

IDEOLOGY ACCORDING TO MARX AND ACCORDING TO NIETZSCHE

“There is not, nor has there ever been, ideology,” write Deleuze and Guattari.¹ This sybilline aphorism is surely true: an ideology is never more than rationalizing and justifying behavior, which convinces no one but the already convinced and amuses or bores the others. It is thus a small thing in comparison with the random wandering of thought throughout history and the arbitrariness of cultures, “nurtures:” since Nietzsche, or a certain aspect of Nietzsche, taught us to be in despair of the Truth, we can no longer impute this wandering and this arbitrariness to the distortion of who knows what natural light by ideology.

This amounts to saying that ideology is also an enormous number of things: it is a particular instance of Idealism in the Nietzschean sense, that is, a first marriage between the Good and the True;² far from being a stratagem, this edifying attitude is the primary attitude. What should astonish us is not ideology,

Translated by Jeanne Ferguson.

¹ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Rhizôme* (introduction). Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1976, p. 12.

² J. Granier, *Le problème de la vérité dans la philosophie de Nietzsche*. Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1966. p. 93.

but Truth. No property-holder makes a distinction between his opinions and his interests, which he understands as the Good. Ideology is optimism, it is the Idea of the Good, from Plato to Marx.

The Marxist theory of ideology is doubly unuseable, because it is dualism, first of all.³ There would be Being, and then there would be Thought, which would be the correct or distorted, faithful or false, reflection of Being. "Materialist" naiveté, which collapses under the easy criticism that can be made of all dualisms. In reality, ideology is never this shadowy reflection, this simulacrum, this representative: it has substance, it is an entity. It frequently happens, in fact, that a human group is a victim of its own ideology, "sacrifices its interests to its ideology," its imperialism to its other passions. If then ideologies can turn against their substructures, if the "derivations" can turn against their "residues," it is because they do not reflect these residues or cannot be reduced to reflecting them. An ideology is not a thing: it is the use which groups or individuals make of a thing. Marxists know that well, recognizing that the superstructure reacts on the substructure... One is either a dialectician or one is not.

But this facile criticism⁴ is only the smallest part of the problem. The real difficulty is this: for to be sure that we know what ideology is, we would have to be sure of the Truth. There would have to be natural light: man would have to be the eldest son of the Truth. Now, let us consider, down through the millennia, the enormous mass of metaphysics or religions, and the still more enormous mass of "thought" implicated in manners and customs: are we going to lay all this to the account of ideology? That would be to credit it with universal history. Ideology will no longer be nothing, it will be everything.

My intention is not exactly to protest that tyrants or bourgeois are innocent and that only history is guilty: it is to protest against the mania of dressing ideology up in all sorts of guises.

³ J. Molino, "Critique sémiologique de l'idéologie," in *Sociologie et sociétés*, 1973, V, 2, pp. 17-44.

⁴ Summarized by Paul Veyne in *Le pain et le Cirque*. Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1976, pp. 670-675.

Marxism is as old as Plato: it believes in the Good and the True; it is optimistic, it is humanistic; according to it man does not err. He deceives himself and, most often, is deceived, but if he were not deceived, the natural light would definitively illuminate him. Because man has eyes to see the Truth; if he does not see it, this is because the natural functioning of his reason is the victim of an accident: man has lost his way for a moment, which is called "error," or he has closed his eyes in a moment of escape, which is called "illusion". Or, more often, he wears blinkers which come from his social class or have been put on him by the dominating class. These blinkers are called "ideology." Once these obstacles and their causes are removed, the light of reason will again be before his eyes.

And if this optimism were too ingenuous?⁵ If the random wandering of thought were more irremediable than error, than illusion, than ideology? Yes, Locke and his theory of the State as defender of private property, Adam Smith and his economic liberalism, were used as ideologies; politicians, professors and publicists have used their ideas to deceive the proletariat or at least to comfort the bourgeois in their conviction of the excellence of the bourgeoisie. A justifying and ideological use has been made of Locke or of Smith. But their thought itself is no more and no less ideological than the enormous mass of explicit or implicit thought that mankind has formulated since the world began; because ideology is not the thing itself, but the way it is used.

