

interpretation

A JOURNAL OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

September 1981

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IDEOLOGY AND REALITY: THE IDEOLOGUE'S PERSUASION IN MODERN POLITICS

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"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." "The question is," said Alice, "whether you *can* make words mean different things." "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all."

Currently, the words philosophy, theory, and ideology have been made to mean the most different things by the fiat of the Humpty Dumpties of our world. The confusion has reached the point where the terms have become interchangeable: On the one hand, we find that all types of man's symbolic creations are arbitrarily classified as philosophies, theories, or ideologies. On the other hand, the concept of ideology is extended to all kinds of symbolizations, disliked for one or the other reason, in order to deprive them of their status of reality; carried to extremes there is the *allgemeine Ideologieverdacht*, the general suspicion of ideology that dissolves any truth whatsoever of symbolic expressions into the sociology of knowledge. We may agree that all persons are allowed to define ideology, etc., as they please, vote in the profession on each definition and establish an opinion of the majority as the ruling opinion while recording the dissenting opinions of the respective minorities for further use. This procedure would reduce the chaotic situation that prevents meaningful discussion by a decision à la Humpty Dumpty, without bringing about any conceptual clarification. Critical clarifications of the terms in question cannot mean the enumeration of definitions in order to add new ones of one's own; clarification can ask that the symbols be put back into the experiential context of their genesis, in which context analysis is possible. Content and structure of the consciousness and the engendering experiences underlying the respective sets of symbols may then be investigated. This is not to dismiss the sociology of knowledge as irrelevant for the enterprise of critical clarification; it is to take symbols seriously as the form of man's ongoing investigation of his part in the drama of being. The act of symbolization, however, does not take place in a vacuum but is to be located in the respective historical context. The study of the situation that gave rise to a form of symbolism tells us something about the motivating experiences, insofar as each symbolization is an attempt at coping with fundamental problems of human existence in society and history.

The history of symbolization is, therefore, to be considered the "history of the search for emergent truth about man's fundamental problems, whatever the result of the search may be." It is an "ongoing search for ever greater understanding" in terms of an experiential differentiation of the dimensions of reality

man participates in, as well as the evidence of the possible refusal to understand “refusals that are also made in the mode of symbolization.”¹ Symbols are not things to be dealt with as objects, but the human medium of interpreting experiences of order and disorder, truth and untruth, perfection and imperfection. They testify to social fields of consciousness which are bound together by equivalent experiences of some underlying reality that makes human being partners in a common order.

Methodologically, general considerations for the process of theoretical clarification suggest the following steps: First, the term *ideology* is to be traced to the original appearance of the symbolic ensemble of this term as part of the self-explication of Western man in the late 18th century. Second, the content and structure of *ideology* are to be analyzed and put into the respective experiential context of the historical process. In the course of this analysis a clarification will be made of the relationship of the symbolic form *ideology* to the historical event of philosophy developed by the Greeks at the very beginning of our civilization in an effort to come to an understanding of their humanity. That understanding culminated in the Platonic-Aristotelian enterprise of a critical science of human order in society and history. Concerning this, it must be emphasized that methodologically the same holds true for philosophy as for *ideology* and any other symbolism: It is to be perceived in the form of its appearance in history in order to understand its authentic meaning. In the case of philosophy this is the more important, since it is the symbolism that has structured the reality we still live in, it has provided the language symbols of human self-interpretation up to today, and shaped the framework for all analytical questions about social order in history. Philosophy, in this respect, is an epochal event of differentiation; symbolizations later in time could not fall behind it, however much they may twist the original meaning of the symbols or pervert the structure of reality.

Third, the summary of our findings will be a survey consisting of the central tenets of *ideology*. This is in order to decide whether *ideology* is a prototype of a modern symbolism in content and structure with specific consequences for the political reality—when put into practice—that can be used as a paradigm for all symbolic variants of equivalent structure and content. This paradigm fits in with Voegelin’s concept of modern gnostic mass-movement and poses the question of the gnostic nature of ideology.² The gnostic features of modern ideology, which are still much disputed by students of gnosticism, are crucial for an understanding of Voegelin’s interpretation of modernity. The French *idéologues* were, in terms of Voegelin, an intellectual movement which has had “if not the form, at least the success of political mass-movements.”³

¹G. Sebba, “Order and Disorder of the Soul: Eric Voegelin’s Philosophy of History,” *Southern Review* III (N.S.) Spring 1967, 2, 295.

²E. Voegelin, *Science, Politics and Gnosticism* (Chicago 1968), pp. 83–88.

³Voegelin, *Science*, p. 84.

From the intellectual movement of the *idéologues* important varieties of modern scientism have sprung up, which have shaped the modern mind more than any other intellectual movement. It might be useful, therefore, to tie the tenets of *ideology* with certain gnostic and magic⁴ traditions in the West in order to substantiate the gnosticism of this intellectual movement beyond a general suspicion of gnosticism (*allgemeiner Gnosisverdacht*). Such suspicion regards "any system as Gnostic which shares one or two of the main traits of the ancient world feeling", thus throwing "a gnostic blanket over modern consciousness" in general.⁵ In Voegelin's understanding the essential core is "the enterprise of returning the pneuma in man from its state of alienation in the cosmos to the divine pneuma of the Beyond through action based on knowledge."⁶ This statement, mainly inspired by the studies of Jonas and Quispel, sums up the six characteristics "that, taken together, reveal the nature of the gnostic attitude,"⁷ and it is at least as plausible as the recent attempts at terminological clarification undertaken at the Messina Congress of 1966.⁸ With respect to the current state of Gnostic studies I want to suggest tentatively that the decisive criterion is the preordained self-redemptive act of *gnosis* practiced spiritually, ritually or socially or combining all three of them with the purpose of changing the nature of reality proper for the better.

