

THE THEORY OF IDEOLOGY IN CAPITAL

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"There must be some way out of here"
Said the joker to the thief
"There's too much confusion
I can't get no relief"

(Dylan)

Where do incorrect ideas come from?

In What is to be Done? Lenin argues that "the spontaneous development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology". (1) It is the necessity of going beyond the spontaneous development of the movement that is the basis of his argument for a three-fold struggle, theoretical, political and economic. It is in the same context that he makes the famous statement that "without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement". (2) What are the epistemological bases of these interconnected necessities, the spontaneous dominance of bourgeois ideology and the need for theory? Standing behind such analyses there must be a theory of the conditions for the production of knowledge and of effective practice and also a theory of the production of mystification. In What is to be Done?, which is not intended as a work on the theory of knowledge, Lenin only offers a passing remark about the origins of mystification. "But why, the reader will ask, does the spontaneous movement, the movement along the line of least resistance, lead to the domination of bourgeois ideology? For the simple reason that bourgeois ideology is far older in origin than socialist ideology, that it is more fully developed, and that it has at its disposal immeasurably more means of dissemination". (3)

Now I think that this statement is, not surprisingly given its context, incomplete, and is open to misinterpretation. It may suggest a view that is very common but which is, in my opinion, fundamentally mistaken. This view, which is an ideology of ideology, is that the dominance of bourgeois ideology has its basis in the dominance of the bourgeoisie as a class only in the sense that this dominance as a class allows the bourgeoisie to have a monopoly on the production and dissemination of ideas. Thus, from the point of view of the workers ideas have their origin in the means of the dissemination of ideas produced originally elsewhere. Ideas are transmitted, via cultural and educational institutions, public communications systems and so on, into the otherwise empty minds of the working class. It could be that conditions in mid-twentieth century bourgeois society are such as to spontaneously suggest this view. There is no doubt that mid-twentieth century capitalism does generate a formidable semic pollution to a degree and of kinds quite unimaginable one hundred or even fifty years ago. The very forms and modern technological means of the production and dissemination of ideas (the "advertising industry", the "public" television and radio systems, political campaigns designed around the production of "images" of politicians etc.etc.) do seem to suggest a social division between the producers of ideas (advertising copy writers, press agents, speech writers etc.) and the consumers of ideas ("the public"). (4) And some writers who have attempted to diagnose our contemporary condition ("one-dimensional man") do, perhaps because of this, stumble sometimes into the error of mislocating the source of mystification in the way defined above. Marcuse, for example; in his essay "Repressive Tolerance" tends to identify the conditions under which people live and think, and which thereby determine what

they think, with the "prevailing indoctrination" by the "media", advertisements and so on to which they are exposed. He says "The people exposed to this impartiality are no tabulae rasae, they are indoctrinated by the conditions under which they live and think and which they do not transcend. To enable them to become autonomous, to find by themselves what is true and what is false for man in the existing society, they would have to be freed from the prevailing indoctrination ...". And "different opinions and 'philosophies' can no longer compete peacefully for adherence and persuasion on rational grounds: the 'marketplace of ideas' is organised and delimited by those who determine the national and the individual interest." (5) Perhaps if it were only Marcuse who made this mistake it would not deserve so much emphasis here. I believe, however, that it is a mistake very commonly made by, for example, the students that I teach, and it is perhaps what Marx would call a "natural and spontaneous mode of thought" in contemporary capitalist society. If this is so then this view is self-refuting because it would itself be ideology which has its origins in something other than the indoctrination which it identifies as the origins of ideology.

In what follows I do not, of course, intend to deny for one moment that the bourgeoisie do control the means for the dissemination of ideas in Lenin's sense, nor that they do use this control as a powerful weapon in the defence of their class-interests. But my view is that the bourgeois class is the producer of ideas only in the sense that sleep is the producer of dreams. To say that the bourgeoisie produces ideas is to ignore the conditions that make this possible, to ignore that which determines which ideas are thus produced, and to conceal the real nature and origins of ideology. It is not the bourgeois class that produces ideas but bourgeois society. And the effective dissemination of ideas is only possible because, or to the extent that, the ideas thus disseminated are ideas which, for quite different reasons, do have a sufficient degree of effectiveness both in rendering social reality intelligible and in guiding practice within it for them to be apparently acceptable. It is the relation between ideology and reality that is the key to its dominance. To show this one would have to explore the relation between the "representations in mens' brains" and the reality of which these are representations both as a cognitive and as a practical relation. In what follows I will for the most part be concerned with the cognitive aspect of this relation.

The Theory of Ideology in *The German Ideology*

The obvious place to begin is with those passages in The German Ideology in which Marx discusses the epistemology of mystification. But my claim will be that, in fact, Marx has not, in such early works on which discussions of ideology are usually based, achieved a clear theoretical position on the origin of ideology, and that the metaphors in terms of which he discusses the problem have to be drastically modified in the light of what he says in his later works. I claim that on this epistemological question of the origin of incorrect ideas Capital is a great advance on The German Ideology.

In familiar and typical passages from The German Ideology Marx says. (6)

"If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical

(1) Lenin What is to be Done? (Moscow 1969) p41

(2) *ibid* p25

(3) *ibid* p42

(4) For some exhilarating analyses, based on structuralist linguistics, of some of these semiological phenomena see Roland Barthes Mythologies (Cape 1972)

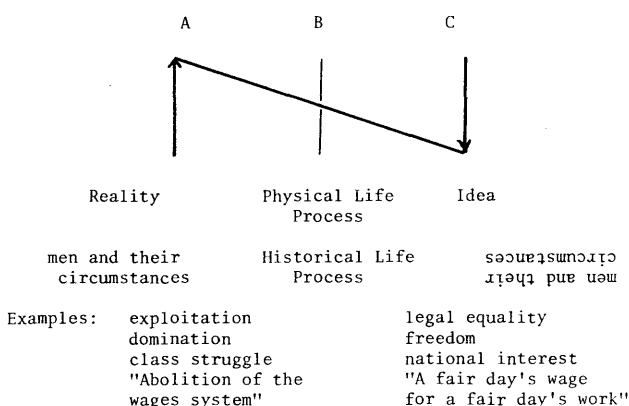
(5) Herbert Marcuse "Repressive Tolerance" in A Critique of Pure Tolerance by Marcuse et.al. (Beacon Press 1965) pp98, 110

(6) German Ideology; given for example in ed. Lewis Feuer Marx and Engels, Basic writings on Politics and Philosophy p247

life process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life process....we set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises...."