Or if we want to designate by ideology the too complacent rapport which these thoughts have with the world as it is, "ideology" will in this case no longer designate the origin or use of certain doctrines, but a much larger fact, namely, a natural, too natural, conformity of practically all our thoughts and the majority of the philosophies, this too-human incapacity to stand back from what is, to curse the reality of each century, to burn one's boats, not to conform to the culture, an incapacity which causes the progress of mankind to leave behind it a succession of rationalizations which are as many ruins. Only,

⁵ Optimism is discussed by G. Deleuze in the remarkable Chapter III of *Différence et répétition*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1968.

in order not to act in that way, not to construct a philosophy which is only the recognition and rationalization of the reality of one or two centuries, it is not sufficient to wish it so; it is not sufficient to call oneself a revolutionary or even to be a revolutionary; to burn one's boats is easy, the difficulty is in refusing the culture. To be Einstein in the century of Newton. It is easy to reverse the algebraic signs, to put Hegel on his feet and inscribe "minus" instead of "plus" before the bourgeois state. Assuredly, that is better than timidity of thought, complacency toward sound doctrines and the established order which we are amused to divine in many philosophies, including the greatest; so much does the need for social and ethical security seem to be visceral. That said, the difficulty is not to curse reality, but to guess what the political philosophy in the centuries to come will be. And if our grand-nephews should smile at our theories for and against the state? We should certainly smile to see the Christian apologists of the third century so blithely and lucidly destroy pagan mythology in order to replace it with their own. We should smile even more to see that they do not go so far as to say that pagan gods do not exist (their thought did not go to such extremes...). They limited themselves to changing the algebraic signs in front of the gods: these are not really gods, they said, they are demons in disguise.

It is not enough to break away from social determinations or mystifications in order to withdraw from the randomness of thought. If we imagine that in tearing away man's blinkers his eyes will be reopened *ipso facto* to the light of Truth, we will have only built one more rationalization. The present use of the word ideology consists in confusing two things: the social behavior of rationalizations and the randomness of thought. Or, if you prefer, the confused idea of ideology is born of the incapacity of classical philosophy to absorb the blows (in the sense of a boxer who can take blows well) of the traumatizing notion of the erratic wandering of thought throughout history.

To which is added another reassuring illusion: ideology would be only a stratagem by which masters deceive slaves (the more subtle thinkers will add that if the masters seem the first to believe in it, it is by a supplementary step in the stratagem, the way a good actor truly enters his part). Ideology

Ideology of Marx and Nietzsche

is a lie of interest; now, in order to lie we must know the truth. Thus truth is the primary fact. The light is natural and the blinkers only come later...

And if this fine optimism were too good to be true?

* * *

Ideology is not the stratagem of a social class. It is the most natural use that mankind makes of knowledge; man wants to live and be comfortable in his interests, rather than to be curious and seek out the truth. I do not conclude that he is correct, that what is necessary is necessary, that *primum vivere*. Nietzsche absolutely insisted that mankind live, but that does not seem to be philosophically necessary. Let us conclude only that truth and life do not get on well together; there are mortal truths which demoralize peoples and their leaders... What can be done? No one can use his reason to prove to himself that he must sacrifice his reason for the survival of large interests. If he does, he will lose on the grounds of reason without sensibly increasing his chances on the grounds of survival.

It is precisely in order to delay as much as possible this tragic choice or this secret uneasiness that man takes so long to separate the True from the Good. It should not be believed that he confuses them, that he endorses the opinions of his interests. On the contrary, he begins by not distinguishing between them. Listen to people when they discuss politics. Do they say that the doctrines of the opposite party are disastrous? That they are false? Neither one. They say that they are *scandalous* and that "one does not have the right" to think that way: this rapid interdiction dispenses with the need to give a distinct reason for the condemnation.

This lack of distinction is properly ideology, and it is the primary attitude: it will be agreed that the scandalized tone in political conversations is a matter of style more widespread and more ancient than even the most conformist philosophy. Everyone knows that primitive men construct cosmologies which are *sociodiciées*: natural order is the guarantee for the social order; and children do not ask if an institution is justified, but only what its justification is, because they are sure it has

one: a knife is to cut with and a government is to govern with. Adult civilizations do as much, and an amusing page by Musil says so: "In a man who has arrived at an important position, the dominant sentiment is not exactly egoism but a deep and, if we may say so, disinterested, indeed, impersonal love for that which serves his personal interests. In other words, he feels a virtuous respect for that on which his interests depend, but not because his interests depend on it. Let us rather say that he identifies with these interests and is in harmony with them." Will we say that Musil is wasting his time in splitting hairs? That would be an error: Musil is subtle but he is not a dupe. He continues: "In the canine species, the dog, an animal with a sense of honor, places himself under the table, where choice morsels of food drop, but he does not do this for baseness or meanness: on the contrary, he does it out of a feudal sense of vassalage. And in the human species, cynics, who calculate too coldly, are less successful than happily equivocal characters who are sincerely able to feel a deep love for beings or situations which are useful for their interests."⁶

