return finally to the question of ideology as 'lived relations' rather than empirical representations. If this is true, then certain important political consequences follow from this view. It follows, for instance, that ideology cannot be substantially transformed by offering individuals true descriptions in place of false ones - that it is not in this sense simply a mistake. We would not call a form of consciousness ideological just because it was in factual error, no matter how deeply erroneous it was. To speak of 'ideological error' is to speak of an error with particular kinds of causes and functions. A transformation of our lived relations to reality could be secured only by a material change in that reality itself. To deny that ideology is primarily a matter of empirical representations, then, goes along with a materialist theory of how it operates, and of how it might be changed. At the same time, it is important not to react so violently against a rationalistic theory of ideology as to abstain from trying to put people right on matters of fact. If someone really does believe that all childless women are thwarted and embittered, introducing him to as many ecstatic childfree women as possible
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might just persuade him to change his mind. To deny that ideology is fundamentally an affair of reason is not to conclude that it is immune to rational considerations altogether. And 'reason' here would mean something like: the kind of discourse that would result from as many people as possible actively participating in a discussion of these matters in conditions as free as possible from domination.
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TO THINK of Marxism as the scientific analysis of social formations, and to think of it as ideas in active struggle, will tend to yield two quite different epistemologies. In the former case, consciousness is essentially contemplative, seeking to 'match' or 'correspond to' its object in the greatest possible accuracy of cognition. In the latter case, consciousness is much more obviously part of social reality, a dynamic force in its potential transformation. And if this is so, then to a thinker like Georg Lukács it would not seem entirely appropriate to speak of whether such thought 'reflects' or 'fits' the history with which it is inseparably bound up.

If consciousness is grasped in this way as a transformative force at one with the reality it seeks to change, then there would seem to be no 'space' between it and that reality in which false consciousness might germinate. Ideas cannot be 'untrue' to their object if they are actually part of it. In the terms of the philosopher J.L. Austin, we can speak of a 'constative' utterance, one which aims to describe the world, as either true or false; but it would not make sense to speak of a 'performatory' statement as either correctly or incorrectly 'reflecting' reality. I am not *describing* anything when I promise to take you to the theatre, or curse you for spilling ink on my shirt. If I ceremonially name a ship, or stand with you before a clergyman and say 'I do', these are material events in reality, acts as efficacious as ironing my socks, not 'pictures' of some state of affairs which could be said to be accurate or mistaken.
Does this mean, then, that the model of consciousness as cognitive (or miscognitive) should be ousted by an image of consciousness as performative? Not exactly: for it is clear that this opposition can be to some degree deconstructed. There is no point in my promising to take you to the theatre if the theatre in question was closed down for gross obscenity last week and I am unaware of the fact. My act of cursing is empty if what I thought was an ink stain on my shirt is just part of the floral design. All 'performative' acts involve cognition of some kind, implicate some sense of how the world actually is; it is futile for a political group to hone its ideas in the struggle with some oppressive power if the power in question collapsed three years ago and they simply have not noticed.

In his great work *History and Class Consciousness* (1922), the Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukács takes full account of this point. 'It is true', Lukács writes there, 'that reality is the criterion for the correctness of thought. But reality is not, it becomes - and to become the participation of thought is needed.' Thought, we might say, is at once cognitive and creative: in the act of understanding its real conditions, an oppressed group or class has begun in that very moment to fashion the forms of consciousness which will contribute to changing them. And this is why no simple 'reflection' model of consciousness will really do. 'Thought and existence', Lukács writes, 'are not identical in the sense that they "correspond" to each other, or "reflect" each other, that they "run parallel" to each other or "coincide" with each other (all expressions that conceal a rigid duality). Their identity is that they are aspects of one and the same real historical and dialectical process.' The cognition of the revolutionary proletariat, for Lukács, is part of the situation it cognizes, and alters that situation at a stroke. If this logic is pressed to an extreme, then it would seem that we never simply know some 'thing', since our act of knowing it has already transformed it into something else. The model tacitly underlying this doctrine is that of self-knowledge; for to know myself is no longer to be the self that I was a moment before I knew it. It would seem, in any case, that this whole conception of consciousness as essentially active, practical and dynamic, which Lukács owes to the work of Hegel, will force us to revise any too simplistic notion of false consciousness as some lag, gap or disjunction between the way things are and the way we know them.

Lukács takes over from aspects of the Second International the positive, non-pejorative sense of the word ideology, writing unembarrassedly for Marxism as 'the ideological expression of the proletariat'; and this is at least
one reason why the widespread view that ideology for him is synonymous with false consciousness is simply mistaken. But he retains at the same time the whole conceptual apparatus of Marx's critique of commodity fetishism, and thus keeps alive a more critical sense of the term. The 'other' or opposite of ideology in this negative sense, however, is no longer primarily 'Marxist science' but the concept of totality; and one of the functions of this concept in his work is to allow him to ditch the idea of some disinterested social science without thereby falling prey to historical relativism. All forms of class consciousness are ideological; but some, so to speak, are more ideological than others. What is specifically ideological about the bourgeoisie is its inability to grasp the structure of the social formation as a whole, on account of the dire effects of reification. Reification fragments and dislocates our social experience, so that under its influence we forget that society is a collective process and come see it instead merely as this or that isolated object or institution. As Lukács's contemporary Karl Korsch argues, ideology is essentially a form of synecdoche, the figure of speech in which we take the part for the whole. What is peculiar to proletarian consciousness, in its fullest political development, is its capacity to 'totalize' the social order, for without such knowledge the working class will never be able to understand and transform its own conditions. A true recognition of its situation will be, inseparably, an insight into the social whole within which it is oppressively positioned; so that the moments in which the proletariat comes to self-consciousness, and knows the capitalist system for what it is, are in effect identical.

Science, truth or theory, in other words, are no longer to be strictly counterposed to ideology; on the contrary, they are just 'expressions' of a particular class ideology, the revolutionary world view of the working class. Truth is just bourgeois society coming to consciousness of itself as a whole, and the 'place' where this momentous event occurs is in the self-awareness of the proletariat. Since the proletariat is the prototypical commodity, forced to sell its labour power in order to survive, it can be seen as the 'essence' of a social order based on commodity fetishism; and the self-consciousness of the proletariat is therefore, as it were, the commodity form coming to an awareness of itself, and in that act transcending itself.

In coming to write History and Class Consciousness, Lukács found himself faced with a kind of Hobson's choice or impossible opposition. On the one hand, there was the positivist fantasy (inherited from the Second International) of a Marxist science which appeared to repress its own historical
roots; on the other hand, there was the spectre of historical relativism. Either knowledge was sublimely external to the history it sought to know, or it was just a matter of this or that specific brand of historical consciousness, with no more firm grounding than that. Lukács's way of circumventing this dilemma is by introducing the category of self-reflection. There are certain forms of knowledge – notably, the self-knowledge of an exploited class – which while thoroughly historical are nevertheless able to lay bare the limits of other ideologies, and so to figure as an emancipatory force. Truth, in Lukács's 'historicist' perspective, is always relative to a particular historical situation, never a metaphysical affair beyond history altogether; but the proletariat, uniquely, is so historically positioned as to be able in principle to unlock the secret of capitalism as a whole. There is thus no longer any need to remain trapped within the sterile antithesis of ideology as false or partial consciousness on the one hand, and science as some absolute, unhistorical mode of knowledge on the other. For not all class consciousness is false consciousness, and science is simply an expression or encodement of 'true' class consciousness.