Gnostic soteriology is a very complicated matter. But the rich soteriological symbolism always suggests an identical underlying pattern that Irenaeus of Lyon sketched out quite correctly: since *ignorance* is the cause of *want* and *passion*, *knowledge* (*gnosis*) will dissolve the whole state which has come into being by ignorance. *Gnosis*, therefore, is the redemption of the inner or pneumatic man from his empirical existence, body and psyche being derived from want. *Gnosis* is the knowledge of the whole and true redemption. The redeeming *gnosis* is not only an act of self-knowledge but an existential activity. It is usually initiated by some extracosmic force that calls upon the Gnostic, but redeemer and redeemed are of the same nature, merging in the divinizing action of redeeming the Gnostic in the psychodrama of *gnosis*.⁹ The call makes the Gnostic his own redeemer. The ancient Gnostic, however, is a redeemed one,

⁴For a discussion of the magic tradition see Cari L. G. Shay, "The Transmutation of Alchemy into Science and Political Thought," University of Oregon, Ph.D., 1974.

⁵S. McKnight, *Gnosticism and Modernity*, p. 19. (Paper presented to the Conference on Gnosticism and Modernity, May 1978.)

⁶E. Voegelin, *The Ecumenic Age* (Baton Rouge, 1974), p. 20.

⁷Voegelin, *Science*, p. 86.

⁸U. Bianchi, "Le origini dello Gnosticismo, Colloquio di Messina," 13-18 April 1966 = *Studies in the History of Religions* (Supplements to *Numen*, XII) Leiden, 1967, XXIII-XXVI.

⁹Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, I, 21, 2 & 4; on the gnostic soteriology see: H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston, 1958); H. M. Schenke, "Die neutestamentliche Christologie und der gnostische Erlöser," in: K. W. Tröger (ed.), *Gnosis und Neues Testament*, Berlin 1973, 205-29; L. Schottroff, *Animae naturaliter salvandae*, in: W. Eltester (ed.), *Christentum und Gnosis* (Berlin, 1969), 65-97; and especially the new study of K. Rudolph, *Die Gnosis*, (Göttingen, 1977), 130-84.

whose redemption is fully achieved only after his death. But the modern Gnostic in the provisional state of salvation is to expect ultimate fulfillment of redemption in history. In my opinion, though, the distinguishing trait of *modern* gnosticism consists of the radical spatio-temporal view of this salvational act taking place within the historical process. Many a modern gnostic system, therefore, interprets the historical process in terms of an innerworldly apocalypse insofar as the salvational act through man's own effort is the imagined *logic* and *telos* of history. But it must be remembered that not every modern Gnostic is an apocalyptic, nor is every apocalyptic a modern Gnostic.

Fourth, and finally, the process of clarification should be completed in a genuine theoretical way by putting the truth of ideology to the test of reality: Does the *idéologue* have to deny and eclipse a major part of the historical field of experiences and the symbolizations of that experience in order to safeguard his conception of man in society and history?

1. *The Historical Roots of Ideology*

My report on the French *idéologues* elaborates certain points made by Dante Germino and Hans Barth in their contributions to the subject. I have also drawn on the materials in the work of Picavet, van Duzer, Kitchin and Moravia.¹⁰ The term *ideology* was coined by Antoine Destutt de Tracy and accepted by an intellectual movement that played a powerful role in the intellectual and political life of France from 1794 till Napoleon's rise to the imperial throne. For some time this group of persons made up the intellectual center of France setting up the French system of public education and bringing together the best minds of all fields of science in their Institut National. The removal of the *idéologues* from the public scene did not negate their impact upon the public consciousness of the French nation. Socially, it was a movement of a revolutionary intelligentsia consisting of members of the non-capitalist bourgeoisie, the declining class of *officiers* and the men of the liberal professions mingled with landed aristocrats of the rentier type. It was the social class that lived a marginal and precarious existence within the ranks of the political class of the *ancien régime* and who became most active in the revolution. The result was that this class was largely able to change its declining position by rising to power in postrevolutionary France. The *idéologues* proved true to this revolutionary achievement of their class by establishing themselves as the intellectual elite of the society.

"The National Institute represented the keystone of the institutions which had been established by the Convention of Public Education. The professors of the central schools

¹⁰D. Germino, *Beyond Ideology* (New York, 1967); H. Barth, *Wahrheit und Ideologie*, new ed. (Frankfurt, 1974); Fr. Picavet, *Les Idéologues* (Paris, 1891); Charles H. Van Duzer, *Contribution of the Ideologues to French Revolutionary Thought* (Baltimore, 1935); J. Kitchin, *La Décade (1794-1807)*, Paris, 1965; S. Moravia, *Il pensiero degli Idéologues* (Florence, 1974).

as well as those of all specialized schools could perceive its members as 'leaders of education'.¹¹

The Fathers of the movement were Condillac and especially Condorcet, the central figures, beside Destutt de Tracy, were Cabanis, Volney, Broussais, Lancelin, Daunou, J. B. Say and such eminent scientists as Lamarck, Laplace and Ampère, and last but not least Napoleon. The *Idéologistes*, as they called themselves, acted as the class of men that were, as Condorcet once said, to propagate the truth in order to ring in the age of human perfection. The symbolic form of *ideology* absorbed the various symbolic strands—spiritual, intellectual, political, and economic—that dissociated themselves from the disintegrating old European order, separated them from their respective contexts, and rearranged them into a new symbolism that turned out to be a coherent conception of man in history and society. Thus, the *idéologistes* could claim that their speculation is the new truth of the new era of mankind as it was introduced by the revolutionary calendar.