Such is the paradox of the ideologue, which is nevertheless more subtle than the *Paradoxe sur le Comédien*: a dualism is never very subtle. The lack of distinction between the True and the Good is so natural that it is almost impossible to avoid: statements such as "Any true member of the proletariat is a revolutionary" or "A woman worthy of the name will not have an abortion" even slip into... books on ideology. On the surface, these statements seem to come from a confusion between definitions for words and definitions for things: the author seems to have thought that to make his point (Will a woman with the expected characteristics of femininity or humanity have an abortion?) it is enough for him magically to change a convention of vocabulary. In reality, there is indistinction here rather than confusion: the word is also an honorable title and the fact is also conformity to the norm; carried away by his indignation, the author proclaims that if a woman or a member of the proletariat behaves *badly*, he will no longer hold them to be a *true* proletariat, a *true* woman; such scandalous beings

⁶ *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, I, 1, 3.

Ideology of Marx and Nietzsche

are no longer worthy of their names. We have analyzed this type of rhetorical argument at some length because it is very frequent, and it illustrates very well the primary indistinction between the fact and the Good.

We have almost as much reticence to admit, except *sotto voce*, that what is, is not justified unless it takes us away from the thought patterns to which we have become accustomed. Let no one say that a large part of philosophy is criticism and that it has always been so: this dispute consists only in placing on another level of reality the convergence of the Good and the True, or a hope for it in the society of the future, but not to recognize that it is highly improbable that the pluralistic chaos called the world should conform to the postulates of reason/action. However familiar it may be to mathematicians, the idea that a certain order of problems may admit of no solution at all is never even examined seriously, though it has *a priori* a rather high probability.

Let us take as an example the following hypothesis, which will offend everyone: political activity admits of no solution which can make use of reason or understanding; conservatism or progressivism, when they are applied, contradict their own principles, moderation is no better than revolution; as for abstention, the flight into nirvana, it is no solution either. All exits are blocked. And if it is thus, it is not because men do not agree in judging values, on the idea of Good, nor because they do not have the same interests nor because value judgments are no more demonstrable than tastes or colors: even if all men agreed on values, on interests, the putting into operation of those values would end in contradictions because of the plurality of consciences, the impossibility to combine preferences and because of the time involved (how, over a period of time, can the ills of the established disorder and those of the revolution be integrated? How much time should be allowed?). There is the hypothesis (my too-feeble mathematical capacities prohibit my seeing if it has some connection with the theories of Kenneth J. Arrow). It is surely not absurd to ask if politics alone permits a solution, or indeed a compromise; in a related field, economics, an effort has been made to discover if the general equilibrium according to Walras is possible, if a solution exists and if the

“theorem of existence” for this solution can be proved. The question has also been asked if an equitable compromise (the optimum of Pareto) is possible in matters of economic satisfactions. Does politics allow of a theorem of existence? This is a question we carefully avoid asking, not because life must continue and large interests, or those which are so called, do not wait, but because it would be unpleasant for us to be no longer able to make use of reason, to have no longer the right to claim that our opinion, whether of the left, right or center, is the only sensible one, to be able no longer to construct an ideology. With all hope gone, we would play a tragic or pathetically absurd role and say, with Max Weber: “Since the heavens are torn to pieces, the gods fight each other and there no longer exists any reason in this affair, well, let each of us follow his own demons!”; now there already, slyly, is ideology, for reason can well prove, in the indicative mood, that in fact life continues and that men follow their demons, but reason cannot say, in the imperative mood, to follow them, because demons are not a demonstrable solution, either. But Max Weber was a patriot and even an imperialist, and he hoped to establish that there was, if not agreement at least non-contradiction between the savant and the politician he had within himself. So much is ideology a visceral need; as St. Augustine says, “I have seen many people wish to deceive, but not one who consented to deceive himself: men so love the truth that whatever they love they want to be the truth.”⁷ An ironic turn to what Plato says, “No one errs on purpose.” It must be acknowledged that without ideology reality appears in a rather macabre light. If politics did not permit a solution, if it were only a corpse, then, as the will to power abhors a vacuum, that corpse would have fallen prey to all false functions and false rationalizations; now, this corpse is ours.