Lukács's own way of phrasing this argument is unlikely to win much unqualified allegiance today. The proletariat, he claims, is a potentially 'universal' class, since it bears with it the potential emancipation of all humanity. Its consciousness is thus in principle universal; but a universal subjectivity is in effect identical with objectivity. So what the working class knows, from its own partial historical perspective, must be objectively true. One does not need to be persuaded by this rather grandly Hegelian language to rescue the important insight buried within it. Lukács sees quite rightly that the contrast between merely partial ideological standpoints on the one hand, and some dispassionate views of the social totality on the other, is radically misleading. For what this opposition fails to take into account is the situation of oppressed groups and classes, who need to get some view of the social system as a whole, and of their own place within it, simply to be able to realize their own partial, particular interests. If women are to emancipate themselves, they need to have an interest in understanding something of the general structures of patriarchy. Such understanding is by no means innocent or disinterested; on the contrary, it is in the service of pressing political interests. But without, as it were, passing over at some point from the particular to the general, those interests are likely to founder. A colonial people, simply to survive, may find itself 'forced' to enquire into the global structures of imperialism, as their imperialist rulers need not do. Those who
today fashionably disown the need for a 'global' or 'total' perspective may be
privileged enough to dispense with it. It is where such a totality bears
urgently in on one's own immediate social conditions that the intersection
between part and whole is most significantly established. Lukács's point is
that certain groups and classes need to inscribe their own condition within a
wider context if they are to change that condition; and in doing so they will
find themselves challenging the consciousness of those who have an interest
in blocking this emancipatory knowledge. It is in this sense that the bugbear
of relativism is irrelevant for to claim that all knowledge springs from a
specific social standpoint is not to imply that any old social standpoint
is as valuable for these purposes as any other. If what one is looking for
is some understanding of the workings of imperialism as a whole, then
one would be singularly ill-advised to consult the Governor General or the
Daily Telegraph's Africa correspondent, who will almost certainly deny its
existence.

There is, however, a logical problem with Lukács's notion of some 'true'
class consciousness. For if the working class is the potential bearer of such
consciousness, from what viewpoint is this judgement made? It cannot be
made from the viewpoint of the (ideal) proletariat itself, since this simply
begs the question; but if only that viewpoint is true, then it cannot be made
from some standpoint external to it either. As Bhikhu Parekh points out, to
claim that only the proletarian perspective allows one to grasp the truth of
society as a whole already assumes that one knows what that truth is.  It
would seem that truth is either wholly internal to the consciousness of the
working class, in which case it cannot be assessed as truth and the claim
becomes simply dogmatic; or one is caught in the impossible paradox of
judging the truth from outside the truth itself, in which case the claim that
this form of consciousness is true simply undercuts itself.

If the proletariat for Lukács is in principle the bearer of a knowledge of
the social whole, it figures as the direct antithesis of a bourgeois class sunk in
the mire of immediacy, unable to totalize its own situation. It is a traditional
Marxist case that what forestalls such knowledge in the case of the middle
class is its atomized social and economic conditions: each individual
capitalist pursues his own interest, with little or no sense of how all of these
isolated interests combine into a total system. Lukács, however, places
emphasis rather on the phenomenon of reification - a concept he derives
from Marx's doctrine of commodity fetishism, but to which he lends a
greatly extended meaning. Splicing together Marx's economic analysis and
Max Weber's theory of rationalization, he argues in *History and Class Consciousness* that in capitalist society the commodity form permeates every aspect of social life, taking the shape of a pervasive mechanization, quantification and dehumanization of human experience. The 'wholeness' of society is broken up into so many discrete, specialized, technical operations, each of which comes to assume a semi-autonomous life of its own and to dominate human existence as a quasi-natural force. Purely formal techniques of calculability suffuse every region of society, from factory work to political bureaucracy, journalism to the judiciary; and the natural sciences themselves are simply one more instance of reified thought. Overwhelmed by an opaque world of autonomous objects and institutions, the human subject is rapidly reduced to an inert, contemplative being, incapable of recognizing any longer in these petrified products its own creative practice. The moment of revolutionary recognition arrives when the working class acknowledges this alienated world as its own confiscated creation, reclaiming it through political praxis. In the terms of the Hegelian philosophy which underlies Lukács's thought, this would signal the reunification of subject and object, torn grievously asunder by the effects of reification. In knowing itself for what it is, the proletariat becomes both subject and object of history. Indeed Lukács occasionally seems to imply that this act of self-consciousness is a revolutionary practice all in itself.

What Lukács has in effect done here is to replace Hegel's Absolute Idea - itself the identical subject-object of history - with the proletariat. Or at least, to qualify the point, with the kind of politically desirable consciousness which the proletariat could in principle achieve - what he calls 'ascribed' or 'imputed' consciousness. And if Lukács is Hegelian enough in this, he is equally so in his trust that the truth lies in the whole. For the Hegel of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, immediate experience is itself a kind of false or partial consciousness; it will yield up its truth only when it is dialectically mediated, when its latent manifold relations with the whole have been patiently uncovered. One might say, then, that on this view our routine consciousness is itself inherently 'ideological', simply by virtue of its partiality. It is not that the statements we make in this situation are necessarily false; it is rather that they are true only in some superficial, empirical way, for they are judgements about isolated objects which have not yet been incorporated into their full context. We can think back here to the assertion: 'Prince Charles is a thoughtful, conscientious fellow', which may be true enough as far as it goes, but which isolates the object known as
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Prince Charles from the whole context of the institution of royalty. For Hegel, it is only by the operations of dialectical reason that such static, discrete phenomena can be reconstituted as a dynamic, developing whole. As to this extent one might say that a certain kind of false consciousness is for Hegel our 'natural' condition, endemic to our immediate experience.

For Lukács, by contrast, such partial seeing springs from specific historical causes - the process of capitalist reification - but is to be overcome in much the same way, by the workings of a 'totalizing' or dialectical reason. Bourgeois science, logic and philosophy are his equivalent of Hegel's routine, unredeemed mode of knowledge, breaking down what is in fact a complex, evolving totality into artificially autonomous parts. Ideology for Lukács is thus not exactly a discourse untrue to the way things are, but one true to them only in a limited, superficial way, ignorant of their deeper tendencies and connections. And this is another sense in which, contrary to widespread opinion, ideology is not in his view false consciousness in the sense of simple error or illusion.

To seize history as totality is to grasp it in its dynamic, contradictory development, of which the potential realization of human powers is a vital part. To this extent, a particular kind of cognition - knowing the whole - is for both Hegel and Lukács a certain kind of moral and political norm. The dialectical method thus reunites not only subject and object, but also 'fact' and 'value', which bourgeois thought has ripped asunder. To understand the world in a particular way becomes inseparable from acting to promote the free, full unfolding of human creative powers. We are not left high and dry, as we are in positivist or empiricist thought, with a dispassionate, value-free knowledge on the one hand, and an arbitrary set of subjective values on the other. On the contrary, the act of knowledge is itself both 'fact' and 'value', an accurate cognition indispensable for political emancipation. As Leszek Kolakowski puts the point: 'In this particular case [i.e. that of emancipatory knowledge] the understanding and transformation of reality are not two separate processes, but one and the same phenomenon.'

Lukács's writings on class consciousness rank among the richest, most original documents of twentieth-century Marxism. They are, nevertheless, subject to a number of damaging criticisms. It could be argued, for example, that his theory of ideology tends towards an unholy mixture of economism and idealism. Economism, because he uncritically adopts the later Marx's implication that the commodity form is somehow the secret essence of all ideological consciousness in bourgeois society. Reification figures for Lukács
not only as a central feature of the capitalist economy, but as 'the central structural problem of capitalist society in all aspects'? A kind of essentialism of ideology is consequently at work here, homogenizing what are in fact very different discourses, structures and effects. At its worst, this model tends to reduce bourgeois society to a set of neatly layered 'expressions' of reification, each of its levels (economic, political, juridical, philosophical) obediently miming and reflecting the others. Moreover, as Theodor Adorno was later to suggest, this single-minded insistence upon reification as the clue to all crimes is itself covertly idealist: in Lukács's texts, it tends to displace such more fundamental concepts as economic exploitation. Much the same might be said of his use of the Hegelian category of totality, which sometimes pushes to one side an attention to modes of production, contradictions between the forces and relations of production and the like. Is Marxism, like Matthew Arnold's ideal poetic vision, just a matter of seeing reality steadily and seeing it whole? To parody Lukács's case a little: is revolution simply a question of making connections? And is not the social totality, for Marxism if not for Hegel, 'skewed' and asymmetrical, twisted out of true by the preponderance within it of economic determinants? Properly cautious of 'vulgar' Marxist versions of 'base' and 'superstructure', Lukács wishes to displace attention from this brand of mechanistic determinism to the idea of the social whole; but this social whole then risks becoming a purely 'circular' one, in which each 'level' is granted equal effectivity with each of the others.