Now this is not a clear statement. Marx is here struggling to discover an adequate language and the result is a series of metaphors which are the symptoms of his failure (not that metaphors as such are a symptom of failure in philosophy. Here it is the profusion of them which suggests that none of them alone satisfies the author - camera obscura, reflexes, echoes, phantoms, sublimates....) Also the passage is open to many different interpretations. Perhaps most unfortunately the words "empirically verifiable" and "material premises" taken together with the word "phantom" suggest a positivist interpretation. This would be that ideology arises from the tendency to be taken in by phantoms in such a way that the victim simply overlooks or is distracted from "empirically verifiable facts" that would otherwise be obvious and clear.

As a way of focusing later on the model of relations involved in the production of ideology which I will extract from Capital it will be useful at this point to make explicit some of the features involved in the use of the camera obscura metaphor. This metaphor involves the following representations of the relations between reality and ideas.



This metaphor suggests that in the production of ideology there are the following aspects:

- (i) three independent entities; the real object A, the representation C, and the mediating entity (light) B which effects the production of the latter from the former. Each idea is the distorted representation of some one "thing" in reality to which it corresponds in a one-to-one manner.
- (ii) the relation between A and C is one of inversion. The transformation A to C preserves all internal relations.
- (iii) the metaphor not only suggests the independence of the entity reflected, A, (it doesn't need C in order to exist) and denies the independence of C (ideas are not themselves among the conditions for the production of ideas), but also suggests that representations are in some sense "mere illusions" (an epistemological thesis) and "mere epiphenomena" or "phantoms" (an ontological thesis). It seems to follow that they (the representations) can therefore have no element of either truth or practical effectiveness. These suggestions amount to a thesis of crude materialism with which Marx certainly disagreed. Why then is Marx so fascinated with this metaphor which is very frequent throughout his work and which has led to gross misinterpretations of his views?

The Structure of Ideology and its Relation to Reality

I shall now state three theses concerning the structure of ideology and its relation to reality. These theses are stated in such a way as to make it clear that they are different from views on ideology mentioned above. I shall in following sections show how these theses amount to a part of a theory of ideology that is implicit in Capital.

Thesis 1 Ideology is structured discourse. It is, directly or indirectly, based on or generated by a set of mutually interdependent categories. The view that ideology is made up of ideas is itself misleading to the extent that this has been taken in philosophy to suggest that the units of which ideology

is composed, or out of which it is constructed, are independent of one another, and that they can be traced back to atomistic ideas which are derived from reality "one at a time", or on a one-to-one basis (as for example in the relation A to C in the camera obscura metaphor). We cannot understand ideological concepts or ideological propositions as standing in some such one-to-one relation with non-ideological, non-distorted, factual or scientific concepts, propositions or facts. The translation of ideology (or manifest text) into the true, underlying (latent) text cannot be performed on a word to word or proposition to proposition basis. The "true text" is reconstructed not by a process of piecemeal decoding but by the identification of the generative set of ideological categories and its replacement by a different set. This different set will be differently constituted in its internal relations. And we must discover the transformational mechanism whereby the distorted matrix is, in the historical life process, substituted for the undistorted one.

Thesis 2 The relation between reality and ideology (which produces "inversion") is the cognitive relation. That is to say that mystification has its basis in the perception of the apparently intelligible order of social reality by a process of "misrecognition". An implication of this second thesis is that ideology does not derive fundamentally from the intention to deceive others, from self-deception, or in the perversion of cognition by its being infected with values (for example the value of self- or class-interests). Nor does ideology derive fundamentally from the cognitive function being overwhelmed by non-cognitive functions such as the emotions, feelings or passions. I am not denying that ideology does have the effect of, or does constitute mystification or deception, and that it does function as a defence of class-interests, and does have the result that what appears to be objective, positive, scientific discourse is not in fact "value-free".

I'll try to clarify this second thesis and its implications by reference to some analogies. This will also help to locate this discussion in a broader context. I am thinking of the problem of ideology in relation to the general questions "What are the conditions for the production of knowledge and what are the conditions for the production of various systems of mystificatory belief?". These questions have been raised not only in relation to ideology but also, for example, in relation to the history of science and to the problem of myth in anthropology. (7) As one aspect (but only one; there are many others) of such enquiries progress has been achieved I think by the rediscovery, paradoxical as it may seem, of the cognitive basis of some systems of mystificatory belief. The history of science makes great strides to the extent that it rejects the view that "prescientific" systems of belief and practice such as alchemy or natural magic resulted from simple lack of interest in the empirical facts, or from ignorance of the importance of empirical study, or from simple empirical mistakes or oversights; and also rejects the view that such systems were essentially the result of enterprises that were overwhelmed entirely by non-cognitive subjective forces (e.g., greed or "mysticism"). One might claim in fact that such systems were possible by virtue of the fact that they were too firmly established on the basis of the "immediately perceivable" forms of empirical reality (such as for example the occurrence of the transformation of apparently elemental substances, systems of perceivable relations of analogy, sympathy and antipathy and so on(8)). Similarly anthropological study of myth has progressed to the extent that it has refused the ethnocentric prejudice that myth is pure "superstition" satisfying only affective demands or that it is infantile proto-science which paid insufficient attention to detailed empirical facts. This is clearly one of the main themes of Levi-Strauss in *La Pensée Sauvage*. Elsewhere Levi-Strauss identifies the main mistake in the work of Levy-Bruhl by saying that "he denied to 'primitive mentality' the cognitive character which he had initially conceded to it, and cast it back entirely into the realm of affectivity." (9)

Thesis 3 Ideology arises from the opacity of reality, where the opacity of reality is the fact that the forms in which reality "presents itself" to men, or the forms of its appearance, conceal those real relations which themselves produce the appearances. This thesis involves the introduction of the concepts phenomenal form, real relation and opacity. It is stated explicitly by Marx, for example in Vol 1 chapter 19 which is called "The Transformation of the Value of Labour-Power into Wages". 'Value of Labour-Power' is the name of a real relation, and 'Wages' (or the wage-form) is a phenomenal form. The selling of the commodity labour-power is the real relation of exchange which is transformed, in experience, into the

(7) One might have added here "also in relation to the problem of madness" with reference to the work of Foucault *Histoire de la Folie*

(8) cf. M. Foucault *The Order of Things* chapter 2 "The Prose of the World"

(9) C. Levi-Strauss *The Scope of Anthropology* (Cape Editions 1967) p41

mystifying phenomenal form Wages or wage-contract, thus disguising the real nature of the social relations involved in transactions between capitalist and labourer in bourgeois society. In political economy the mystified form "value of labour" (as distinct from the "value of labour power") is identified with wages. (10)

Hence, we may understand the decisive importance of the transformation of value and price of labour-power into the form of wages, or into the value and price of labour itself. This phenomenal form, which makes the actual relation invisible, and, indeed, shows the direct opposite of that relation, forms the basis of all the juridical notions of both labourer and capitalist, of all the mystifications of the capitalist mode of production, of all its illusions as to liberty, of all the apologetic shifts of the vulgar economists. (540)

This third thesis involves an important aspect of Marx's epistemology, namely his distinction between "phenomenal forms" (or appearances) and "real relations" as developed in *Capital* in the context of a critique of the categories of political economy. Marx himself thought his most fundamental theoretical breakthrough the discovery of the true concept of surplus value which enabled him to penetrate in a rigorous way to the secret and hidden realities of capitalism. It is this theoretical advance that also allows Marx to make a decisive move beyond the ambiguities of his earlier remarks on ideology. Marx's claim is then that it is the importance of the phenomenal forms that they render invisible real relations and hence give rise to bourgeois ideology. Here is another example of Marx's use of these concepts.