The conviction that the Good is real, or at least possible, that reason is not unemployed, that reality is not pluralist, serves as a protective screen for this type of vision. Our capacity for being blind is incredible. Let the Stoic ethic serve as an example. Every being, Chrysippus explains, has the will to live,

⁷ *Confessions*, X, 23.

an instinct toward self-preservation which makes him love himself. But if he loves himself, he will also love what belongs to him. Where does the circle of "what belongs to him" end? Gradually the Stoic recognition will discover and thus found the Family, the Country, and in the end, the love for the Country will expand into love for mankind and God, without the idea even having crossed the mind of the thinker that these loves could be contradictory among themselves, as we daily learn through the most banal experiences. Because finally, why should the world be one rather than plural? Why should the network of things be unified, rather than disconnected and full of short-circuits? In all of antiquity Carneades is the only philosopher, to my knowledge, who asked himself this simple question.

We believe that the real is, or will be, good; reciprocally, we do not really believe in a good which is not real or at least is not continually becoming so: Minerva's owl wakes up only at nightfall. A strange paralysis takes hold of the thinkers when they see themselves on the point of having logically to condemn an institution held to be necessary or one which seems simply to be indestructible. Aristotle explains, in a forced manner, that there are noble characters among the slaves and that consequently ideal and justifiable slavery perhaps does not always coincide with the realities of slavery. Having thus saved his honor as a thinker, he holds firm there. Because of class interests? Not just that, but also through false shame, through seriousness; not being able to imagine that slavery must one day cease to exist, he did not dare condemn it in the name of logic for fear of seeming a Utopian adolescent. That is why the most idealistic souls pose themselves only problems which they can solve and dare not attack an institution as long as it is not in decline. That is why there are more Communists than there are Leftists: because the Soviet Union has many variances. We are so desirous that reason cut into reality that it would seem puerile to us if it undertook ineffectually and platonically to condemn an inescapable necessity, or one which seems so, and that it maintain its sentence throughout millenia without ever carrying it out; suppose there were proof that justice and the courts are just as absurd as pagan mythology or State

religion. My reader would shrug his shoulders and say, "And what then?" As if one proved that it is absurd to breathe.

We are so convinced that we speak of good when we speak of truth that if a prophet of doom announces an unpleasant future to us, we suspect him of expressing his own wishes, his own good, with the pretext of announcing the truth. "Prophet of doom," says Agamemnon to Calchas, "you always enjoy announcing a future which will be disagreeable to me."⁸ Try to make an optimist understand that a pessimist does not necessarily enjoy the unconstructive statements he makes. And moreover, that he does not conclude from these statements what should be done (since reason cannot say to do whatever it may be) and that he does not even play Cassandra. Because a reason which begins to believe itself responsible for the future of humanity cannot but be carried away by audacity and soon end by lying to itself.

In fact, we heedlessly submit reason to an exigency to which it all too easily bends. One expects, from any criticism, that it be constructive. Reflection should not demolish anything without "proposing something else in exchange." Philosophers thus unconsciously recoil from the possibility of removing all foundation from what seems to be socially vital; it is not just in case their criticism would be dangerous, but because irresponsibility seems to them scandalous. For example, the idea that no society could exist without retributive justice, and that retribution has for foundation free will, must have exerted some clandestine influence on given solutions for the philosophical problem of liberty. This influence must have been considerable, if we may judge it by another problem, that of God, which the philosophers did not pose to themselves as long as Christendom existed. One will thus say that there is ideology as soon as a thought is believed constructive, that is, edifying. As can be seen, ideology is much more than a class phenomenon: "cultural" or "vital" would be more appropriate qualitatifs. The philosophy of justice is not an ideology of class, any more than justice itself is only unjust as long as it is of "class," to correspond to an authentic essence as soon as it ceases to be of

⁸ *Iliad*, I, 106.

class. Men sense that truth is their worst enemy, but at the same time they cannot do without it. Thus they do everything to disarm it in ideologies. At the least, they demand that all criticism be crowned with a constructive part, that is, with a Utopia.