Commodity fetishism, for Lukács as much as for Marx, is an objective material structure of capitalism, not just a state of mind. But in History and Class Consciousness another, residually idealist model of ideology is also confusingly at work, which would seem to locate the 'essence' of bourgeois society in the collective subjectivity of the bourgeois class itself. 'For a class to be ripe for hegemony', Lukács writes, 'means that its interests and consciousness enable it to organise the whole of society in accordance with those interests.' What is it, then, which provides the ideological lynchpin of the bourgeois order? Is it the 'objective' system of commodity fetishism, which presumably imprints itself on all classes alike, or the 'subjective' strength of the dominant class's consciousness? Gareth Stedman Jones has argued that, as far as the latter view is concerned, it is as though ideology for Lukács takes grip through 'the saturation of the social totality by the ideological essence of a pure class subject.' What this overlooks, as Stedman Jones goes on to point out, is that ideologies, far from being the 'subjective
product of the “will to power” of different classes, are ‘objective systems
determined by the whole field of social struggle between contending classes’. For Lukács, as for ‘historicist’ Marxism in general, it would sometimes appear as though each social class has its own peculiar, corporate ‘world view’, one directly expressive of its material conditions of existence; and ideological dominance then consists in one of these world views imposing its stamp on the social formation as a whole. It is not only that this version of ideological power is hard to square with the more structural and objective doctrine of commodity fetishism; it is also that it drastically simplifies the true unevenness and complexity of the ideological ‘field’. For as Nicos Poulantzas has argued, ideology, like social class itself, is an inherently relational phenomenon: it expresses less the way a class lives its conditions of existence, than the way it lives them in relation to the lived experience of other classes.\(^{10}\) Just as there can be no bourgeois class without a proletariat, or vice versa, so the typical ideology of each of these classes is constituted to the root by the ideology of its antagonist. Ruling ideologies, as we have argued earlier, must engage effectively with the lived experience of subordinate classes; and the way in which those subaltern classes live their world will be typically shaped and influenced by the dominant ideologies. Historicist Marxism, in short, presumes too organic and internal a relation between a ‘class subject’ and its ‘world view’. There are social classes such as the petty bourgeoisie – ‘contradiction incarnate’, as Marx dubbed them – whose ideology is typically compounded of elements drawn from the classes both above and below them; and there are vital ideological themes such as nationalism which do not ‘belong’ to any particular social class, but which rather provide a bone of contention between them.\(^{11}\) Social classes do not manifest ideologies in the way that individuals display a particular style of walking: ideology is, rather, a complex, conflictive field of meaning, in which some themes will be closely tied to the experience of particular classes, while others will be more ‘free floating’, tugged now this way and now that in the struggle between contending powers. Ideology is a realm of contestation and negotiation, in which there is a constant busy traffic: meanings and values are stolen, transformed, appropriated across the frontiers of different classes and groups, surrendered, repossessed, reinflected. A dominant class may ‘live its experience’ in part through the ideology of a previous dominant one: think of the aristocratic colouring of the English haute bourgeoisie. Or it may fashion its ideology partly in terms of the beliefs of a subordinated class – as in the case of fascism, where a ruling sector of finance capitalism takes over
for its own purposes the prejudices and anxieties of the lower middle class. There is no neat, one-to-one correspondence between classes and ideologies, as is evident in the case of revolutionary socialism. Any revolutionary ideology, to be politically effective, would have to be a good deal more than Lukács's 'pure' proletarian consciousness: unless it lent some provisional coherence to a rich array of oppositional forces, it would have scant chance of success.

The idea of social classes as 'subjects', central to Lukács's work, has also been contested. A class is not just some kind of collectivized individual, equipped with the sorts of attributes ascribed by humanist thought to the individual person: consciousness, unity, autonomy, self-determination and so on. Classes are certainly for Marxism historical agents; but they are structural, material formations as well as 'intersubjective' entities, and the problem is how to think these two aspects of them together. We have seen already that ruling classes are generally complex, internally conflictive 'blocs', rather than homogeneous bodies; and the same applies to their political antagonists. A 'class-ideology', then, is likely to display much the same kind of unevenness and contradictoriness.

The harshest criticism of Lukács's theory of ideology would be that, in a series of progressive conflations, he collapses Marxist theory into proletarian ideology; ideology into the expression of some 'pure' class subject; and this class subject to the essence of the social formation. But this case demands significant qualification. Lukács is not at all blind to the ways in which the consciousness of the working class is 'contaminated' by that of its rulers, and would seem to ascribe no organic 'world view' to it in non-revolutionary conditions. Indeed if the proletariat in its 'normal' state is little more than the commodity incarnate, it is hard to see how it can be a subject at all — and therefore hard to see how exactly it can make the transition to becoming a 'class for itself'. But this process of 'contamination' does not appear to work the other way round, in the sense that the dominant ideology seems in no way significantly shaped by a dialogue with its subordinates.

We have seen already that there are really two discrepant theories of ideology at work in History and Class Consciousness — the one deriving from commodity fetishism, the other from a historicist view of ideology as the world view of a class subject. As far as the proletariat is concerned, these two conceptions would seem to correspond respectively to its 'normal' and revolutionary states of being. In non-revolutionary conditions, working-class consciousness is passively subject to the effects of reification; we are
given no clue as to how this situation is actively constituted by proletarian ideology, or of how it interacts with less obediently submissive aspects of that experience. How does the worker constitute herself as a subject on the basis of her objectification? But when the class shifts - mysteriously - to becoming a revolutionary subject, a historicist problematic takes over, and what was true of their rulers - that they 'saturated' the whole social formation with their own ideological conceptions - can now become true of them too. What is said of these rulers, however, is inconsistent: for this active notion of ideology in their case is at odds with the view that they, too, are simply victims of the structure of commodity fetishism. How can the middle class govern by virtue of its unique, unified world view when it is simply subjected along with other classes to the structure of reification? Is the dominant ideology a matter of the bourgeoisie, or of bourgeois society?

It can be claimed that History and Class Consciousness is marred by a typically idealist overestimation of 'consciousness' itself. 'Only the consciousness of the proletariat', Lukács writes, 'can point to the way that leads out of the impasse of capitalism'; and while this is orthodox enough in one sense, since an unconscious proletariat is hardly likely to do the trick, its emphasis is nonetheless revealing. For it is not in the first place the consciousness of the working class, actual or potential, which leads Marxism to select it as the prime agency of revolutionary change. If the working class figures as such an agent, it is for structural, material reasons - the fact that it is the only body so located within the productive process of capitalism, so trained and organized by that process and utterly indispensable to it, as to be capable of taking it over. In this sense it is capitalism, not Marxism, which 'selects' the instruments of revolutionary overthrow, patiently nurturing its own potential gravedigger. When Lukács observes that the strength of a social formation is always in the last resort a 'spiritual' one, or when he writes that 'the fate of the revolution ... will depend on the ideological maturity of the proletariat, i.e. on its class consciousness', he is arguably in danger of displacing these material issues into questions of pure consciousness - and a consciousness which, as Gareth Stedman Jones has pointed out, remains curiously disembodied and ethereal, a matter of 'ideas' rather than practices or institutions.

If Lukács is residually idealist in the high priority he assigns to consciousness, so is he also in his Romantic hostility to science, logic and technology. Formal and analytic discourses are simply modes of bourgeois reification, just as all forms of mechanization and rationalization would seem inherently
alienating. The progressive, emancipatory side of these processes in the history of capitalism is merely ignored, in an elegiac nostalgia typical of Romantic conservative thought. Lukács does not wish to deny that Marxism is a science; but this science is the 'ideological expression of the proletariat', not some set of timeless analytic propositions. This certainly offers a powerful challenge to the 'scientism' of the Second International — the belief that historical materialism is a purely objective knowledge of the immanent laws of historical development. But to react against such metaphysical fantasies by reducing Marxist theory to revolutionary ideology is hardly more adequate. Are the complex equations of Capital no more than a theoretical 'expression' of socialist consciousness? Is not that consciousness partly constituted by such theoretical labour? And if only proletarian self-consciousness will deliver us the truth, how do we come to accept this truth as true in the first place, if not by a certain theoretical understanding which must be relatively independent of it?