"...in respect to the phenomenal form, 'value and price of labour', or 'wages', as contrasted with the essential relation manifested therein, viz., the value and price of labour-power, the same difference holds in respect to all phenomena and their hidden substratum. The former appear directly and spontaneously as current modes of thought; the latter must first be discovered by science. Classical Political Economy nearly touches the true relation of things, without, however, consciously formulating it. This it cannot so long as it sticks in its bourgeois skin." (542) (Emphases mine)

Notice that here Marx is making a general point ("the same difference holds in respect to all phenomena and their hidden substratum"), and is not limiting his remarks to this particular categorial transformation and mystification. And secondly it should be noted that Marx is here providing us with an answer to the question with which we started "Why does the spontaneous movement lead to the domination of bourgeois ideology?", namely that phenomenal forms appear "directly and spontaneously as current modes of thought".

These three theses stated in this section can be summed up in a remark by Henri Lefebvre, (11)

"Social reality, ie. interacting human individuals and groups, produces appearances which are something more and else than mere illusions. Such appearances are the modes in which human activities manifest themselves within the whole they constitute at any given moment - call them modalities of consciousness. They have far greater consistency, let alone coherence, than mere illusions or ordinary lies. Appearances have reality, and reality involves appearances."

I think that, if true these theses necessitate drastic and illuminating modifications to the camera obscura metaphor in ways which I will explain later.

Phenomenal Forms and Real Relations

Before going on to give a detailed account of Marx's use of this distinction in relation to his analysis of the categories of political economy I'll give in this section further clarification and elaboration of Marx's general thesis. The distinction is referred to in *Capital* by a variety of interchangeable terms. Phenomenal forms are called semblances, appearances, estranged outward appearances, illusions, forms, forms of manifestation. Real relations are called essences, real nature, actual relations, secret or hidden substratum, content, inner connections. And the distinction is a systematic one in Marx's later writings. That is to say it is not invoked in an ad hoc fashion nor is it appealed to only infrequently. It is involved systematically at each point where the problem of mystification arises,

and this in connection with the discussion of many different categories (not only in connection with the famous fetishism of commodities). Norman Geras has listed some of its occurrences. (12) His examples, and those given elsewhere in this paper mostly relate to a discussion of basic socio-economic formations, but it is important to notice that the distinction is also used in relation, for example, to the theory of the State and of the class struggle. (13) (14)

"...the different states of the different civilised countries, in spite of their manifold diversity of form, all have this in common, that they are based on modern bourgeois society, only one more or less capitalistically developed. They have, therefore, also certain essential features in common. In this sense it is possible to speak of the "present-day state"...." (Emphases mine)

"It is altogether self-evident that, to be able to fight at all, the working class must organise itself at home as a class and that its own country is the immediate arena of its struggle. In so far its class struggle is national, not in substance, but, as the Communist Manifesto says, "in form!" (Emphases mine)

And note that in such cases as these Marx is also, as in the cases I'll be analysing later, discussing the origin or basis of ideology (the ideology of the independence of the state and society in the first case, and that of nationalism in the second).

This distinction between phenomenal form and real relation is applied both to the order of reality and to the order of language and thought ("phenomenal forms appear as modes of thought"). Wages, for example, are an aspect of social reality, namely its phenomenal aspect. And the category 'wages' or 'price of labour' is a conceptual category. We think about and talk about social relations in these terms because these categories have the same form that reality has, because this is the form in which reality "is presented to us". 'Value of labour-power' is both a real relation, the exchange relation between the worker and the capitalist, and it is a scientific category in terms of which we understand that real relation. This means that the distinction is not a superficial one, a simple rewording of some such commonsense distinctions as those between "superficial" and "profound" or "confused" and "clear". It is a distinction that contains a substantial epistemological theory about the relation between thought and reality and about the origins of illusions about reality. This theory is that the origin of ideological illusions is in the phenomenal forms of reality itself.

This theory is also presented by Marx using the concepts 'imperceptibility', 'invisibility' and related notions. In these terms the theory says that it is a feature of social life, and in particular the life of social production, that it is so structured as to render that social reality sometimes opaque to its participants. The invisibility of real relations derives from the visibility of outward appearances or forms. The apparent immediacy of these forms obscures their mystificatory character. For example of the commodity-form and of the systematic illusion of individual freedom Marx says

"It is, however, just this ultimate money-form of the world of commodities that actually conceals, instead of disclosing, the social character of private labour, and the social relations between individual producers." (76)

"A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour. This is the reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses." (72)

"The Roman slave was held by fetters: the wage-labourer is bound to his owner by invisible threads. The appearance of independence is kept up by means of a constant change of employers, and by the fictio juris of a contract." (574) (my emphases throughout)

In Geras' words then Marx is providing us with an analysis of "the mechanisms by which capitalist society

(10) All quotes from *Capital* are from volume 1 of the Moore and Aveling translation, Moscow 1961, and the page references are given in the text after each quote.

(11) Henri Lefebvre *The Sociology of Marx* (Allen Lane the Penguin Press 1968) p62

(12) Norman Geras "Essence and Appearance; Aspects of Fetishism in Marx's *Capital*" *New Left Review* 65 Jan-Feb 1971 p69

(13) *Critique of the Gotha Programme* in Marx and Engels *Selected Works* (Moscow 1962) volume 2 p32

(14) *Critique of the Gotha Programme* p27

necessarily appears to its agents as something other than it really is..... It is because there exists, at the interior of capitalist society, a kind of internal rupture between the social relations which obtain and the manner in which they are experienced." (15) The function of ideology is to keep hidden the real social relations. But the possibility of performing this function is not given in the possibility of some individual wishing to perform this function, or deliberately designing a language, or using a discourse in which it may be performed. Ideological language does not just distract attention away from real social relations, nor does it explain them away, nor even does it directly deny them. It structurally excludes them from thought. And this is because the phenomenal forms of social life constitute not merely a realm of appearances of particulars, but appearances articulated upon a semantic field. Social life is a domain of meanings with which men "spontaneously" think their relations to other men and to nature. It is therefore not accurately captured in the idealist notion of a "world-view". (16) Social life is structured like a language; or rather the conditions that make it possible for social life to be of a particular kind (a particular mode of production) are also conditions for the possibility of a particular language. These conditions are material conditions and are the social practices which constitute a particular mode of production. The "natural self-understood" meanings encountered in social life form a text which we need to decipher to discover its true meaning.