One of the finest examples of the indistinction between the true and the good is Marxism. Marx proves that in fact mankind is going inexorably toward Communism, and the text of his prediction is of a glacial objectivity. Marx is a savant, he is not a Utopian who takes his desires for realities. He is a fighter, not a preacher. Nonetheless, he does not resemble a physicist who would predict the thermal death of the universe. If his words are of an impeccable coldness, his tone of voice is enticing, enthusiastic. It is understood that it is *good* that mankind is going in fact to Communism. Marx has not even distinguished, the indistinction being so obvious to him. To tell the truth, who would think of launching a message for the future and for action which is not radiant? This is what it means to have optimistic temperament. The marriage between the True and the Good is so complete in Marx that he can permit himself to have no moral philosophy and to be ironic about ethics: he has a moral philosophy without knowing it, which allows him to announce the fall of the capitalist as though it were a question of a *fatum mahumetanum* and at the same time to appeal for the overthrow of capitalism. "He was so convinced of the unworthiness of the capitalistic regime that the analysis of reality irresistibly suggested to him the revolutionary will."⁹ However, Kautsky¹⁰ made a pertinent distinction: "Determinist or finalist, an objective science permits no imperative conclusion; the fact that the evolution of history is toward Socialism does not diminish in the least the obligation to contribute to the acceleration of this evolution, nor even only to approve of it." One will say that this text only proves that Kautsky was not enough of a dialectician, and one will be correct: dialectics consists of verbally rendering a still closer primary intimacy between the Good and the True, if possible.¹¹

⁹ Raymond Aron, *Les étapes de la pensée sociologique*, Paris, Gallimard, 1967.

¹⁰ Cited by L. Goldmann, *Recherches dialectiques*. Paris, Gallimard, 1959.

¹¹ On Nietzsche and the Hegelian dialectic, see G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la*

* * *

Thus we use the word ideology in at least two senses. First, we may designate by this too vague word the wandering of thought throughout history: the doctrines of Locke, of Adam Smith or of Marx are ideologies, in the sense that they are not definitive truths. They belong to that long history of political philosophy which it is difficult to hail as an assured progress toward the Truth, as the construction of a science, or as the sporadic manifestations of a *philosophia aeterna*.

But we can also give a more limited meaning to the word and say that bourgeois thinkers or Communist functionaries have made an ideological use of Smith or Marx; ideology is then a collective behavior of rationalization. The first of the ideologues and rationalizers was Aesop's fox, when he declared that the grapes he could not reach were too green. This is less a stratagem than compulsive behavior: there is anguish at the bottom of ideology. The bourgeois who proclaims that he is an admirable creature wants to justify himself in everyone's eyes, and first of all his own, in the way in which a neurotic rationalizes his illness, both to better his relations with his entourage and to justify himself in his own conscience. Marxists have always hesitated between the two interpretations of ideology: product or lying stratagem. Is ideology the mediocre product of an unhealthy class situation, as a bad harvest comes from unprofitable soil? Or is it the lie which seeks to deceive a social partner? The Freudian idea of rationalization goes beyond these hesitations: ideology is a compulsion, and not a stratagem. It is hysterical automystification, and not falsehood. It is directed behavior and not product: its orientation is both toward the subject himself and toward his entourage—or rather let us say the ideologue calls Heaven itself to witness (since bourgeois publicists did not imagine that the proletariat would read their octavos).

Thus we will call ideology not all false or unjust thought, but behavior of rationalization, of justification of oneself or of things, which seeks to "reduce the dissonance"¹² between reality and

philosophie, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1962, pp. 9, 187.

¹² L. Festinger, *A Theory of the Cognitive Dissonance*. Stanford University

our interests. Since we cannot change reality, we make a virtue of necessity. Ideology is a behavior of illusion. As such it procures a specific semi-satisfaction: to believe that the king loves his people but that his ministers deceive him is less comforting than a full stomach, but it is better than despair. This semi-satisfaction has an original coloring, strongly ethical, which changes from a surly apology to a proud humility and self-righteousness. It is the rainbow of resentment, in the German sense of the word, which might be better translated as "sullen delight." Ideology is more often an invention of the oppressed for their own use than it is a stratagem of their oppressors, or rather the two parties agree to invent and approve the type of the good worker, faithful subject, old servant or virtuous wife. Ideology is thus an original solution and not a double, even though false, of reality; the ideological "lie" does not have the magic power to rouse the false rather than the real in the mind; people continue to know, somehow, that the king is not good, and their conduct proves it: they do not expect miracles from their government. Ideology does not have the power to make them believe that a monarchic regime is a bed of roses: it is a position which is a little less uncomfortable than the one the sleeping prisoner has finally managed to find on the floor of his cell. Here again, dualism does not hold and incidentally, one could say the same for the relationship between the imaginary and the real. Imaginary satisfactions do not serve as substitutes for real satisfactions: they are two different realms of satisfaction which are joined. One never reads as many romantic novels as when one is in love. One does not fall back on the imaginary, on escapist literature, because one is deprived of real satisfactions: one would prefer to have both at the same time, the more so that romance novels, the literature of escape, have always been one of the pleasures of the upper classes, however full of real satisfactions they were. Reality does not destroy the attraction of the imaginary; frustrated people do not rush to pornographic films because they