I have already argued that it is mistaken to see Lukács as equating ideology with false consciousness tout court. Working-class socialist ideology is not of course in his view false; and even bourgeois ideology is illusory only in a complex sense of the term. Indeed we might claim that whereas for the early Marx and Engels, ideology is thought false to the true situation, for Lukács it is thought true to a false situation. Bourgeois ideas do indeed accurately mirror the state of things in bourgeois society; but it is this very state of affairs which is somehow twisted out of true. Such consciousness is faithful to the reified nature of the capitalist social order, and often enough makes true claims about this condition; it is 'false' in so far as it cannot penetrate this world of frozen appearances to lay bare the totality of tendencies and connections which underlies it. In the breathtaking central section of History and Class Consciousness, 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat', Lukács boldly rewrites the whole of post-Kantian philosophy as a secret history of the commodity form, of the schism between empty subjects and petrified objects; and in this sense such thought is accurate to the dominant social categories of capitalist society, structured by them to its roots. Bourgeois ideology is false less because it distorts, inverts or denies the material world, than because it is unable to press beyond certain limits structural to bourgeois society as such. As Lukács writes: 'Thus the barrier which converts the class consciousness of the bourgeoisie into "false" consciousness is objective; it is the class situation itself. It is the objective result of the economic set-up, and is neither arbitrary, subjective
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nor psychological."13 We have here, then, yet another definition of ideology, as 'structurally constrained thought', which runs back at least as far as Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. In a discussion in that text of what makes certain French politicians representatives of the petty bourgeoisie, Marx comments that it is 'the fact that in their minds they do not get beyond the limits which the [petty bourgeoisie] does not get beyond in life'. False consciousness is thus a kind of thought which finds itself baffled and thwarted by certain barriers in society rather than in the mind; and only by transforming society itself could it therefore be dissolved.

One can put this point in another way. There are certain kinds of error which result simply from lapses of intelligence or information, and which can be resolved by a further refinement of thought. But when we keep running up against a limit to our conceptions which stubbornly refuses to give way, then this obstruction may be symptomatic of some 'limit' built into our social life. In this situation, no amount of intelligence or ingenuity, no mere 'evolution of ideas', will serve to get us further forward, for what is awry here is the whole cast and frame of our consciousness, conditioned as it is by certain material constraints. Our social practices pose the obstacle to the very ideas which seek to explain them; and if we want to advance those ideas, we will have to change our forms of life. It is precisely this which Marx argues of the bourgeois political economists, whose searching theoretical enquiries find themselves continually rebuffed by problems which mark the inscription on the interior of their discourse of the social conditions surrounding it.

It is thus that Lukács can write of bourgeois ideology as 'something which is *subjectively* justified in the social and historical situation, as something which can and should be understood, i.e. as "right". At the same time, *objectively*, it by-passes the essence of the evolution of society and fails to pinpoint and express it adequately.'16 Ideology is now a long way from being some mere illusion; and the same is true if one reverses these terms 'objective' and 'subjective'. For one might equally claim, so Lukács remarks, that bourgeois ideology fails 'subjectively' to achieve its self-appointed goals (freedom, justice and so on), but exactly in so failing helps to further certain objective aims of which it is ignorant. By which he means, presumably, helping to promote the historical conditions which will finally bring socialism to power. Such class consciousness involves an unconsciousness of one's true social conditions and is thus a kind of self-deception; but whereas Engels, as we have seen, tended to dismiss the conscious motivation involved
here as sheer illusion, Lukács is prepared to accord it a certain limited truth. 'Despite all its objective falseness', he writes, 'the self-deceiving "false" consciousness that we find in the bourgeoisie is at least in accord with its class situation.' Bourgeois ideology may be false from the standpoint of some putative social totality, but this does not mean that it is false to the situation as it currently is.

This way of putting the point may perhaps help to make some sense of the otherwise puzzling notion of ideology as thought true to a false situation. For what seems spurious about this formulation is the very idea that a situation might be said to be false. Statements about deep-sea diving may be true or false, but not deep-sea diving itself. As a Marxist humanist, however, Lukács himself has a kind of answer to this problem. A 'false' situation for him is one in which the human 'essence' – the full potential of those powers which humanity has historically developed – is being unnecessarily blocked and estranged; and such judgements are thus always made from the standpoint of some possible and desirable future. A false situation can be identified only subjunctively or retrospectively, from the vantage-point of what might be possible were these thwarting, alienating forces to be abolished. But this does not mean taking one's stand in the empty space of some speculative future, in the manner of 'bad' utopianism; for in Lukács's view, and indeed in the view of Marxism in general, the outline of that desirable future can already be detected in certain potentialities stirring within the present. The present is thus not identical with itself; there is that within it which points beyond it, as indeed the shape of every historical present is structured by its anticipation of a possible future.

If the critique of ideology sets out to examine the social foundations of thought, then it must logically be able to give some account of its own historical origins. What was the material history which gave rise to the notion of ideology itself? Can the study of ideology round upon its own conditions of possibility?

The concept of ideology, it can be argued, arose at the historical point where systems of ideas first became aware of their own partiality; and this came about when those ideas were forced to encounter alien or alternative forms of discourse. It was with the rise of bourgeois society, above all, that the scene was set for this occurrence. For it is characteristic of that society, as Marx noted, that everything about it, including its forms of consciousness, is in a state of ceaseless flux, in contrast to some more tradition-bound social
order. Capitalism survives only by a restless development of the productive forces; and in this agitated social condition new ideas tumble upon one another's heels as dizzyingly as do fashions in commodities. The entrenched authority of any single world view is accordingly undermined by the very nature of capitalism itself. Moreover, such a social order breeds plurality and fragmentation as surely as it generates social deprivation, transgressing time-hallowed boundaries between diverse forms of life and pitching them together in a mêlée of idioms, ethnic origins, life-styles, national cultures. It is exactly this which the Soviet critic Mikhail Bakhtin means by 'polyphony'. Within this atomized space, marked by a proliferating division of intellectual labour, a variety of creeds, doctrines and modes of perception jostle for authority; and this thought should give pause to those postmodern theorists for whom difference, plurality and heterogeneity are unequivocally 'progressive'. Within this turmoil of competing creeds, any particular belief system will find itself wedged cheek by jowl with unwelcome competitors; and its own frontiers will thus be thrown into sharp relief. The stage is then set for the growth of philosophical scepticism and relativism - for the conviction that, within the unseemly hubbub of the intellectual marketplace, no single way of thinking can claim more validity than any other. If all thought is partial and partisan, then all thought is 'ideological'.

In a striking paradox, then, the very dynamism and mutability of the capitalist system threaten to cut the authoritative ground from under its own feet; and this is perhaps most obvious in the phenomenon of imperialism. Imperialism needs to assert the absolute truth of its own values at exactly the point where those values are confronting alien cultures; and this can prove a notably disorientating experience. It is hard to remain convinced that your own way of doing things is the only possible one when you are busy trying to subjugate another society which conducts its affairs in a radically different but apparently effective way. The fiction of Joseph Conrad turns on this disabling contradiction. In this as in other ways, then, the historical emergence of the concept of ideology testifies to a corrosive anxiety - to the embarrassed awareness that your own truths only strike you as plausible because of where you happen to be standing at the time.

The modern bourgeoisie is accordingly caught in something of a cleft stick. Unable to retreat to old-style metaphysical certainties, it is equally loath to embrace a full-blooded scepticism which would simply subvert the legitimacy of its power. One early twentieth-century attempt to negotiate this dilemma is Karl Mannheim's Ideology and Utopia (1929), written under
the influence of Lukács's historicism in the political tumult of the Weimar republic. Mannheim sees well enough that with the rise of middle-class society the old monological world view of the traditional order has disappeared forever. An authoritarian priestly and political caste, which once confidently monopolised knowledge, has now yielded ground to a 'free' intelligentsia, caught on the hop between conflicting theoretical perspectives. The aim of a 'sociology of knowledge' will thus be to spurn all transcendental truths and examine the social determinants of particular belief systems, while guarding at the same time against the disabling relativism which would level all these beliefs to one. The problem, as Mannheim is uneasily aware, is that any criticism of another's views as ideological is always susceptible to a swift *tu quoque*. In pulling the rug out from beneath one's intellectual antagonist, one is always in danger of pulling it out from beneath oneself.

Against such relativism, Mannheim speaks up for what he calls 'relationalism', meaning the location of ideas within the social system which gives birth to them. Such an enquiry into the social basis of thought, he considers, need not run counter to the goal of objectivity; for though ideas are internally shaped by their social origins, their truth value is not reducible to them. The inevitable one-sidedness of any particular standpoint can be corrected by synthesizing it with its rivals, thus building up a provisional, dynamic totality of thought. At the same time, by a process of self-monitoring, we can come to appreciate the limits of our own perspective, and so attain a restricted sort of objectivity. Mannheim thus emerges as the Matthew Arnold of Weimar Germany, concerned to see life steadily and see it whole. Blinkered ideological viewpoints will be patiently subsumed into some greater totality by those dispassionate enough to do so — which is to say, by 'free' intellectuals with a remarkable resemblance to Karl Mannheim. The only problem with this approach is that it merely pushes the question of relativism back a stage; for we can always ask about the tendentious standpoint from which this synthesis is actually launched. Isn't the interest in totality just another interest?