"The characters that stamp products as commodities, and whose establishment is a necessary preliminary to the circulation of commodities, have already acquired the stability of natural, self-understood forms of social life before man seeks to decipher... their meaning." (75)

I think that the theory of ideology which I've been presenting can only be clear if it is examined in its application in detailed analyses. (17) Lack of space here means that I'll only be able to present sketches of Marx's analyses. I'll give four sketches using each as a way of making a general point. I'll deal mostly with the wage-form and the money-form but it's important to note that Marx's treatment follows exactly the same lines in relation to all the categories (commodity-form, value-form etc). I use mainly the wage-form partly for ease of exposition and partly because of its clear and direct connection with the problem of the dominance of bourgeois ideology in Trades Union practice.

The Mystification of the Wage-Form

The wage payment seems to involve a fair exchange of equivalents.

"If history took a long time to get at the bottom of the mystery of wages, nothing, on the other hand, is more easy to understand than the necessity, the raison d'etre, of this phenomenon. The exchange between capital and labour at first presents itself to the mind in the same guise as the buying and selling of all other commodities. The buyer gives a certain sum of money, the seller an article of a nature different from money". (540).

Marx's argument here depends on his distinction between labour and labour-power. That which is sold by the worker is his labour-power; the capitalist buys the labourer's capacity to work for a certain period of time. The labour performed in that period creates value. It creates as much value as is paid back to the worker as his wage, and it creates value over and above this amount, it creates surplus-value which

is retained by the capitalist. (18) Labour itself does not have value.

"Labour is the substance and the immanent measure of value, but has itself no value. In the expression 'value of labour', the idea of value is not only completely obliterated, but actually reversed. It is an expression as imaginary as the value of the earth. These imaginary expressions, arise, however, from the relations of production themselves. They are categories for the phenomenal forms of essential relations." (537)

Imaginary expressions have their home in the ordinary language of everyday life. "Classical Political Economy borrowed from every-day life the category 'price of labour' without further criticism..." (537)

"On the surface of bourgeois society the wage of the labourer appears as the price of labour, a certain quantity of money that is paid for a certain quantity of labour. Thus people speak of the value of labour" (535)

For Marx the fact that people speak of the value of labour that this is a "spontaneous, natural" mode of speech under capitalism, shows that "ordinary language", far from being something to which we should appeal in theoretical discussion, is something which we have good grounds for suspecting of distortion. Ordinary language is the repository of category mistakes. Theoretical discourse corrects ordinary language, tells us what we should say. Ordinary language, and the philosophy which makes a fetish of it, has, as Marx says, things standing on their heads.

The fact that the wage-form has the form of an exchange of equivalents, then, disguises the reality which is that wage-labour contains unpaid labour and is the source of surplus-value. One can consider the working day as divided into that period in which the labourer works to create value equivalent to his own needs of means of subsistence, and another period in which he works to create value given gratis to the capitalist. One of Marx's criticisms of the Gotha Programme was that it had fallen back into the modes of thought of bourgeois ideology on this point and he restates, in his Critique his analysis of the real relations involved. (19)

"...wages are not what they appear to be, namely, the value, or price, of labour, but only a masked form for the value, or price, of labour-power ... it was made clear that the wage-worker has permission to work for his own subsistence, that is, to live, only in so far as he works for a certain time gratis for the capitalist the system of wage-labour is a system of slavery..whether the worker receives better or worse payment." (Marx's emphases)

It is for this reason that the notion of a "fair wage", another of the imaginary expressions of everyday life, is an absurd one. The very meaning of wages which is now deciphered is the extraction of unpaid labour. Therefore wages are unfair as such. (20)

(15) Geras art. cit. p71

(16) The notion of "world-views" tends to be explained on the model of Gestalt-switch experiences of visual perception. Marx's view clearly differs from this in at least this basic respect. The difference between the one "language" and the other is one which can be explained in terms of appearance and reality, or in terms of the aspect of reality which is its appearance and that which is its hidden substratum. Thus the difference is explained by reference to properties of the object and not solely of the subject and his idiosyncracies. No doubt these considerations would form the basis for an explanation of the way in which Marx's epistemology escapes the problems of idealism and relativism with which I do not deal in this essay.

(17) I also think that a full treatment of these problems would require a close examination of Marx's theory of categories given in the 1857 Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy, especially the section "The Method of Political Economy". This is now available in David McLellan Marx's Grundrisse (Macmillan 1971) pp 33-43

(18) This presentation of the concept of surplus-value is certainly fetishistic in as much as it says of various things (labour-power, commodities) that they have value. The relation between labour and value cannot be presented here more accurately for lack of space - it would involve noting at least two movements of totalisation (a) the labour of the individual does not in itself have a relation to value or surplus-value, but only as a component of the aggregate of social labour (b) the value of the products of labour is correctly understood only in relation to their multiple appearance both as products and as commodities, and hence their location in the spheres both of production and of consumption. The 1857 Introduction (see note 17) is invaluable in its discussion of the semantic and logical problems involved here. A fuller presentation of these relations would be too complex given the space available but would only strengthen and further support the points I am making in the text. Marx himself often appeals, in passing, to such oversimplified examples for ease of presentation.

(19) Critique of the Gotha Programme, Selected Works volume 2 p29

(20) Marx points out that wages take a variety of forms "a fact not recognisable in the ordinary economic treatises which, exclusively interested in the material side of the question, neglect every difference of form" (543). Marx, being interested also in the practical and cognitive (and hence ideological, political etc) sides of capitalism, systematically considers forms as well as contents throughout Capital. In chapters

This particular mystification illustrates a general point, namely that the transformations from real-relations to phenomenal forms is a transformation in which a complex relation (or a relation of relations, as in the complex wages - money - value - commodities etc) is presented as a simple relation or is presented as a thing or the property of a thing. (21) Thus here an apparent relation of exchange of equivalents is in reality a compound of an exchange of equivalents plus an extraction of surplus value; and this compound is itself ultimately analysable into a complex set of relations between relations. (22) Also what appears as a fair and free exchange (a contract) is in reality a relation of exploitation and domination.