2. The Theoretical Analysis of the Ideologue's Interpretation of Order

In *ideology*, there becomes apparent, as a personal and social process, one alternative answer to the ongoing process of differentiation permeating Western civilization. This process made the individual the final spiritual and sociopolitical unit of human existence. This response to the challenge of differentiating experiences of the surrounding reality of God and man, world and society, history and nature was given in a mode of symbolization the components of which are sketched out briefly:

The first and most fundamental principle was the view of history. All *idéologues* agreed on Condorcet's speculation of human history. Condorcet and his confrères were tormented by Pascal's experience of man who finds himself lost in a remote corner of the infinite universe wondering about the true value of earth, kingdoms, cities, and himself. But, in reply to Pascal's question: 'What is man in the infinite?' Condorcet formulated the principle of the indefinite perfectibility of the human species in history: "If this indefinite perfectibility of our species is, as I believe, a general law of nature", Condorcet argues in the *Mémoires sur l'instruction publique*, "man must no longer regard himself as an individual limited to a transitory and isolated existence . . . he becomes an active part of the great whole and the cooperator in an eternal enterprise. In a momentary existence on a point of space, he can by his work embrace all places, bind his fate to that of the centuries, and be still active long after his memory has vanished from the earth."¹² The *idéologue* Cabanis in his *lettre sur*

¹¹Picavet, *Les Idéologues*, p. 81.

¹²M. de Condorcet, *Œuvres*, A. Condorcet, O'Connor, F. M. Arago (eds.) (Paris 1847-49, repr. Stuttgart, 1968), VII, 183.

la perfectibilité published in the *Décade*, obtains from the “doctrine of the perfectibility of the human species in relation to reason and morality” whatever meaning there is to human existence in history and society. This doctrine

“has served well for the basis and encouragement for the works of the Genius, to the attempts at the improved mode of education. The research on the better form of government and the efforts of the searchers for truth, the moralists and the legislators have always been founded on the belief that man is perfectible; that he is it individually, that he is it especially considered collectively or as the whole of a nation. Without this given fact, the continuing changes which history shows us, the revolutions of empires, the barbarity and the civilization, the ignorance and the progress of the mind, the evil and the good all would in effect become equally inexplicable.”¹³

History was seen as a progress in civilization towards the reduction of common errors and prejudices and the infinite perfection of the human mind. Condorcet’s *Esquisse d’un tableau historique des progrès de l’esprit humain* called for the beginning of the tenth and final epoch of the advancement to absolute perfection in the *New Atlantis* of enlightened reason as envisioned in his *Fragment sur l’Atlantide*: destruction of inequality between the nations, progress of equality within one and the same nation and the real perfecting of man. Condorcet constructs the rise of Western man to his full stature of the *zoon noetikon*, *zoon politikon* and *zoon historikon*, originally inspired and initiated by philosophers, Jews and Christians, and the accompanying development of natural science and the rise of politically and economically powerful social organizations into a speculation of an unilinear history, giving it a meaning of its own. History becomes a closed process towards a known *telos* described in terms of the purification of the deficiencies of human existence in time, a leap into a new quality as yet not experienced. The progress of perfection may be an indefinite one, but in the last analysis it will lead to a collective state of salvation from all existential evil. “I think I have proved the possibility and indicated the means of resolving the perhaps most important matter for the human race”, Condorcet proclaimed, “that of its perfectibility considered in its general masses, which is to say rendering exactness of mind, independent and sound reason, enlightened conscience, and habitual submission to the principles of humanity and justice, almost universal qualities.”¹⁴ And he indulges in the imaginative anticipations of the fine things to come, consoling himself—in the present time of misery—with the “picture of the human race freed from all its chains, released from the domination of chance and from that of the enemies of its progress, advancing with a firm and sure step in the path of truth, virtue and happiness.” In this contemplation Condorcet lives

“in thought with man restored to the rights and dignity of his nature. There he truly lives in communion with his fellows, in a paradise that his reason has been able to create, enhanced with the purest of pleasures by his love for humanity.”¹⁵

¹³Lettre inconnue de Cabanis sur la perfectibilité, in: Picavet, *Les Idéologues*, p. 591.

¹⁴Condorcet, *Œuvres*, VI, 595.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, VI, 275–76.

In this we observe Condorcet in the act of projecting the imaginary reality of the community of the redeemed which emerges from a certain sequence of stages, each of which frees man from some earthly evil. Technically, Condorcet and the *idéologues* adhered to an apocalyptic structure of history. The speculation rested on the rich apocalyptic tradition of the past but the symbolic connotations were eliminated, only the structure remained untouched.