Press, 1957; C. Faucheux and S. Moscovici, *Psychologie sociale théorique et expérimentale*, Mouton, 1971, pp. 107-206; J. P. Poitou, *La dissonance cognitive*. A. Colin, 1974.

replace more substantial amorous or social satisfactions: they would prefer to have both. They rush to the imaginary because it is the only one of the two satisfactions which is accessible to them. A work of art is no more *mimesis* than ideology is a reflection, though false.

It seems impossible for man not to justify his interests, not to question if what is to his interest is ethical. The Nazis themselves insisted that they were right, not wrong, and that the interest of the *seigneurs* was precisely the Good: not to claim one's rights but simply to take them is inconceivable. What is historically significant is the tone in which this claim is made: a haughty tone, at times sanctimonious, at times querulous, since the bourgeois or the puritans are not *seigneurs*. The content of those rationalizations also varies historically: ideology may make use of a philosophy, a religion, an ethic. In its simplest form it is the same thing as the "censorship" exerted on the conscious by the unconscious.

It is thus in what may be called coalitions.¹³ When individuals unite in a group which proposes an action or a conquest, the individual motives and objectives of the different members vary considerably, but all nonetheless agree on the necessity to stay grouped, it being in their interest not to break the coalition. All are careful to ignore what separates them and to think about what unites them. This repression is accompanied by a release of ethical warmth: the group has a delightful sense of good conscience in its feeling of brotherhood, and its own unity seems to be a holy cause. Patriotic festivals and banquets are the great moments of these Rousseau-like illusions.¹⁴ The diversity of repressed interests nonetheless exists. It rises to the surface in the form of reticence, of uneasiness, of bad conscience. The group feels toward certain of its members a distrust which it dares not admit, because it seems to be a base sen-

¹³ G. Devereux, *Ethnopsychanalyse complémentaire*, Paris, Flammarion, 1972, p. 123 ff. Here will be found a striking illustration (analysis of a group of Komsomols) in the memorable account of Wolfgang Leonhard, *Die Revolution entlässt ihre Kinder*, Ullstein Bücher, p. 58.

¹⁴ On group illusion and the banquet, Didier Anzieu, *Le groupe et l'inconscient*, Paris, Bordas, 1975, pp. 142, 180, 191 and index under "illusion groupale."

timent: in fact, such an admission would put the homogeneity of the group in question. Nonetheless, it is arranged to push the suspicions aside, but without saying so. Here the rapport of ideology to reality is not that of the "cover" to what is covered, but that of the emerged part of the iceberg to the whole iceberg. The group professes only the most elevated part of its motivations, that which divides in the least and justifies it.

Large sections of historical reality thus appear as illusions. The word illusion is not here a disguised value judgment (since in the name of what would it be forbidden to "lie to oneself?") It is licit for each of us to estimate whether an illusion is useful and praiseworthy.) Nor does it imply the idea of collective bad faith: illusion is not an indication of itself. Assuredly, it is objectively conveyed by inconsistencies of belief and incoherences in conduct (we hope for Paradise, but as far off in the future as possible; we are anti-militarist, but only until the day of mobilization). These surface cracks are exactly the most frequent indications of an underlying ideological fault. But these incoherences do not trouble the conscience, which tolerates them very well and ignores them: that is what it is for. Objectively, there is illusion when there is a difference between reality and the sentiments which correspond to it and the difference makes life easier. Illusion may be a permanent condition, and we see kingdoms which never cease to believe comfortably in the goodness of the king, without ever demanding that it be translated into action. It could be that all political life is located in this zone of illusion, and political philosophy with it, in the same way that each of us sees around him couples and individuals managing to live by lying to themselves.