At this point we can begin (but only begin) to see the connection between ideological categories and ideology in the broader sense, that whole range of discourse and practises structured by these categories. In this familiar case we can see some of the connections between the wage-form and the ideological concept of a fair wage. On the basis of complex comparisons the workers, or the organisations which defend their interests, negotiate wage agreements. The political party which is thought of as that which represents the workers' interests has as one of its slogans "a fair days wage for a fair days work", and has attempted to enact an "incomes policy", a machinery for defending both "employers" and "employed" against "unfairness", thus also defending "the national interest". In difficult cases (eg. "special cases") a court of inquiry is empowered to arbitrate and suggest ways of reaching a "just settlement" which is then "freely" agreed to by all parties. (23) Now all of this is necessary. It is no good ever losing sight of the fact that the workers' fight to defend themselves in such ways is a necessary response to those forces in capitalist society which systematically tend to sacrifice their interests. But it is also true that this historically elaborated complex of institutions and practises is a mystification because it systematically excludes an understanding of real social relations.

Now if it is necessary for the working class to conduct an economic, trades-union struggle in self defence, and if the spontaneous language in which this struggle is conducted is structured by the wage-form and other "natural, self-understood" bourgeois categories, and if these categories and their embodiments in practice systematically exclude the categories of real relations, then what is the point of saying that the workers ought not to be "exclusively absorbed" in this struggle? (24)

The workers "ought not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerilla fights [against the tendency to decrease real wages, to reduce the working day etc] incessantly springing up from the never-ceasing encroachments of capital or changes of the market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the material conditions and the social forms necessary for an economic reconstruction of society. Instead of the conservative motto "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!" they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword "Abolition of the wages system!" (Marx's emphases)

If this is not to be a purely idealist moral exhortation there must be some sense in which it is possible to conduct the struggle on the three fronts mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the theoretical, the political and the

20 and 21 he considers some varieties of the wage-form (Time-wages, Piece-wages), showing how each conceals real relations and how "difference of form in the payment of wages alters in no way their essential nature" (552).

(21) This is most clearly spelt out by Marx in relation to the commodity-form; see chapter 1, sec.4 "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof".

(22) cf. note 18

(23) Some of the connections between ideological categories and ideological moral principles are discussed by Marcuse Reason and Revolution p 280-281 eg. "If wages ...express the value of labour, exploitation is at best a subjective and personal judgment. If capital were nothing other than an aggregate of wealth employed in commodity production, then capital would appear to be the cumulative result of productive skill and diligence. If the creation of profits were the peculiar quality of utilized capital, such profits might represent a reward for the work of the entrepreneur."

(24) Marx Wages, Price and Profit in Selected Works volume 1 p 446

economic, (25) for it is this that is involved in this passage from Marx. It would be impossible to clarify the issues involved here without a very long detour. I am only concerned to make the point that Marx's theory of ideological categories does not contradict the demand for a three-fold struggle and in fact may actually help to reveal its theoretical basis. How are we to understand the double thesis of Lenin; "the spontaneous struggle is dominated by bourgeois ideology" and "the working class spontaneously gravitates towards socialism"? (26) And how is it possible in practice to both conduct the necessary defence of workers economic interests and simultaneously struggle for an "economic reconstruction of society"? These problems have been the central theoretical and practical problems for the workers' movement from the debates on reformism in the SPD to the current debates on the alleged reformism of the continental communist parties.

There are two points which would need to be taken into account in this debate which spring directly from Marx's theory of ideology. First, the present system "engenders the material conditions and the social forms necessary for an economic reconstruction of society". The system real-relations/phenomenal-forms is a dynamic one and is not unchanging any more than is the mode of production of which it is an aspect. Secondly it does not follow from the fact that the categories of bourgeois ideology exclude socialist categories that the reverse of this is also true. There is a sense in which the wage-form etc. are included in or assimilated into the categories of Capital. I can only indicate here that Marx attempts an explanation of this inclusion in the 1857 Introduction, in the section "The Method of Political Economy". (27)

The Interdependence of Categories

Notice secondly about the wage-form that it conceals not only the real relation involved in the exchange transaction but that it also conceals the real nature of the labour-fund, or variable capital, from which the labourer is paid. This particular mystification is analysed by Marx in the section of Capital on "The Accumulation of Capital".

"The simple fundamental form of the process of accumulation is obscured by the incident of the circulation which brings it about, and by the splitting up of surplus-value. An exact analysis of the process, therefore, demands that we should, for a time, disregard all phenomena that hide the play of its inner mechanism." (565) (my emphases)

It is worth noting the particular forms of concealment involved here because they illustrate another general point that I want to make explicit, namely that the various appearance-forms are not independent. They support each other. Each form can appear as an element in the composition of any other form; and each element is itself a form constructed out of other elements. It is this that defines the categories as a structure of appearances.

In this case we have the following particular combinations. How is it that the source of the wage is obscured? It is because it is paid in the form of money. But

"this money is merely the transmuted form of the product of his labour. While he is converting a portion of the means of production into products, a portion of his former product is being turned into money. It is his labour of last week, or of last year, that pays for his labour-power this week or this year. The illusion begotten by the intervention of money vanishes immediately, if, instead of taking a single capitalist and a single labourer, we take the class of capitalists and the class of labourers as a whole. The capitalist class is constantly giving to the labouring class order-notes,

(25) See above, first section of this paper, and the quotes from Engels given in Lenin What is to be Done? p 28 ...the struggle is being conducted pursuant to its three sides - the theoretical, the political, and the practical-economic (resistance to the capitalists) - in harmony and in its interconnections, and in a systematic way..."

(26) What is to be Done? p 42

(27) cf. Introduction "The anatomy of the human being is the key to the anatomy of the ape." I think a clear exposition of the theory in this Introduction would be invaluable. It would show, for example, just how different Marx's theory of categories and of ideology is from, for example, the relativist, idealist Khunian theory of "paradigms" in which two competing paradigms, in a revolutionary period, do exclude one another. It would also show how Marx would be able to give an account of "justification" in terms of his theory of inclusion and hence escape the irrationalism of Kuhn and the retreat to methodology of Lakatos.

in the form of money, on a portion of the commodities produced by the latter and appropriated by the former. The labourers give these order-notes back just as constantly to the capitalist class, and in this way get their share of their own product. The transaction is veiled by the commodity-form of the product and the money-form of the commodity." (568) (my emphasis)

This example illustrates the point that whichever category one starts with in the immediate problem (in this case Marx is discussing the simple reproduction of capital) this inevitably leads to an analysis in which all the central categories are employed. Their systematic relations in reality are reproduced in their systematic relations in thought. Thus the analysis of the simple reproduction of capital involves the recognition that the capitalist pays the labourer by returning to him only a portion of that which is produced by him. This is obscured by the intervention of money, which makes it seem as if the capitalist has some other source of wealth than the expropriation of unpaid labour. And this intervention of money is an aspect of the commodity form of production. And the commodity form of production is that form in which use-values are produced for exchange, and are exchanged in relation to their values. Thus, as Marx says, "the transaction is veiled by the commodity-form of the product and the money-form of the commodity". Thus the real process is veiled not by some single element but by the whole system of related elements. The bourgeois economist cannot see through the concept of capital as source of the labour-fund because the concept is not the name for a simple empirical relation which can be examined independently. He is caught up in a system of categories which generates "solutions" to each particular analytic problem in a way like that in which a particular calculation in arithmetic is generated by the whole of arithmetic.