The old apocalypse envisioned the transfiguration of reality, preeminently the redemption of man, by the intervention of God. This idea always tempted people in crisis to take the works of redemption into their own hands. The self-redemptive enterprises, magic not excluded, of many ancient and medieval sects and movements testify to this. But the penetration into the structure of the phenomenal world occasioned by the rise of modern science changed the situation. The advance of the mathematical and physical sciences and their ramification into technology increasingly affected the social and political structure of the western world. Knowledge became power in the sense that the ever present rational-utilitarian sector in society expanded rapidly in the public consciousness. The functional rationality of science promised an all-embracing power over nature and by implication the vision of the possible manipulation of the entire reality at the discretion of the knowing man. If science meant tangible and calculable transformation of the world, why not put the new science to use to accomplish the transformation of human existence into the state of transfiguration so longed for in order to achieve this transformation with a degree of certainty that had unfortunately been missing up to then?

This solution required the combination of several intellectual operations. Concerning the experience of reality the following principles were to be dogmatized: "(1) the assumption that the mathematized science of natural phenomena is a model science to which all other sciences ought to conform; (2) that all realms of being are accessible to the methods of the sciences of phenomena; and (3) that all reality which is not accessible to sciences of phenomena is either irrelevant or . . . illusionary."¹⁶ This reduction of reality to its spatio-temporal domain by itself, however, did not make mathematics and physics an instrument for redemption; it often resulted in a sound scepticism. In his excellent study of Condorcet, Baker argues that

"in their view of the limited nature and extent of scientific knowledge Pascal and the philosophers were virtually at one. In their response to these limits they could hardly have been more opposed."¹⁷

Pascal maintained:

"Physical science will not console me for the ignorance of morality in the time of affliction. But the science of ethics will always console me for the ignorance of the physical sciences."¹⁸

¹⁶E. Voegelin, "The Origins of Scientism," *Social Research* 15 (1948) 4, 462.

¹⁷K. M. Baker, *Condorcet* (Chicago, 1975), pp. 91f.; see also K. Vondung, *Condorcet*, in: T. Schabert (ed.), *Der Mensch als Schöpfer der Welt*, Munich, 1971, 111-40.

¹⁸B. Pascal, *Pensées*, New York, 1958, Section II, 67.

The ideological persuasion, however, turned the metaphysical ignorance of the physical sciences into the foundation of the sciences of ethics. Condorcet has the ‘prudence’ “to stop at the facts and accept the ignorance of the causes”¹⁹ in order to attain the certainty, the utility, the power, and the progress of the physical sciences in exchange for the metaphysical failure to penetrate to the essence of the physical universe. The new certainty of the science of man, the calculable probability of the phenomenal world, puts human knowledge, conduct and happiness at the disposal of the reason of the truly *éclairé*, his mind being the historical process become luminous to itself in the emergence of the inner reasonable man cleansed from instinct and passion. Thus, the new universal science is motivated by the desire to free man from instinct and passion and to restore the empire of reason. In an early version of the introduction to the *Esquisse* Condorcet makes known to man his “true destiny” by pointing out that “as man has come to master the physical reality through the power of the natural sciences, he is bound to eventually succeed in ordering his social world through that of the moral and political sciences.” This idea, however, depends upon the

“important truth that social evils are the consequence not of the nature of man or the necessary relations of society but of the imperfections of social constitutions, which is to say the lack of enlightenment; that the vices and crimes that dishonor history and make its study so painful arise neither in man’s heart nor from the needs that civilization creates in him but from the errors and prejudices that the ignorance and feebleness of the human mind have multiplied, and the destruction of which has already begun and must one day be completed by reason.”²⁰

The central concern of Condorcet, Condillac and the *idéologues* was not so much a comprehensive science of man based on empirical observation and statistical analysis of the data of social life but the new *science sociale*—the term was first used by Garat and Condorcet in the discussions of the *Société de 1789*—the science of “social organisation as it should be, rationally developed from first principles of human nature as derived from sensationalist psychology.”²¹ Cabanis argues against the metaphysics of the ancient scholastics and states “the true metaphysics is in one word the science of the methods as it is based on the knowledge of the faculties of man and as it fits the nature of different objects.” And he continues: “if the perfecting of ideas depends on that of instruction, the perfecting of instruction depends again on that one of the methods.”²² There was to be created a new science of man that, like the philosophical science of politics of old, was simultaneously conceived of as the leading science, a science of all sciences. The creation of such a science was the very intention of the *idéologues*: A science that embodied the concept of

¹⁹Condorcet, *Œuvres*, II, 294.

²⁰Quoted in Baker, *Condorcet*, p. 346.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 200.

²²Picavet, *Les Idéologues*, p. 592.