There are two ways to reduce the idea of illusion to a reassuring rationalism: they both consist in saying that what is necessary is necessary. The first says that if illusion is everywhere, it is nowhere; if all the world is mad, no one is, and it is no longer worth the effort to change governments: it would be a useless and even harmful idea, and thus erroneous. The second way, on the contrary, encourages a change of government; it imputes ideology as the only objective condition to which people will submit, to the hardness of the prison floor to which the sleeping prisoner tries to adjust himself: it ignores the strange ability the human

will has to bend, to mold itself to realities which are foreign to it¹⁵ as do the flaccid watches of Salvador Dali. With a release of ethical warmth. All that "is nothing but psychology:" from the point of view of the man of action, it is only important to know where to apply the lever in order to change it all. From this social point of view, it would be equally useful to impute tuberculosis to the slum and to ignore the existence of Koch's bacillus. The criticism of defense thus joins the defense of criticism, the Good and the True are not separated.

The reader, disappointed, probably feels that the present article is politically undecided; that is only too true. We will excuse ourselves by pleading that we did not choose to be born in the twentieth century. Because historians well know that politics have only existed for the last two centuries or thereabouts. For example, when we read Roman texts of the Imperial era, we are struck by an astounding fact: at that time there were no political opinions. People fought over power and prestige, while hurling Homeric curses, since they lacked true ethico-political arguments; but they were neither of the Right nor the Left, for order or for action, for or against revolution or imperialism. Politics was not defined in terms of an ethical reorganization of society. Not that I have nostalgia for that "realist" politics. My sole aim is to recall that, at the same time, Truth no longer felt itself obliged to be subject to practical application, with the danger of seeming false if it had none. The Stoics held almost all men to be "mad," themselves included; Seneca considered civilized society as profoundly corrupt;¹⁶ and the Christians believed that the world was Satan's dominion. One dared to condemn what is, in the name of a certain conception of reason, because one thought that the condemnation would remain purely ethical: this preacher-like irresponsibility lent daring. With us, the connection between truth and political imperatives ends in asking too much of the first and paralyzing it, which is why there are so many ideologies.

¹⁵ On heterogeneous relations in a pluralist society, see Paul Veyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 706-709. On apolitical feeling and passivity, pp. 84-94.

¹⁶ See especially *Letters to Lucilius*, XCV, CXXII; *De constantia sapientis*, XIII; *On natural questions*, V, 18; and especially VII, 31.

* * *

All through the history of philosophical ideas, the notion of ideology, in a million avatars, is constantly brought back to life. In other words, alongside the true and the false, there has always been the tendency to place a third term. Stoicism, for example, presents a well-known paradox (although its historians have hardly commented on it): in the opinion of this optimistic and providential rationalism, man is evidently a reasonable animal, but, on the other hand, all men are mad.¹⁷ Obviously, such a wide-spread folly is not the same thing as the errors we carelessly commit when we make mistakes in multiplying.

One could say as much for the philosophy of the Enlightenment: it preserves the notion of truth and divides that of falsehood into two. It makes a distinction between simple error, or "errors of haste" and "prejudiced" error, due to authority (*praejudicium auctoritatis*):¹⁸ spiritual or temporal authorities have the strange power to close our eyes to the natural light. Here we rediscover the lack of symmetry which characterizes the classical conception of the truth: while the truth needs no explanation (because it comes from the natural light, which blinds us) error requires explanation. At times this error is due to the too hasty use we make of the functioning of reason, at times it is due to the fact that the functioning itself has been distorted in us by authority. Then we no longer speak of error, but of "prejudice." Prejudice is recognized by both its content and its genesis, it is at the same time a false idea and an idea having a social origin. One may say as much for ideology according to Marx: a false idea, an idea which is explained by reasons of social class. It would thus be possible to judge the truth of ideas from their genesis. It follows that, for classical thought as for Marx, there is a privilege of the thinker which is removed from social conditioning. For the classical thinkers,

¹⁷ In my opinion the explanation of this apparent contradiction may be found in Aulu-Gelle, *Nuits Attiques*. XII, 5.

¹⁸ H.-G. Gadamer, *Vérité et méthode: les grandes lignes d'une herméneutique philosophique*. Paris, Éditions de Seuil, 1976, p. 110.

a free mind, freed from all authority, finds by itself the natural access to the truth: for Marx, proletarian thought alone is free from the blinkers of social class, because the proletariat is the universal class.