Historical Specificity of Phenomenal Forms

Taking Marx's analysis one step further will demonstrate a third and extremely important point about the forms of opacity, namely that they differ under different modes of production, they are historically specific. Marx often reveals a real, but hidden, relation in capitalism by reference to other modes of production in which this particular relation or its equivalent is transparent. Mystification can occur, especially at the level of theory (eg. political economy) when a correct analysis of some aspect of social relations goes together with the assumption that that form of the relation is a natural one and not a historically specific one. Consider for example the fact mentioned above that the labour-fund appears in the form of capital. This is specific to the capitalist mode of production.

"The bourgeois economist whose narrow mind is unable to separate the form of appearance from the thing that appears, shuts his eyes to the fact that it is but here and there on the face of the earth, that even now-a-days the labour-fund crops up in the form of capital" (569)

But notice that this "shutting of the eyes" is not simply a wilful refusal to see a fact. The secret of the labour-fund, namely that it is accumulated surplus-value, cannot be thought within the categories of bourgeois political economy. (28) The "narrow mind" of the bourgeois economist is thus not simply the narrow mind of the bigot or the fool but is, as Marx says, the narrowness of the mind "which is unable to separate the form of appearance from the thing that appears".

In order to demonstrate the correctness of his own analysis Marx has simply to refer to a historical example the relation of which to its equivalent under capitalism is made clear by Marx's categories; ie., it is not made clear by simply referring to the facts in an empiricist sense. (29)

(28) cf. Engels "Preface to the Second Volume of Capital" (also in Selected Works volume 1 p470ff, where Engels, using an interesting parallel between Marx's theoretical achievement and that of Lavoisier in chemistry, describes how economists had "remained in thrall to the economic categories as they had found them" thus making it impossible for them to understand surplus-value. "Then Marx came forward. And he did so in direct opposition to all his predecessors. Where they had seen a solution, he saw only a problem." I think the philosophy of science has a lot to learn from such passages.

(29) Since this is such a frequent and powerful aspect of Marx's analyses, and since I've dealt with it so briefly, it may be worth referring to perhaps the most extraordinary occurrences of it - in the chapter on The Fetishism of Commodities Marx goes through a series of five distinct historical variations in the relation between the labour of an individual producer and the aggregate of social production, to demonstrate the peculiarities of commodity-production (Capital volume 1, pp75-79). Or cf. pp539-542 on slavery ("...in the system of slavery, where frankly, and openly, without any circumlocution, labour-power itself is sold...")

Thus,

"Let us take a peasant liable to do compulsory service for his lord. He works on his own land, with his own means of production, for, say, 3 days a week. The 3 other days he does forced work on the lord's domain. He constantly reproduces his own labour-fund, which never, in his case, takes the form of a money payment for his labour, advanced by another person. But in return, his unpaid forced labour for the lord, on its side, never acquires the character of voluntary paid labour. If one fine morning the lord appropriates to himself the land, the cattle, the seed, in a word, the means of production of this peasant, the latter will thenceforth be obliged to sell his labour-power to the lord. He will, caeteris paribus, labour 6 days a week as before, 3 for himself, 3 for his lord, who thenceforth becomes a wages-paying capitalist....from that moment the labour-fund, which the peasant himself continues as before to produce and reproduce, takes the form of a capital advanced in the form of wages by the lord" (568)

Money, Commodities and Language

The conditions for the production of ideology are the conditions for the production of a language, and can only be understood by reference to the structure of forms and social practices which systematically enter into the production of particular concepts and propositions in that language. Ideology is not a collection of discrete falsehoods but a matrix of thought firmly grounded in the forms of our social life and organised within a set of interdependent categories. We are not aware of these systematically generative interconnections because our awareness is organised through them.

"Whenever, by an exchange, we equate as values our different products, by that very act, we also equate, as human labour, the different kinds of labour expended upon them. We are not aware of this, nevertheless we do it. Value, therefore, does not stalk about with a label describing what it is. It is value, rather, that converts every product into a social hieroglyphic. Later on, we try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret of our own social products. [ie., the value-form]; for to stamp an object of utility as a value, is just as much a social product as language" (74) (my emphases)

The puzzle of money is especially like the puzzle of language. Each element, taken by itself (a word, a coin) seems to have the power to function in an efficacious act (of reference, of exchange) by virtue of having a particular property (a meaning, a value). In each case the puzzle derives from the contrast between the efficacy of the element on the one hand, and the arbitrariness of its substance (sounds, inscriptions, bits of metal or paper) on the other. How is it possible to breath life into a sign? (30) How is it possible to conjure value into a coin? The fetishism of commodities (of the value-system and of the money-form) has its equivalent in the fetishism of names (of the concept-system and the reference-form). That is why it is not just a joke to say that just as money is the universal medium of exchange of labour-power and commodities so logic is the universal medium of exchange of concepts and propositions. And just as political economy cannot take the money-form for granted but must explain it, similarly philosophy cannot take the logic for granted but must explain it.

The arbitrariness of the money-substance (like that of the sign-substance in linguistics) ie., the fact that there is no necessary or natural connection between the physical properties and the monetary properties of a coin, has given rise to the mistaken notion that money is a mere symbol.

"In this sense every commodity is a symbol, since, in so far as it is value, it is only the material envelope of the human labour spent upon it. But if it be declared that the social characters assumed by objects, or the material forms assumed by the social qualities of labour under the regime of a definite mode of production, are mere symbols, it is in the same breath also declared that these characteristics are arbitrary fictions sanctioned by the so-called universal consent of mankind. This suited the mode of explanation in favour during the 18th century. Unable to account for the origin of the puzzling forms assumed by social relations between man and man, people sought to denude them of their strange appearance by ascribing to them a conventional origin." (91)

(30) cf. Wittgenstein Philosophical Investigations para. 432 "Every sign by itself seems dead. What gives it life? - In use it is alive. Is life breathed into it there? - or is the use its life?"

The parallels between philosophical theories of meaning and economic theories of value should be no surprise because the structural feature that the phenomena have in common is the dislocation between the invisibility of the social life which makes them possible and the visibility of the individual acts in which they enter into social practice.