the reduced reality in combination with the Platonic-Aristotelian claim of rationally ordering man and society, now however, perverted to redemptive manipulation of men turned into objects of instrumental reason. The foundation of this science brings the science of man on an equal footing with the natural sciences and ushers mankind into the new era of its perfection. Accordingly, the *idéologues* could claim that "Ideology amounts to the mission to change the shape of the world."²³ In de Tracy's understanding, *idéologie* replaces "l'ancienne métaphysique", that asked for the beginning and end of everything and addressed itself to the question of origin and destination of the world. The goal of metaphysics is relegated into the sphere of imagination, or worse, is unmasked as the useful lie of the rulers and their spiritual associates that keep the suppressed people quiet. This antiphilosophical revolt that was at the same time anti-Christian, is first of all to be understood in the historical context of the general breakdown of the great western symbolisms that had made the Western Civilization into an ordered and meaningful social field of consciousness. In the course of the imperial adventure that brought about this very civilization the symbolic ensembles had been cut off from their motivating experiences and reified to dominant dogmatisms administered by powerful orthodoxies in the service of public power. Once the symbols explicating the experience of the truth of substantive reality—such as the abbreviative notion of man being the *zoon noetikon*—have become opaque, man was at the crossroads. The philosophers's way was to attain the experiential restitution of the openness toward all ranges of reality in the quest for the realissimum. In this way philosophy actualizes man's substantive reason in recognition of the *condition humaine*. The alternative path toward the libidinous mastery of reality might dissolve the *condition humaine* into a second reality beyond the existential tension between time and eternity, mortality and immortality, want and abundance, imperfection and perfection.

3. Gnosticism and Ideology

Idéologie stepped into the place of metaphysics as the applied science of self-redemption: it is *science des idées* that applies the methods of the natural sciences to the exploration of the sources and limits and certainty of human knowledge. The "connaissance de la génération de nos idées" which are the carriers of knowledge is fundamental to all other scientific disciplines. The science of ideas, therefore, is a kind of metascience. It investigates the origins and the laws of the formations of ideas. Only the constant reduction of the ideas to their source—the sensations that condition them—vouches for the certainty of any cognition of nature and man.

"The *sensibilité physique* is the last term which one arrives at in the course of the study of the phenomena of life, and in the methodological research of their real chaining

²³Quoted in Kitchin, *Décade*, p. 118.

up; it is also the last result, or the most general principle which yields the analysis of the intellectual faculties and the affections of the soul. Thus, the physical and the moral become identical in their source."²⁴

Once the reality of spirit and substance is reduced to the phenomenon of *sensibilité* as the source of the truth and order of human existence, the knowing *idéologue* is able to instigate the right ideas to create man in the image of the self-styled *éclairé*. The *idéologue* reduces man to an apparatus of sensations that is to be directed by external social determinants; the 'just and reasonable order' he talks about means a system of internalizing social modes of being and succumbing to the forces of power in the name of scientific knowledge. *Idéologie* is the science of the other-directed man. In this we reach the existential core of the *idéologues'* psychomathematical concept of science, the motivating experience of *enlightenment*, which might be called *gnosis*. There is one way to establish truth: *analysis*. Since Pappus had redefined analysis in order to apply it to the solution of geometric problems, it grew increasingly into a general method of philosophical inquiry that, it was hoped, would lead up to a science of sciences. But the understanding of analysis in *ideology* went beyond the mathematical and logical connotation of the term." 'Analysis' . . . was a magic word for the Enlightenment."²⁵ "The light of it," Lakanal cried out, "expands to such a capacity to penetrate everything that it like all the fluids tends incessantly to equalize."²⁶ The *Décade* proclaimed: "It is only by the method of analysis that we can enter with assurance into the sanctuary of science. Only by analysis can the mind attain to positive knowledge."²⁷ To Condillac analysis in general was "an absolute methodological principle, a formula which could be uniformly applied to all problems of metaphysics and morals. . . ."²⁸ In *La Logique* Condillac points out: "I know well that it is customary to distinguish different kinds of analysis: logical analysis, philosophical analysis, mathematical analysis: but there is only one kind; and it is the same in all the sciences, because in all of them it leads from the known to the unknown by reasoning, i.e. by a series of judgments that imply the one in the other."²⁹ In the *Encyclopédie* the Abbé Yvon had already claimed a new definition of *analysis* against the "schools."

"The analysis consists in going back to the origin of our ideas, in explicating the generating and from there in making compositions or decompositions in order to compare them from all angles which can then reveal the relations among each other . . ."

It is the very secret of discovery.

²⁴P. J. G. Cabanis, "Œuvres philosophiques," C. Lehec, I. Cazeneuve (eds.), I-II, Paris, 1956, I, 142.

²⁵I. F. Knight, *The Geometric Spirit* (New Haven, 1968), 47.

²⁶Quoted in Van Duzer, *Contribution*, p. 101.

²⁷Quoted *ibid.*; see also Kitchin, *Décade*, p. 123.

²⁸Knight, *Geometric Spirit*, p. 47.

²⁹E. de Condillac, *Œuvres philosophiques*, G. le Roy (ed.), I-III, Paris, 1947-1951, II, 407.

“It is the enemy of vague principles and of everything that might be contrary to exactness and precision. The search for truth is not at all done with the assistance of general propositions, but always with a kind of calculus, i.e., by composing and decomposing the notions in order to compare them in the most suitable way with discoveries one has in mind. Neither is it done by definitions, which usually cause the disputes to multiply, but by explicating the generating of each idea. By this detail one sees that it is the only method that could give evidence to our reasoning and, consequently, the only one which one ought to follow in the search for truth and equally in the instruction of others.”³⁰

Condorcet the mathematician distinguished between mathematical analysis as a method of discovery and the analysis of ideas as the method of unveiling the new truth of human existence, occasionally merging them into *one* scientific method of inquiry; but he always considered the latter one prerequisite to the first one.