Such a sociology of knowledge is for Mannheim a welcome alternative to the older style of ideology critique. Such critique, in his view, is essentially a matter of *unmasking* one's antagonist's notions, exposing them as lies, deceptions or illusions fuelled by conscious or unconscious social motivations. Ideology critique, in short, is here reduced to what Paul Ricoeur would call a 'hermeneutic of suspicion', and is plainly inadequate for the subtler,
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more ambitious task of eliciting the whole ‘mental structure’ which underlies a group’s prejudices and beliefs. Ideology pertains only to specific deceptive assertions, whose roots, so Mannheim at one point argues, may be traced to the psychology of particular individuals. That this is something of a straw target of ideology is surely clear: Mannheim pays scant regard to such theories as the fetishism of commodities, where deception, far from springing from psychologistic sources, is seen as generated by an entire social structure.

The ideological function of the ‘sociology of knowledge’ is in fact to defuse the whole Marxist conception of ideology, replacing it with the less embattled, contentious conception of a ‘world view’. Mannheim, to be sure, does not believe that such world views can ever be non-evaluatively analysed; but the drift of his work is to downplay concepts of mystification, rationalization and the power-function of ideas in the name of some synoptic survey of the evolution of forms of historical consciousness. In a sense, then, this post-Marxist approach to ideology returns to a pre-Marxist view of it, as simply ‘socially determined thought’. And since this applies to any thought whatsoever, there is a danger of the concept of ideology cancelling all the way through.

In so far as Mannheim does retain the concept of ideology, he does so in a singularly unilluminating way. As a historicist, truth for Mannheim means ideas adequate to a particular stage of historical development; and ideology then signifies a body of beliefs incongruous with its epoch, out of sync with what the age demands. Conversely, ‘utopia’ denotes ideas ahead of their time and so similarly discrepant with social reality, but capable nonetheless of shattering the structures of the present and transgressing its frontiers. Ideology, in short, is antiquated belief, a set of obsolescent myths, norms and ideals unhinged from the real; utopia is premature and unreal, but should be reserved as a term for those conceptual prefigurations which really do succeed in realizing a new social order. Ideology emerges in this light as a kind of failed utopia, unable to enter upon material existence; and this definition of it then simply throws us back to the patently insufficient early Marxian notion of ideology as ineffectual otherworldliness. Mannheim would appear to lack all sense of ideologies as forms of consciousness often all too well adapted to current social requirements, productively entwined with historical reality, able to organize practical social activity in highly effective ways. In his denigration of utopia, which is similarly a ‘distortion of reality’, he is simply blinded to the ways in which what ‘the age demands’
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may be precisely a thought which moves beyond it. 'Thought', he remarks, 'should contain neither less nor more than the reality in whose medium it operates' - an identification of the concept with its object which Theodor Adorno, ironically enough, will denounce as the very essence of ideological thought.

In the end, Mannheim either stretches the term ideology beyond all serviceable use, equating it with the social determination of any belief whatsoever, or unduly narrows it to specific acts of deception. He fails to grasp that ideology cannot be synonymous with partial or perspectival thinking - for of what thinking is this not true? If the concept is not to be entirely vacuous it must have rather more specific connotations of power-struggle and legitimation, structural dissemblance and mystification. What he does usefully suggest, however, is a third way between those who would hold that the truth or falsity of statements is sublimely untainted by their social genesis, and those who would abruptly reduce the former to the latter. For Michel Foucault, it would seem that the truth value of a proposition is entirely a matter of its social function, a reflex of the power interests it promotes. As the linguists might say, what is enunciated is wholly collapsible to the conditions of the enunciation; what matters is not so much what is said, but who says it to whom for what purposes. What this overlooks is that, while enunciations are certainly not independent of their social conditions, a statement such as 'Eskimos are generally speaking just as good as anyone else' is true no matter who says it for what end; and one of the important features of a claim such as 'Men are superior to women' is that, whatever power interests it may be promoting, it is also, as a matter of fact, false.

Another thinker on whom the Lukácsian mantle descends is the Romanian-born sociologist Lucien Goldmann. Goldmann's method of 'genetic structuralism' seeks to identify the 'mental structures' of a particular social group or class, especially as these are revealed in literature and philosophy. Everyday consciousness is a haphazard, amorphous affair; but certain exceptionally gifted members of a class - artists, for example - can rise above this mixed, uneven experience and express the class's interests in purer, more diagrammatic form. This 'ideal' structure Goldmann names a 'world view' - a specific organization of mental categories which silently informs the art and thought of a social group, and which is the product of its collective consciousness. The Goldmannian world view is thus a version of Lukács's 'imputed' consciousness: that style of thought at which a social class
would ideally arrive were it to grasp its real situation and articulate its true aspirations.

Goldmann enforces a distinction between this world view and mere ideology. The former is global in reach, and typifies a social class at the height of its powers, whereas the latter is a partial, distorting perspective characteristic of a class in decline. There is some warrant for this opposition, as we have seen, in a certain reading of Marx, who contrasts the genuine universality of an emergent revolutionary class with the deceptive rationalizations of its subsequent career. All the same, the distinction would seem somewhat shaky: is a world view non-ideological in the sense of being innocent of power? Is there no sense in which it strives to legitimate particular social interests? It is as though Goldmann wishes to safeguard the 'purity' of the world view from the shame of the sheerly ideological; and one reason he needs to do so is because the totality of the world view, for him as for Lukács, offers a vantage-point other than the now discredited 'science' from which specific ideologies may be assessed. This is not to claim that every world view is 'true'; for Goldmann, the Kantian vision is tragically constrained by the categories of bourgeois society. But it is true to actual historical conditions, and so to be contrasted with the mere speciousness of an ideology. World view is ideology purified, elevated, and largely purged of its negative elements.

In his major work *The Hidden God* (1955), Goldmann examines the tragic world view of a sector of the seventeenth-century French bourgeoisie, demonstrating how the works of writers as apparently disparate as Racine and Pascal display an invariable 'deep' structure of categories expressive of the vain search for absolute value in a world now stripped of numinous meaning by scientific rationalism and empiricism. All of the elements of 'historicist' Marxism are clearly in evidence here. Social classes are viewed not primarily as objective material structures but as 'collective subjects', furnished with what - ideally, at least - is a highly homogeneous consciousness. This consciousness stands in directly expressive relation to the class's social conditions; and works of art and philosophy are in turn expressive of this world view. There is no particular room in this model for 'non-class' forms of consciousness, and little room either for any serious complications, dislocations or contradictions between its various levels. The social formation presents itself as an 'expressive totality', within which social conditions, class, world view and literary artefacts unproblematically reflect one another.
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In his later work *Towards a Sociology of the Novel* (1964), Goldmann turns from the concept of world view to the theory of reification. This methodological shift, he considers, reflects a real mutation from classical to advanced capitalism; for the later stages of the system, with their pervasive rationalizing and dehumanizing of existence, have now definitively blocked off the possibility of global totality at the level of consciousness. What this suggests is that the notion of world view, and the theory of commodity fetishism, cannot really coexist as accounts of ideology. If, as we have seen, they stand in uneasy interrelation in the work of Lukács, they divide into chronologically successive phases of the history of capitalism in the writings of Goldmann. So the question which we raised in the case of Lukács returns in the instance of his disciple: is the dominant ideology a matter of the ruling class somehow imposing its coherently organized consciousness upon society as a whole, or is it a matter of the material structures of the capitalist economy itself?