Ideology and Dialectic

I'll recapitulate some of the points that I've been making by returning to the camera obscura metaphor. The relation between reality and the representation of reality in men's brains is not a relation involving three independent entities (two entities and a mediating entity between them) as is suggested by the camera obscura and the mirror image metaphors. Marx's metaphor of "inversion" is notoriously difficult to understand and has suggested many different interpretations. The metaphor continues to occur throughout his later works. It is worth remembering that this very same metaphor of inversion, plus that of reflection, mixed with that of the kernel and its shell, all occur together in the very famous passage in the Afterword to the 2nd German Edition of Capital in which Marx struggled to explain the difference between Hegel's dialectical method and his own. (31) Hegel's dialectic was the mystified form of the dialectic and was an aspect of the famous "German Ideology". Marx's discussion of it is both an attempt to identify his own dialectical method and an attempt to explain the relation between a mystified form of thought and its nondistorted equivalent. But the multitude of interpretations of this passage, and its obvious inadequacy as a theoretical statement (how does one conceive of turning something "right side up again" in order to discover "the rational kernel within the mystical shell"?), has led to an ambitious attempt by Louis Althusser to analyse the specific problem that Marx was struggling with and which led him back again and again to this metaphor. (32) Althusser's analysis focuses particularly on the problem of Marx's dialectical method. I think that since the metaphors in question are invoked by Marx most often in relation to the general problem of mystification (and not only mystification in its specifically Hegelian form) it would be worth trying to think beyond them here also.

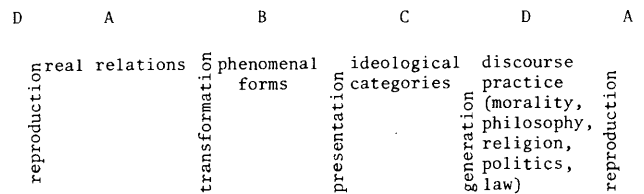
The difference between Marxian categories and the ideological categories of, for example, political economy, is that where the latter designate things and their properties the former designate internal relations and their transformations; and where the latter designate relations between things the former designate relations between relations. (33) This is the most general form of what Marx calls "fetishism". For example,

"Whence arose the illusions of the monetary system? To it gold and silver, when serving as money, did not represent a social relation between producers, but mere natural objects with strange social properties. And modern economy, which looks down with such disdain on the monetary system, does not its superstition come out as clear as noonday, whenever it treats of capital? How long is it since economy discarded the physiocratic illusion, that rents grow out of the soil and not out of society?" (82)

Similarly I think the difference between Marx's theory of ideology and the ideology of ideology is that whereas the latter thinks of it in terms of two elements and a relation between them (or one element, reality, and its property of creating another element, an idea) Marx's theory is dialectical. It is a theory of a totality. Both the nature of the components and that of the relations between them are thus drastically different. It can be represented as below although it should

- (31) Capital p19 "My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite. To Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of "the Idea", he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of "the Idea". With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought..... The mystification which dialectic suffers in Hegel's hands, by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general form of working in a comprehensive and conscious manner. With him it is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell." (my emphases)
- (32) L. Althusser For Marx (Allen Lane the Penguin Press 1969) especially part 3 "Contradiction and Overdetermination".
- (33) A brave effort to explain the peculiarities of a "philosophy of internal relations" and the consequent difficulties in the interpretation of Marx is made by Bertell Ollman Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society (Cambridge University Press 1971).

be remembered that this is presented as merely a helpful graphical device and should not be taken too seriously especially in as much as it can give no account of the relations within the totality.



Examples:

Labour of production, relations of production	value-form (value adhering to an object, value relations) money-form etc.	value money commodity etc.	buying and selling, wage-demands, advertising, evaluating etc.
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The properties of this system are complex. I can only make a few comments here by way of highlighting some of its differences from the camera obscura model. I have said that this model differs from the earlier one both in the nature of its components (A,B,C etc) and in the relations between them. In both these respects we can only understand the model by reference to some concept of a structured totality. As Balibar points out (34) the notion of the structural complexity of a totality was introduced by Althusser in order to clarify the relations within the totality base-superstructure i.e., the social structure as a whole, as an articulation of several relatively autonomous levels. But it is also true that each of these "levels" is itself a structured totality. I have given some indication of this above in discussing the interdependence of ideological categories, and below I note briefly a similar feature in relation to the level D, discourse and practice. It is equally true that "real relation" names (eg. social-labour, capital, interest, surplus-value, property) are not the names of things, nor even of relations between things, but of structured functions. In his attempt to grasp this Ollman quotes Marx on "fixed capital" (35)

"It is not a question of a definition which things must be made to fit. We are dealing here with definite functions which must be expressed in definite categories"

Thus, relations within A,B etc., are not easy to describe. But it is clear that the relations within A are not the same as those within C (the relation between labour and value for example) and that the inversion metaphor, with its preservation of internal relations in the transformation from real to ideological categories, is therefore incorrect. As for the relations between A,B etc., it is again clear that, however difficult to describe they may be, certain indications of difference from the earlier model can be made. The problem would be to spell out the properties of the new model in such a way as to preserve certain of Marx's central tenets; in particular the interpretation would have to be compatible with some notion of historical materialism and with the doctrine of the determination in the last instance by the "economic". However this is done at least it is clear that, unlike the earlier model, this later one shows that each of the elements A,B, etc., is a necessary condition for each of the others. In particular D is necessary for A (which removes the most blatant problem of the "phantom" metaphor, its suggestion that social reality is independent of ideas). The way in which D relates to A is suggestively analysed by Althusser in his theory that ideology, as "materialised" in the Ideological State Apparatuses, secures the reproduction of the relations of production. (36)

Discourse, Practice and Institutions

What is the relation between C and D i.e., between ideological categories and ideological discourse and practices?

- (34) Etienne Balibar "The Basic Concepts of Historical Materialism" in Reading Capital by L. Althusser and E. Balibar (New Left Books 1970) p215
- (35) B. Ollman Alienation p23. The quote is from Capital volume 2 p226. This conception of categories and its elaboration in relation to the basic categories of historical materialism is probably most usefully discussed in Balibar op.cit.
- (36) L. Althusser "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" in Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays (New Left Books 1971).

The massive, powerful presence of mystification secreted by man in the course of his social production and consumption, in its extremely diverse visual, linguistic and institutional forms, is ultimately constructed upon (determined in the penultimate instance by?) the spontaneous categories of the forms of representation of social life. But clearly many mediations and many local specificities would have to be taken into account in any convincingly detailed analysis of some of the more elaborate or bizarre forms of ideological discourse (religions, moralities, philosophical systems etc). Also we would have to know how to distinguish in any particular case between superficial, apparent, manifest semantic content, and deeper, more revealing, latent, formative principles of discourse. At the surface level ideology is infinitely flexible and a determined ideologist can plunder even the least likely sources for sentences, images, phrases, words, with which to forge effective weapons (think of Watney's beer and the "Red Revolution"; or of Nixon at a banquet in Pekin invoking the image of the Long March). Such curiosities remind us that meaning is not a matter of words, images, phrases etc taken in isolation, but of an order of discourse and practices within which particular words, phrases, or images can take on a variety of meanings. It should also remind us of the problem that discourse is overdetermined, so that there may well be levels of relative coherence and intelligibility autonomous from that of any particular set of generative categories. Thus the theory of ideology outlined here is clearly very incomplete in as much as it would have to be expanded to include a theory of mediations and of overdetermination to make of it a useful tool of analysis for cases which are less directly grounded in the particular categories discussed in *Capital* than are those related to the wage-form discussed above.