“Thus the analysis of our sentiments made it possible for us to discover, in the development of our faculty of experiencing pleasure and pain, the origin of our moral ideas; the foundation of the general truth resulting from these ideas, which determine the immutable and necessary laws of justice and injustice; and finally the reasons for directing our conduct in conformity with these laws, reasons founded on the very nature of our sensibility, on what could in essence be called our moral constitution.”³¹

Consequently Garat summed up the creed of *ideology*: analysis, directed against prejudice, superstition and blind tradition—that is in the words of Garat the obscure science of the old school—would serve the ends of revolution and social amelioration.³² The analytical spirit of enlightenment is incarnated in the knowing members of the *Institut National*: The voice of the *société*, the *Journal d'instruction sociale* (1793) as well as its sequel of 1795, the *Décade*, both of which propagate incessantly the philosophers' role in the new society—institutionalized in an academic system, governed by an enlightened elite, functioning as the custodian of public enlightenment and the guardian of the public freedom.³³ For the time being there were only a few enlightened prophets of the new age and, therefore, as Condorcet pointed out, “the social right to have an opinion on matters of society is confused with the right to pronounce on the truth of a proposition, which the *lumières* alone can give.”³⁴ This explains the need for a center of the knowing enlightened ones spreading the light of analysis throughout the institutional system of education that operates upon the minds of the people. “The *écoles normales*, as directed especially to instruct in the method of analysis, were conceived as the keystone of the whole system of education. Analysis was to be the language of all professors. Analysis, which could alone refashion human thought, was to become the universal instrument

³⁰Encyclopédie, I, Paris, 1751, repr. Stuttgart, 1966, art. “Analyse”, 401.

³¹Condorcet, *Œuvres*, VI, 183–84.

³²Van Duzer, *Contribution*, p. 120.

³³Baker, *Condorcet*, p. 303.

³⁴Condorcet, *Œuvres*, V, 203.

of all sciences. Analysis had been proven by its fruits in the field of physical science; it was thenceforth to regenerate the world of morals and society."³⁵ I suggest the knowledge of analysis be *gnosis* insofar as it redeems from the state of alienation in passion and prejudice caused by ignorance, and is thus in accord with Irenaeus' paradigm of gnostic redemption. The salvatory act of enlightenment can, in my opinion, tentatively be compared to the particular *gnosis* of hermeticism. I do not want to argue that the *idéologues* put themselves into the tradition of the *philosophie hermétique* as so many of the contemporary French *illuminés* have done.³⁶ The *Encyclopédie* called Hermeticism the science of the Alchemists and rated some of the better ones among the first chemists. The exclusiveness and alleged superiority of the science of the Hermetics, however, was strongly repudiated. "Our science is communicative and friendly of evidence; the *mystères hermétiques* can neither comply with its method nor tempt its followers."³⁷ The *idéologue* Volney argued against the *illuminés* and claimed to possess superior knowledge of the sources of good and evil, and the knowledge of the laws of nature, which would reveal the mover of human destiny: Man "will know what are the causes of his sufferings and what can be the remedies of them."³⁸ The knowledge implied in this argument and arrived at by analysis is by no means different from the *gnosis* of the gnostic-hermetic tracts. "Man who has reason in him should recognize himself", it is said in the book of *Poimandres*.³⁹ "He who has recognized himself has arrived at the abundant good."⁴⁰ This radical *gnosis* of the self means the destruction of the empirical man in favor of the inner man who was prior to the beginning of things: "If then, being made of life and light, you learn to know that you are made of them, you will go back into life (and light)."⁴¹ "This is the *telos* for those who have got *gnosis* to be devinized."⁴² Some of the hermetic tracts betray a missionary impetus usually absent from Gnostic writings: The speaker of the book of *Poimandres* "having been taught the nature of all that is, and seen the supreme vision" preached: "O men, why have you given yourselves up to death, when you have granted power to partake of immortality? Turn around, you who have journeyed with error, and joined company with ignorance; turn away from the dark light; partake of immortality, leaving perdition." To those who wanted to be taught, he made himself a "guide to mankind teaching them

³⁵Van Duzer, *Contribution*, p. 110.

³⁶See: A. Viatte, *Les Sources occultes du Romantisme* (Paris, 1965).

³⁷Encyclopédie, XI, Neufchatel, 1765, repr. Stuttgart, 1967, art. 'Hermétique (Philosophie)', 171.

³⁸Quoted in Viatte, *Sources occultes* I, 308.

³⁹Corpus Hermeticum, A. D. Nock, A. J. Festugière (eds.), I–III, Paris 1960, and: *Hermetica*, W. Scott (ed.), I–III, Oxford 1924–36, I, 21. I follow the respective reading of Tröger and Scott's English version corrected by Festugière's French and Tröger's German translation.

⁴⁰Corpus Hermeticum, I, 19.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, I, 21.