The key category in the writing of Lukács's Western Marxist colleague Antonio Gramsci is not ideology but *hegemony*; and it is worth pondering the distinction between these two terms. Gramsci normally uses the word *hegemony* to mean the ways in which a governing power wins consent to its rule from those it subjugates - though it is true that he occasionally uses the term to cover both consent and coercion together. There is thus an immediate difference from the concept of ideology, since it is clear that ideologies may be forcibly imposed. Think, for example, of the workings of racist ideology in South Africa. But hegemony is also a broader category than ideology: it includes ideology, but is not reducible to it. A ruling group or class may secure consent to its power by ideological means; but it may also do so by, say, altering the tax system in ways favourable to groups whose support it needs, or creating a layer of relatively affluent, and thus somewhat politically quiescent, workers. Or hegemony may take political rather than economic forms: the parliamentary system in Western democracies is a crucial aspect of such power, since it fosters the illusion of self-government on the part of the populace. What uniquely distinguishes the political form of such societies is that the people are supposed to believe that they govern themselves, a belief which no slave of antiquity or medieval serf was expected to entertain. Indeed Perry Anderson goes so far as to describe the parliamentary system as 'the hub of the ideological apparatus of capitalism', to which such institutions as the media, churches and political parties play a
critical but complementary role. It is for this reason, as Anderson points out, that Gramsci is mistaken when he locates hegemony in 'civil society' alone, rather than in the state, for the political form of the capitalist state is itself a vital organ of such power.\footnote{19}

Another powerful source of political hegemony is the supposed neutrality of the bourgeois state. This is not, in fact, simply an ideological illusion. In capitalist society, political power is indeed relatively autonomous of social and economic life, as opposed to the political set-up in pre-capitalist formations. In feudal regimes, for example, the nobility who economically exploit the peasantry also exercise certain political, cultural and juridical functions in their lives, so that the relation between economic and political power is here more visible. Under capitalism, economic life is not subject to such continuous political supervision: as Marx comments, it is the 'dull compulsion of the economic', the need simply to survive, which keeps men and women at work, divorced from any framework of political obligations, religious sanctions or customary responsibilities. It is as though in this form of life the economy comes to operate 'all by itself', and the political state can thus take something of a back seat, sustaining the general structures within which this economic activity is conducted. This is the real material basis of the belief that the bourgeois state is supremely disinterested, holding the ring between contending social forces; and in this sense, once again, hegemony is built into its very nature.

Hegemony, then, is not just some successful kind of ideology, but may be discriminated into its various ideological, cultural, political and economic aspects. Ideology refers specifically to the way power-struggles are fought out at the level of signification; and though such signification is involved in all hegemonic processes, it is not in all cases the dominant level by which rule is sustained. Singing the National Anthem comes as close to a 'purely' ideological activity as one could imagine; it would certainly seem to fulfil no other purpose, aside perhaps from annoying the neighbours. Religion, similarly, is probably the most purely ideological of the various institutions of civil society. But hegemony is also carried in cultural, political and economic forms – in non-discursive practices as well as in rhetorical utterances.

With certain notable inconsistencies, Gramsci associates hegemony with the arena of 'civil society', by which he means the whole range of institutions intermediate between state and economy. Privately owned television stations, the family, the boy scout movement, the Methodist church, infant
schools, the British Legion, the Sun newspaper: all of these would count as hegemonic apparatuses, which bind individuals to the ruling power by consent rather than by coercion. Coercion, by contrast, is reserved to the state, which has a monopoly on ‘legitimate’ violence. (We should note, however, that the coercive institutions of a society – armies, law courts and the rest – must themselves win a general consent from the people if they are to operate effectively, so that the opposition between coercion and consent can be to some extent deconstructed.) In modern capitalist regimes, civil society has come to assume a formidable power, in contrast to the days when the Bolsheviks, living in a society poor in such institutions, could seize the reins of government by a frontal attack on the state itself. The concept of hegemony thus belongs with the question: How is the working class to take power in a social formation where the dominant power is subtly, pervasively diffused throughout habitual daily practices, intimately interwoven with ‘culture’ itself, inscribed in the very texture of our experience from nursery school to funeral parlour? How do we combat a power which has become the ‘common sense’ of a whole social order, rather than one which is widely perceived as alien and oppressive?

In modern society, then, it is not enough to occupy factories or confront the state. What must also be contested is the whole area of ‘culture’, defined in its broadest, most everyday sense. The power of the ruling class is spiritual as well as material; and any ‘counterhegemony’ must carry its political campaign into this hitherto neglected realm of values and customs, speech habits and ritual practices. Perhaps the shrewdest comment ever passed on this topic was Lenin’s, in a speech to the Moscow conference of trade unions in 1918:

The whole difficulty of the Russian revolution is that it was much easier for the Russian revolutionary working class to start than it is for the West European classes, but it is much more difficult for us to continue. It is more difficult to start a revolution in West European countries because there the revolutionary proletariat is opposed by the higher thinking that comes with culture, while the working class is in a state of cultural slavery.20

What Lenin means is that the relative lack of ‘culture’ in Tsarist Russia, in the sense of a dense network of ‘civil’ institutions, was a key factor in making the revolution possible, since the ruling class could not secure its hegemony
by these means. But the very same absence of culture, in the sense of a literate, well-educated population, developed technological forces and so on, also plunged the revolution into grave problems as soon as it occurred. Conversely, it is the preponderance of culture in the West, in the sense of a complex array of hegemonic institutions in civil society, which makes political revolution difficult to inaugurate; but this same culture, in the sense of a society rich in technical, material and 'spiritual' resources, would make political revolution easier to sustain once it came about. This is perhaps the place to remark that for Lenin, as indeed for all Marxist thinkers up to Stalin, socialism was inconceivable without a high level of development of the productive forces, and more generally of 'culture'. Marxism was never intended to be a theory and practice of how desperately backward societies could leap, isolated and unaided, into the twentieth century; and the material consequence of such an attempt is generally known as Stalinism.

If the concept of hegemony extends and enriches the notion of ideology, it also lends this otherwise somewhat abstract term a material body and political cutting edge. It is with Gramsci that the crucial transition is effected from ideology as 'systems of ideas' to ideology as lived, habitual social practice—which must then presumably encompass the unconscious, inarticulate dimensions of social experience as well as the workings of formal institutions. Louis Althusser, for whom ideology is largely unconscious and always institutional, will inherit both of these emphases; and hegemony as a 'lived' process of political domination comes close in some of its aspects to what Raymond Williams calls a 'structure of feeling'. In his own discussion of Gramsci, Williams acknowledges the dynamic character of hegemony, as against the potentially static connotations of 'ideology': hegemony is never a once-and-for-all achievement, but 'has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified'.

As a concept, then, hegemony is inseparable from overtones of struggle, as ideology perhaps is not. No single mode of hegemony, so Williams argues, can exhaust the meanings and values of any society; and any governing power is thus forced to engage with counter-hegemonic forces in ways which prove partly constitutive of its own rule. Hegemony is thus an inherently relational, as well as practical and dynamic, notion; and it offers in this sense a signal advance on some of the more ossified, scholastic definitions of ideology to be found in certain 'vulgar' currents of Marxism.

Very roughly, then, we might define hegemony as a whole range of
practical strategies by which a dominant power elicits consent to its rule from those its subjugates. To win hegemony, in Gramsci’s view, is to establish moral, political and intellectual leadership in social life by diffusing one’s own ‘world view’ throughout the fabric of society as a whole, thus equating one’s own interests with the interests of society at large. Such consensual rule is not, of course, peculiar to capitalism; indeed one might claim that any form of political power, to be durable and well-grounded, must evoke at least a degree of consent from its underlings. But there are good reasons to believe that in capitalist society in particular, the ratio between consent and coercion shifts decisively towards the former. In such conditions, the power of the state to discipline and punish – what Gramsci terms ‘domination’ – remains firmly in place, and indeed in modern societies grows more formidable as the various technologies of oppression begin to proliferate. But the institutions of ‘civil society’ – schools, families, churches, media and the rest – now play a more central role in the processes of social control. The bourgeois state will resort to direct violence if it is forced to it; but in doing so it risks suffering a drastic loss of ideological credibility. It is preferable on the whole for power to remain conveniently invisible, disseminated throughout the texture of social life and thus ‘naturalized’ as custom, habit, spontaneous practice. Once power nakedly reveals its hand, it can become an object of political contestation.\textsuperscript{22}

A shift from coercion to consent is implicit in the very material conditions of middle-class society. Since that society is composed of ‘free’, apparently autonomous individuals, each pursuing their own private interests, any centralized political supervision of these atomized subjects becomes considerably harder to sustain. Each of them must consequently become his or her own seat of self-government; each must ‘internalize’ power, make it spontaneously their own and bear it around with them as a principle inseparable from their identities. A social order must be constructed, Gramsci writes, ‘in which the individual can govern himself without his self-government thereby entering into conflict with political society – but rather becoming its normal continuation, its organic complement’.\textsuperscript{23} ‘State life’, he adds, must become ‘spontaneous’, at one with the individual subject’s ‘free’ identity; and if this is the ‘psychological’ dimension of hegemony, it is one with a solid material basis in middle-class life.