Secondly we must remember that ideology is present in history not as disembodied thought, nor merely in the form of the thought, speech and behaviour of individuals, but in social organisations of various kinds. (cf. Althusser's concept of Ideological State Apparatus mentioned above). Since I have been mainly concerned with the cognitive basis of ideology I have no doubt been using rather abstract concepts which may have suggested that phenomenal forms and their corresponding ideological categories exist only as aspects of the cognitive acts of individuals, for example the experience of the individual worker of his wage-transactions and of his production and consumption of commodities. But of course it is not this that is involved at all. The worker's experience is mediated not only by language and culture but also by social institutions. The worker not only reads newspapers and watches television, but is also a member of a family, has been to school, belongs to a Union, has perhaps been in the army, and in a football club, is perhaps a member of a church. The conditions for the production of mystification are not abstract but are material and historical.

Keeping this in mind one can get a firmer grip on the problem of the domination of the workers' movement by bourgeois ideology that has been a continuing theme of this paper. Bourgeois ideology dominates because, within serious limits, it works, both cognitively and in practice. It provides intelligibility and is embodied in effective working class organisations. This is the point made by E.P. Thompson in his argument against some of the abstractions of Perry Anderson's analysis of the "peculiarities of the English". (37) The main peculiarity diagnosed by Engels was the dominance of unionism over politics, "the indifference to all theory which is one of the main reasons why the English working class movement crawls along so slowly in spite of the splendid organisation of the individual unions." (38) Thompson's explanation of this absence of a socialist political and theoretical counterbalance to the spontaneously bourgeois union movement in England consists in locating this absence in the context of the history of the labour movement's success. (39)

"....the workers, having failed to overthrow capitalist society, proceeded to warren it from end to end. This "caesura" [between the defeat of Chartism and the appearance of strong unions and eventually the Labour Party] is exactly the period in which the characteristic class institutions of the Labour Movement were built up - trade unions, trades councils, T.U.C., co-ops, and the rest - which have endured to this day. It was part of the logic of this new direction that each advance within the framework of capitalism simultaneously involved the working class far more deeply in the status quo. As they improved their position by organisation within the workshop, so they became more reluctant to engage in quixotic outbreaks which

(37) E.P. Thompson "The Peculiarities of the English" in *Socialist Register* 1965. Perry Anderson "Origins of the Present Crisis" in *New Left Review* 23.

(38) quoted in Lenin *What is to be Done?* p 27

(39) E.P. Thompson *art. cit.* p343.

might jeopardize gains accumulated at such cost. Each assertion of working-class influence within the bourgeois-democratic state machinery, simultaneously involved them as partners (even if antagonistic partners) in the running of the machine.....reformist pressures from secure organisational bases, bring evident returnsBritish reformism is strong because, within very serious limits, it has worked."

Conclusion

It would not be possible to account further for the nature of the relation between the subject and the reality that he describes in ideological discourse without entering further into the theory of language and the theory of consciousness. But it should be clear that from Marx's thesis some negative points about this relation do emerge, points which are criticisms of other possible theories of ideology. It is not necessary to postulate that any basic role in the generation of ideological discourse is played by subjective and individual agencies such as the desire to deceive, or the deliberate intention to manipulate the beliefs of others in such a way as to protect one's own interests. Nor is it necessary to postulate that ideology need be believed only by the aid of some process of self-deception or refusal or bad-faith. Such existentialist concepts are invoked in order to explain how it can come about that a person believes things which are manifest contradictory, or believes things which he is in a good position to know are false. But Marx's theory postulates that ideology arises from the fact that the situation might be such as to provide a person with reasons for thinking in terms of categories which necessarily generate falsehood and illusion.

Marx's theory does not assert a merely causal relation between socio-economic reality and ideology. This is the trouble with some of his early formulae, such as the famous "religion is the opium of the people", in as much as they can be interpreted as meaning that ideology functions as a sort of drug which, acting on a person's cognitive and perceptual equipment would somehow causally prevent him from seeing what was there to be seen. This is quite at variance with the *Capital* theory which asserts that the basis of ideology is precisely in its apparent justification by the perceived forms of empirical social reality. So, we must reject the view that ideology has its basis in some sort of defective perception of clearly perceptible facts. For Marx understanding comes not from making good the oversights of others, nor from merely noticing what they had not noticed, but from discovering that which is concealed by the apparent facts, or more accurately by the form of the facts that are directly perceptible in social life. It is the forms of social relations with which we are apparently directly acquainted in experience (value, wages, money, commodities etc) that are deceptive. Scientific advance is not so much a matter of discovery as of penetration. And this is achieved by systematic conceptual innovation i.e., by theory, which allows us to grasp the hidden coherence of the object.

I am not, of course, denying the reality of self-deception. Nor am I denying that there have been and are many who believe what they believe about social relations because they are aware of the connection between such beliefs and the advancement of their own interests. That is to say that in some way or other beliefs which they regard as justified are fortified or are denied criticism because it is in the interests of that person or group of persons that such beliefs be held. Nor am I denying the obvious truth that there are many who attempt to manipulate others into believing things which they know to be false or into thinking in ways that they know to be mystifying or which simply blunt people's critical faculties in such a way as indirectly to prevent them from arriving at the truth. I have no doubt that such methods of attempted manipulation of people's beliefs are very common, that for example the present President of the United States and many members of his administration are liars, that they and many others not only lie but use their enormous power and wealth to make as sure as possible that their lies fill the media and penetrate into every corner of the language and of people's minds. But I think Marx's theory is an attempt to account for much more puzzling phenomena than this. Namely that at least in certain historical conditions ideological forms of thought are the "natural self-understood modes of thought". The bourgeois ideology that has dominated not only the thought of the bourgeoisie but also the theory and practice for example of the English labour movement for over a century has clearly not had its origins in the methods or instruments that are now available to and used by the cynical elite of crisis-torn America. Such methods have not normally been necessary. If we have all been brain-washed then it is by the very forms of social reality itself. It is they, Marx says, that are impressed on our brains. Of course this is not an unchanging or unchangeable state of affairs. But just what Marx's theory of the conditions for the production of mystification can teach us about the conditions for the production of knowledge, and for the production of a non-mystifying social reality are not questions which I have attempted to answer in this paper.