⁴²*Ibid.*, I, 26; see also XIII, 10 and 14.

the doctrine, how and in what way they might be saved."⁴³ This rather brief reference to the hermetic *gnosis* assumes the Gnostic nature of some of the hermetic books. In this I follow not only Jonas, Festugière and Yates but more so Troeger who refers to tracts I, IV, VI, VII and XIII as *gnostic*.⁴⁴ In his studies he carefully applies the criterion of Steve McKnight, who has some doubts about the *gnosticism* of the *Corpus*: "To qualify as Gnostic, a document must have at its core a concern with salvation through knowledge and must see *nous* or *mens* as the essence of divine and human nature."⁴⁵

Another objection might point out that the analysis of the *idéologues* is 'rational' and 'logical' while *gnosis* is by definition an emotional act of feeling.⁴⁶ The existential core of analysis, the truth of the *sensibilité physique*, blurs any differences in this respect: Condillac offers us in his *Traité des sensations* the key to the motivating experiences of analysis proper. His paradigmatic *homme statue* is to repeat the process of *homo creans se ipsum* up to the point of *réfléchir sur elle-même* and he asks the reader to join the process of enlightenment: "I give notice that it is very important to put oneself in the place of the statue that we are going to observe. We must begin to exist with it, have only a single sense when it has only one; acquire only the ideas that it acquires, contract only the habits that it contracts. In a word to become what it is."⁴⁷ At the final point of waking up, the *moi* exults: "I open my eyes towards the light and first I see nothing but a luminous cloud. . . . I touch, I advance, I touch again: A chaos disentangles itself in front of my eyes. The sense of touch decomposes the light in some way . . . leads my eyes as far as a certain distance, I open them the way by which they have to proceed far over the earth in order to elevate themselves to heaven. In front of them . . . the universe unfolds itself . . . they seem to take away or to give existence to the whole nature at my liking. Just by moving my eyelid I create or annihilate everything that surrounds me."⁴⁸

Condillac, still clinging to vague notions about the supranatural, and his radically immanentist students, the *idéologues*, differ from the ancient hermetic Gnostic in that they create man out of the primordial principle of *sensibilité* instead of the primordial *pneuma* of the protoman. They also do not have man climb upward through the eight spheres of heaven but let him proceed along different stages of the historical process to attain the ultimate *telos* of *gnosis*.

⁴³*Ibid.*, I, 28–29.

⁴⁴K. W. Tröger, "Die hermetische Gnosis," in: Tröger, *Gnosis und Neues Testament*, pp. 97–119; see also *Mysterienglaube und Gnosis im Corpus Hermeticum XIII* (Berlin, 1971) and: A. J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégistes*, I–IV (Paris, 1944–54.)

⁴⁵McKnight, *Gnosticism*, p. 23.

⁴⁶See: W. Förster, "Einleitung," in: Förster (ed.), *Die Gnosis*, I–II, Zurich, 1969–71, I, 7ff.; and: Rudolph, *Die Gnosis*, 130–32.

⁴⁷Condillac, *Œuvres*, I, 221.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, I, 311; for a more detailed discussion see: T. Schabert, *Natur und Revolution*, (Munich, 1969), 75–96.

The language of this experience of cosmogony, however, signifies in my opinion the common experiential core: "When he had thus spoken, forthwith", we read in the *Poimandres*, "all things changed in aspect before me, and were opened out in a moment. And I beheld a boundless view; all was changed into light, a mild and joyous light; and I marvelled when I saw it. And in a little while, there had come to be in one part a downwardtending darkness, terrible and grim And thereafter I saw the darkness change into a kind of watery substance, which was unspeakably tossed about, and gave forth smoke as from fire. . . . But from the light there came forth a holy logos which took its stand upon the watery substance; and I thought this logos was the voice of the light."⁴⁹ " . . . Now fix your thought upon the light", *Poimandres* spoke, "and learn to know it. And when he had thus spoken, he gazed long upon me, eye to eye, so that I trembled at his aspect. And when I raised my head again, I saw in my reason that the light consisted of innumerable powers, and had come to be a cosmos without limits And when I was amazed, he spoke again and said to me, you have seen in your reason the archetypal form which is prior to the beginning of things, and is limitless."⁵⁰ From this and many another example I draw the inference that the *idéologues'* persuasion is essentially derived from a soteriological knowledge of the Gnostic variety.

4. The Meaning of Ideology

This brings us to the point which is theoretically most crucial of the whole matter—The dissolution of man into the atomic existence of the libidinous ego. De Tracy's *Moi*, the vehicle of *sensibilité*, the source of all humanity, is

"an abstract idea of the whole of all sentient parts which constitute an entirety, it is the result of this constitution; its extension in space is built up by all parts which sense all together and obey the same will; its extension in time is made up by all sensations which pertain to it according to our knowledge. The idea of the Ego, the experienced regular of the Queen's Ball may add, is composed of parts brought together in order to have sensations, as the idea of the ball consists in bringing together people in order to dance; in both cases, all parts might have been renovated successively, their action might have been hindered, suspended, interrupted at various times, it is still the same ball and the same Ego, unless the system has been disbanded."⁵¹

Sensibilité constitutes the *moi*, there is no *man* anymore, but just *sentient being*. "I exist solely by what I feel." "My existence and my physical sensibility are one and the same matter."⁵² What used to be man, is reduced to a spatio-temporal phenomenon. Cut off from all transcending experiences and

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, I, 4f.; for the more elaborate version of this cosmogonic vision see: Festugière, I, 5, and: Scott, I, 5b.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 7.

⁵¹ Quoted in Picavet, *Idéologues*, p. 312.