In his \textit{Prison Notebooks}, Gramsci rejects out of hand any purely negative use of the term ideology. This ‘bad’ sense of the term has become widespread, he remarks, ‘with the effect that the theoretical analysis of the
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corner of ideology has been modified and denatured'. Ideology has been too often seen as pure appearance or mere obtuseness, whereas a distinction must in fact be drawn between 'historically organic' ideologies - meaning those necessary to a given social structure - and ideology in the sense of the arbitrary speculations of individuals. This parallels to some extent the opposition we have observed elsewhere between 'ideology' and 'world view', though we should note that for Marx himself the negative sense of ideology was by no means confined to arbitrary subjective speculation. Gramsci also dismisses any economistic reduction of ideology to the mere bad dream of the infrastructure: on the contrary, ideologies must be viewed as actively organizing forces which are psychologically 'valid', fashioning the terrain on which men and women act, struggle and acquire consciousness of their social positions. In any 'historical bloc', Gramsci comments, material forces are the 'content', and ideologies the 'form'.

The German Ideology's equation of ideology with speculative illusion is for Gramsci simply one historically determinate phase through which such ideologies pass: every conception of the world, he observes, might at some point come to assume a speculative form which represents at once its historical highpoint and the beginnings of its dissolution.

One could say, that is, that every culture has its speculative and religious moment, which coincides with the period of complete hegemony of the social group of which it is the expression and perhaps coincides exactly with the moment in which the real hegemony disintegrates at the base, molecularly: but precisely because of this disintegration, and to react against it, the system of thought perfects itself as a dogma and becomes a transcendental 'faith'.

What the early Marx and Engels are tempted to see as the eternal form of all ideology is for Gramsci a specific historical phenomenon.

Gramsci's theory of ideology, then, is cast like Lukács's in what is known as the 'historicist' mould. He is as suspicious as Lukács of any appeal to a 'scientific' Marxism which ignores the practical, political, historically relative nature of Marxist theory, and grasps that theory as the expression of revolutionary working-class consciousness. An 'organic' ideology is not simply false consciousness, but one adequate to a specific stage of historical development and a particular political moment. To judge the whole of past philosophy as mere 'delirium and folly', in the manner of 'vulgar' Marxism,
is an anachronistic error which assumes that men and women in the past should have thought as we do today. But it is also, ironically, a hangover from the metaphysical dogma of that past, presupposing as it does an eternally valid form of thought by which all ages can be judged. The fact that theoretical systems have been superseded does not mean that they were not once historically valid. Marxism is simply the form of historical consciousness adequate to the present moment, and will wither away when that moment is in its turn surpassed. If it seizes hold of historical contradictions, it also grasps itself as one element of those contradictions, and indeed is their most complete, because most conscious, expression. For Marxism to assert that every supposedly eternal truth has practical historical origins is inevitably for it to turn this perspective upon itself. When this fails to happen, Marxism itself rapidly petrifies into a metaphysical ideology.

For Gramsci, the consciousness of subordinated groups in society is typically fissured and uneven. Two conflicting conceptions of the world usually exist in such ideologies, the one drawn from the 'official' notions of the rulers, the other derived from an oppressed people's practical experience of social reality. Such conflicts might take the form of what we have seen earlier as a 'performative contradiction' between what a group or class says, and what it tacitly reveals in its behaviour. But this is not to be seen as mere self-deception: such an explanation, Gramsci thinks, might be adequate in the case of particular individuals, but not in the case of great masses of men and women. These contradictions in thought must have an historical base; and Gramsci locates this in the contrast between the emergent concept of the world which a class displays when it acts as an 'organic totality', and its submission in more 'normal' times to the ideas of those who govern it. One aim of revolutionary practice, then, must be to elaborate and make explicit the potentially creative principles implicit in the practical understanding of the oppressed - to raise these otherwise inchoate, ambiguous elements of its experience to the status of a coherent philosophy or 'world view'.

What is at stake here, to put the matter in Lukács's terms, is a transition from the 'empirical' consciousness of the working class to its 'possible' consciousness - to the world view it could attain in propitious conditions, and which is even now implicit in its experience. But whereas Lukács is disturbingly vague about how such a transition is to come about, Gramsci offers a highly precise answer to this question: the activity of the 'organic' intellectuals. 'Organic' intellectuals, of whom Gramsci himself was one, are the product of an emergent social class; and their role is to lend that class
some homogeneous self-consciousness in the cultural, political and economic fields. The category of organic intellectual thus spans not only ideologues and philosophers but political activists, industrial technicians, political economists, legal specialists and so on. Such a figure is less a contemplative thinker, in the old idealist style of the intelligentsia, than an organizer, constructor, 'permanent persuader', who actively participates in social life and helps bring to theoretical articulation those positive political currents already contained within it. Philosophical activity, Gramsci remarks, must be seen 'as above all a cultural battle to transform the popular "mentality" and to diffuse the philosophical innovations which will prove themselves to be "historically true" to the extent that they become concretely - i.e. historically and socially - universal'. The organic intellectual thus provides the link or pivot between philosophy and the people, adept at the former but actively identified with the latter. His or her goal is to construct out of the common consciousness a 'cultural-social' unity in which otherwise heterogeneous individual wills are welded together on the basis of a common conception of the world.

The organic intellectual thus neither sentimentally acquiesces in the current state of awareness of the masses, nor brings to them some alien truth from 'above', as in the usual banal caricature of Leninism widespread today even on the political left. (It is worth noting here that Gramsci himself, far from being the precursor of a 'liberal' Marxism which regards political leadership as 'elitist', was a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist.) All men and women, he asserts, are in some sense intellectuals, in that their practical activity involves an implicit 'philosophy' or conception of the world. The role of the organic intellectual, as we have seen, is to give shape and cohesion to this practical understanding, thus unifying theory and practice. 'One can construct', Gramsci argues, 'on a specific practice, a theory which, by coinciding and identifying itself with the decisive elements of the practice itself, can accelerate the historical process that is going on, rendering practice more homogeneous, more coherent, more efficient in all its elements, and thus, in other words, developing its potential to the maximum ...'

To do this, however, means combatting much that is negative in the empirical consciousness of the people, to which Gramsci gives the title of 'common sense'. Such common sense is a 'chaotic aggregate of disparate conceptions' - an ambiguous, contradictory zone of experience which is on the whole politically backward. How could we expect it to be otherwise, if a
ruling bloc has had centuries in which to perfect its hegemony? In Gramsci's view there is a certain continuum between 'spontaneous' and 'scientific' consciousness, such that the difficulties of the latter should not be intimidatingly overestimated; but there is also a permanent war between revolutionary theory and the mythological or folkloric conceptions of the masses, and the latter is not to be patronizingly romanticized at the expense of the former. Certain 'folk' conceptions, Gramsci holds, do indeed spontaneously reflect important aspects of social life; 'popular consciousness' is not to be dismissed as purely negative, but its more progressive and more reactionary features must instead be carefully distinguished. Popular morality, for example, is partly the fossilized residue of an earlier history, partly 'a range of often creative and progressive innovations ... which go against, or merely differ from, the morality of the ruling strata of society'. What is needed is not just some paternalist endorsement of existing popular consciousness, but the construction of 'a new common sense and with it a new culture and a new philosophy which will be rooted in the popular consciousness with the same solidity and imperative quality as traditional beliefs'. The function of the organic intellectuals, in other words, is to forge the links between 'theory' and 'ideology', creating a two-way passage between political analysis and popular experience. And the term ideology here 'is used in its highest sense of a conception of the world that is implicitly manifest in art, in law, in economic activity and in all manifestations of individual and collective life'. Such a 'world view' cements together a social and political bloc, as a unifying, organizing, inspirational principle rather than a system of abstract ideas.