⁵² D. de Tracy, *Elémens d'Idéologie*, I–V, Paris, 1824–26, I, 18, 288.

chained to the world of tangible thingness, ideological man has shrunken himself to the libidinous ego that, in the parlance of *idéologie*, is agitated by passionate self-interest, *pleonexia* as the philosophers used to say. De Tracy correctly defined his *science des idées* as a part of zoology that was to replace the *sciences morales et politiques*, i.e., classical political science. The degradation of man to a sentient being, (the thoughts and actions of which were to be manipulated by the means of functional rationality) gratified the existential lust of power, the most extreme gratification being the act of remaking man by man himself. But this intention raised a vexing problem that I want to touch on briefly. The *idéologue*'s proclamation of the 'contracted self'⁵³ gave only his libidinous Ego public status. He did so by repressing his authentic noetic self that emerges from the illuminating experience of the "unseen measure of right judgment" which "alone contains the right boundaries of all things", to use the classical words of Solon. The more the authentic self of man is suppressed the more man suffers from the experience of nothingness. When, however, the shrunken self does not want to retreat anymore from its obsessive will to master reality, the only way out is to press by all means for the final apocalyptic leap of *gnosis* into imaginative transfigurations in order to redeem the contracted self from its misery. Marcuse puts this alternative succinctly: "Behind the definition of the subject in terms of the ever transcending and productive activity of the ego lies the image of the redemption of the ego; the coming to rest of all transcendence in a mode of being that has absorbed all becoming, that is for and with itself in all otherness."⁵⁴

Our analysis has reached a degree of generality that allows a critical summing up of the "Eléments d'Idéologie", to refer to the title of the main work of de Tracy. The *Idéologie*, it seems, is representative for the mode of symbolization of the historic event of *Egophany* (Voegelin) in modernity which restructured the world to the point of getting caught at its own contradictions in the 20th century. Dante Germino has already suggested the use of the concept for all symbolic complexes of equivalent structure and content: "Ideology is used . . . to refer to a set of ideas about the ordering of society claiming the prestige of (phenomenal) science, based on an immanentist, reductionist epistemology, and aiming at the transformation of the world through making it conform to abstractions divorced from the reality of human existence in society."⁵⁵ My analysis indicates some complementary insights.

The first component is the historically conditioned split between man reduced to his libidinous Ego and the spatio-temporal world of sense-perception, i.e., the Cartesian schizophrenia of egophany. This component is intertwined with the idea that a historically evolving knowledge of the logical

⁵³E. Voegelin, "The Eclipse of Reality," in: M. Natanson (ed.), *Phenomenology and Social Reality*, Memorial Volume for Alfred Schütz (The Hague, 1970), 187-94.

⁵⁴H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation*, p. 118.

⁵⁵D. Germino, *Beyond Ideology*, p. 51.

structure of the world will in due time by application of functional rationality lead to a logical system of social order. This set of symbols is put into the context of a secularized apocalypse. History is viewed as an apocalyptic process moving toward material and spiritual perfection, a historical telos that is defined by scientific procedure and the degree of certainty inherent in the exact sciences. The ideological quest for order beyond the *condition humaine* is not an explication of psychic experience of substantive reality becoming luminous in the consciousness of concrete men actualizing their authentic self. Rather, it is an expression of the *libido dominandi* that is employing ever changing techniques of gnostic self-redemption which range from social engineering to revolutionary praxis. But, and this touches on the very core of *ideology*, man's engagement in deforming himself to the contracted self to be redeemed in the apocalypse of total otherness neither changes the human condition nor the structure of the surrounding reality of which man is a part. Therefore, *ideology* tends to turn its speculative imperialism into the politics of imperialism. In politics the contracted self becomes the imperial self; its self-redemptive activity makes self-realization an imperialist enterprise in domestic and world-politics. The last word of *ideology* in its different variants is always and by necessity the subjugation of the quality of life (i.e. the public happiness of the well-ordered psyche), to the compulsory forces of the economic and technological process. In other words, *ideology* turns the structure of human existence in society upside down: It causes the realm of necessity to dominate the realm of substantive reason. This is, of course, not to deny the contribution of the applied sciences to the possible accomplishment of the material autarky of man, the prerequisite of any good life. But it is to emphasize that the domain of reality beyond life as such constitutes the humanity of man.

Our reflections should have made clear by now that *ideology* is to be considered a paradigm that covers all modes of egophantic symbolizations. It is, therefore, not to be labeled 'left' or 'right'. It should be mentioned that totalitarianism is only a special case of *ideology* insofar as it is the most forceful attempt at self-redemption, having organized terror and violence to operate on the population of whole societies for the sake of dissolving the human condition and recreating man in the image of the metaphysical revolutionary.

In the course of our analysis it has become obvious that *ideology* fails the test on reality. *Ideology* is forced to eclipse the dimensions of nonexistential, nonmetric reality that has been restituted in the post-Newtonian natural science as well as the whole range of transcendent experiences that are unearthed by the humanistic sciences of man in recent times.⁵⁶ Furthermore, *ideology* has to constantly suppress the rich field of experiences and symbols that testify to the process of successful self-reflection of men in history who articulated equiva-

⁵⁶Voegelin, *Eclipse*, pp. 186-88.

lent explications of reality. The ideological degradation of the historically evolved symbols of human self-interpretation by cutting them off from the engendering experiences has run its course, since sensitive people increasingly realize that wiping out all the symbols engendered by the classes of experiences of non-spatio-temporal reality, means to wipe out man himself.

The alternative to *ideology* is, therefore, to turn philosopher. Philosophizing means the meditative exegesis of the depth experience in terms that articulate the structure and dimension of reality of which man is an acting part. This enables man to become competent in rational praxis and to formulate paradigms of political order that fit the exigencies of modern society—to enable man to lead the good life within the limits of human condition.