The opposite of the organic intellectual is the 'traditional' one, who believes himself quite independent of social life. Such figures (clerics, idealist philosophers, Oxford dons and the rest) are in Gramsci's view hangovers from some previous historical epoch, and in this sense the distinction between 'organic' and 'traditional' can be to some extent deconstructed. A traditional intellectual was perhaps once organic, but is now no longer so; idealist philosophers served the middle class well in its revolutionary heyday, but are now a marginal embarrassment. The distinction between traditional and organic intellectual corresponds roughly to one we have traced between the negative and the positive senses of ideology: ideology as thought which has come unstuck from reality, as opposed to ideology as ideas in the active service of a class's interests. The traditional intellectual's trust in his or her independence of the ruling class is for Gramsci the material basis of philo-
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Sophical idealism – of the gullible faith, denounced by The German Ideology, that the source of ideas is other ideas. For Marx and Engels, by contrast, ideas have no independent history at all: they are the products of specific historical conditions. But this belief in the autonomy of thought may serve a particular ruling class exceedingly well; and to this extent the now traditional intellectual may once have fulfilled an ‘organic’ function precisely in his social disconnectedness. Indeed Gramsci himself suggests as much when he claims that the speculative view of the world belongs to a class at the acme of its power. We should remember in any case that the traditional intellectual’s trust in the autonomy of ideas is not sheer illusion: given the material conditions of middle-class society, such members of the intelligentsia really do occupy a highly ‘mediated’ position in relation to social life.

Like Lukács and Goldmann, Gramsci is an historicist Marxist who believes that truth is historically variable, relative to the consciousness of the most progressive social class of a particular epoch. Objectivity, he writes, always means ‘humanly objective’, which can in turn be decoded as ‘historically or universally subjective’. Ideas are true in so far as they serve to cohere and promote those forms of consciousness which are in tune with the most significant tendencies of an era. The alternative case to this is to claim that the assertion that Julius Caesar was assassinated, or that the wage-relation under capitalism is exploitative, is either true or it is not. A universal consensus might always prove retrospectively to have been false. Moreover, by what criteria do we judge that a specific historical development is progressive? How do we decide what counts as the ‘possible’ consciousness or most richly elaborated world view of the working class? How do we determine what a class’s true interests are? If there are no criteria for such judgements outside that class’s own consciousness, then it would seem that we are trapped here in just the same kind of vicious epistemological circle we noted in the case of Georg Lukács. If those ideas are true which serve to realize certain social interests, does this not open the door to a cynical pragmatism which, as with Stalinism, defines objectivity as whatever happens politically to suit you? And if the test of the truth of ideas is that they do in fact promote such desirable interests, how can we ever be sure that it was the ideas in question which did the promoting, rather than some other historical factor?

Gramsci has been criticized by ‘structuralist’ Marxists such as Nicos Poulantzas for committing the historicist error of reducing ideology to the
expression of a social class, and reducing a dominant class to the ‘essence’ of the social formation. For Poulantzas, it is not the hegemonic class which binds society together; on the contrary, the unity of a social formation is a structural affair, an effect of the interlocking of several ‘levels’ or ‘regions’ of social life under the finally determining constraints of a mode of production. The political reality of a ruling class is one level within this formation, not the principle which gives unity and direction to the whole. In a similar way, ideology is a complex material structure, not just a kind of collective subjectivity. A dominant ideology reflects not just the world view of the rulers, but the relations between governing and dominated classes in society as a whole. Its task is to recreate, at an ‘imaginary’ level, the unity of the entire social formation, not just to lend coherence to the consciousness of its rulers. The relation between a hegemonic class and a dominant ideology is thus indirect: it passes, so to speak, through the mediation of the total social structure. Such an ideology cannot be deciphered from the consciousness of the governing bloc taken in isolation, but must be grasped from the standpoint of the whole field of class struggle. In Poulantzas’s eyes, historicist Marxism is guilty of the idealist mistake of believing that it is a dominant ideology or world view which secures the unity of society. For him, by contrast, the dominant ideology reflects that unity, rather than constituting it.

Gramsci’s work is certainly vulnerable at points to Poulantzas’s critique of historicism; but he is by no means enamoured of any ‘pure’ class subject. An oppositional world view is not for him just the expression of proletarian consciousness, but an irreducibly composite affair. Any effective revolutionary movement must be a complex alliance of forces; and its world view will result from a transformative synthesis of its various ideological components into a ‘collective will’. Revolutionary hegemony, in other words, involves a complex practice upon given radical ideologies, rearticulating their motifs into a differentiated whole. Nor does Gramsci overlook the relational nature of such world views, as Lukács is occasionally tempted to do. We have seen already that he by no means underestimates the extent to which the consciousness of the oppressed is ‘tainted’ by the beliefs of its superiors; but this relation also works the other way round. Any hegemonic class, he writes in The Prison Notebooks, must take account of the interests and tendencies of those over whom it exerts power, and must be prepared to compromise in this respect. Nor does he always posit a direct relation between a dominant class and a dominant ideology: ‘A class some of whose strata still have a Ptolemaic conception of the world can none the less be the representative of
a very advanced historical situation."34 'Structuralist' Marxism has customarily accused its historicist counterpart of failing to distinguish between a dominant and a determinant social class – of overlooking the fact that one class can exercise political dominance on the basis of the economic determinacy of another. Indeed something of the kind could be said of nineteenth-century Britain, where the economically determinant middle class largely 'delegated' its political power to the aristocracy. This is not a situation which any theory assuming a one-to-one relation between classes and ideologies can easily decipher, since the resultant ruling ideology will be typically a hybrid of elements drawn from the experience of both classes. It is a sign of Gramsci's subtle historical insight, however, that his brief comments on British social history in *The Prison Notebooks* run very much along these lines:

> [In nineteenth-century England] there is a very extensive category of organic intellectuals – those, that is, who come into existence on the same industrial terrain as the economic group – but in the higher sphere we find that the old land-owning class preserves its position of virtual monopoly. It loses its economic supremacy but maintains for a long time a politico-intellectual supremacy and is assimilated as 'traditional intellectuals' and as a directive group by the new group in power. The old land-owning aristocracy is joined to the industrialists by a kind of suture which is precisely that which in other countries unites the traditional intellectuals with the new dominant classes.35

A whole vital aspect of British class history is here summarized with brilliant succinctness, as enduring testimony to the creative originality of its author.
NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. See, for example, the declaration of the Italian postmodernist philosopher Gianni Vattimo that the end of modernity and the end of ideology are identical moments. 'Postmodern Criticism: Postmodern Critique', in David Woods, ed., Writing the Future, London 1990, p. 57.

1 WHAT IS IDEOLOGY?

1. For a useful summary of the various meanings of ideology, see A. Naess et al., Democracy, Ideology and Objectivity, Oslo 1956, pp. 143 ff. See also Norman Birnbaum, 'The Sociological Study of Ideology 1940–1960', Current Sociology, vol. 9, 1960, for a survey of theories of ideology from Marx to the modern day and an excellent bibliography.


19. The latter claim was one of the few parts of my argument to be seriously contested when I delivered a version of this chapter as a lecture at Brigham Young University, Utah.

2 IDEOLOGICAL STRATEGIES

3 FROM THE ENLIGHTENMENT TO THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

2. For a useful account of this style of thought, see Basil Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background, London 1940.
4. Quoted by Kennedy, A Philosopher in the Age of Revolution, p. 189.
5. Quoted in Naess et al., Democracy, Ideology and Objectivity, p. 151.
6. For an account of Marx and ideology, see H. Lefebvre, The Sociology of Marx, London 1963, ch. 3.
7. Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 47. For some interesting comments on this text, see Louis Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique of Culture, New Haven and London 1983.
8. Ibid., p. 47 (my italics).
9. Ibid., p. 52.
10. Williams, Marxism and Literature p. 60.
12. Ibid., p. 173.
14. Ibid., p. 64.
15. Ibid., p. 53.
18. Callinicos, Marxism and Philosophy, p. 131.
4 FROM LUKÁCS TO GRAMSCI

1. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 204.
2. Ibid., p. 204.
3. 'Historicism' in its Marxist sense is elegantly summarized by Perry Anderson as an ideology in which 'society becomes a circular "expressive" totality, history a homogeneous flow of linear time, philosophy a self-consciousness of the historical process, class struggle a combat of collective "subjects", capitalism a universe essentially defined by alienation, communism a state of true humanism beyond alienation' (*Considerations on Western Marxism*, London 1976, p. 70).
5. Like most analogies, this one limps: the Hegelian Idea is really its own creation, whereas the proletariat, far from being self-generating, is for Marxism an effect of the process of capital.
10. Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, London 1973, part 3, ch. 2. It should be pointed out that Lukács does in fact hold that there are heterogeneous 'levels' of ideology.
13. Ibid., p. 70.
16. Ibid., p. 50.
17. Ibid., p. 69.

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