Truth, error, prejudiced thought or ideology: such is the classic trinity. Its most original variant is due to Freud: truth, error, illusion. Man is capable of lying to himself, of deluding himself, of believing what he wants to believe. He is not because of that in bad faith, because he is dual: the hysteric does not simulate but his unconscious, of which he is not the master, simulates in him and knows very well what he should be kept unaware of. La Rochefoucauld, one of the most original minds that ever existed (also for his decided pluralism, which is not well enough known)¹⁹ said: "What proves that men know their faults more than is thought is that they are never wrong when one hears them speak of their conduct; the same self-esteem which ordinarily blinds them enlightens them then and gives them such good vision that they are able to suppress or disguise the least things which might be condemned."²⁰

We must admit that it is an amusing sight, recommended to those who would still doubt the existence of a censor, to see an individual panic or become furious when he hears an objection coming from someone to whom he is speaking which would oblige him to recognize a truth which his unconscious wishes to ignore, but which his emotional self recognizes even at a distance. Only, there it is, the huge mass of the arbitrariness of culture and the randomness of science and philosophy cannot be reduced to that. It was not to rationalize the interests of the rising bourgeoisie that Newton did not bring forward the postulate of universal time. He did not "censure" an Einstein whom in the name of logic he carried within himself. It is not only for "sociological Christianity," for edifying conformity, that Descartes or Leibnitz consider the metaphysical problem of God, which the Greeks barely considered and which, shortly after, philosophers will consider very little more. It is not enough to repress the errors of haste and ideological uses to find oneself

¹⁹ La Rochefoucauld, *Réflexions diverses*. I, "Du Vrai," Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, p. 357.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, maxim 494.

again on a royal road to Truth. The randomness of thought is much broader, the royal road does not exist. If Newton was not Einstein, it was not because of causes or class objectives, but because thought is not its own master; because there is no such thing as the knowledge of knowledge. The suspicion that contemporary philosophy throws on knowledge has no bearing on the limits of the latter (a certainty cannot be attained except within these limits), but on its very exercise in all areas: thought does not even know on the basis of what it thinks and this exercise could have an end that it does not know.

Instead of following a route from which only accidents, prejudices or illusions could turn it aside, knowledge wanders in a trackless domain; its position at each instant is made known not by the direction it takes toward fixed objects, but by the position it had the moment before. As Gerard Lebrun²¹ writes in his great book on Kant, "For lack of attention to genealogy, we spend our time in taking as things ("the sense of history," "the finality of the living," "the esthetic sentiment") the remains of ancient concepts; that is, ideology, more serious than giving too much importance to certain social preferences." In other words, "We are never assured of knowing from which point we conceive the 'objects' which seem to us the best localized: 'life,' 'technique,' 'esthetics;' the elucidation of certain themes is not related to their intrinsic importance, but to the displacement and changes in a discourse."

In other words, there are no concrete concepts nor empirical regions (including "man") which have always merited being held as eternal concepts or essences. We have thus seen the development in the last fifteen or twenty years of a Nietzschean critique of knowledge which revolves around two or three themes between which the reader will easily see the connection:

1) Historicism with a pluralistic foundation: eternal essences do not exist, nor do the state through the ages, human nature, public assistance, filial love, physical sciences through the centuries: we artificially unite, under these names, a succession of heterogeneous phenomena. As if we were to imagine that "la

²¹ *Kant et la fin de la métaphysique*. Paris, A. Colin, 1970, p. 503.

France éternelle” exists through historical maps where are seen in reality a succession of different peoples, depending on different political formations (the immense Roman Empire, the Frankish monarchy, the feudal disintegration) occupying different frontiers and belonging to different ethnic groups. We know with what acclaim Foucault founded this genealogical history.

2) The second theme is less concerned with the momentary realities which are the objects of knowledge than with knowledge itself; this can never come to proof, can never take on itself the point of view of Sirius, but is a prisoner of the system of thought of a moment (if only because it is itself one of these objects). As Plato’s strangest dialogue says (the *Charmides*), knowledge cannot be known (we wonder how such a statement can be reconciled with the rest of Plato’s philosophy or if it can be reconciled at all.)

3) If knowledge is such a mediocre instrument, it is because knowledge does not exist in order that we may know, but in order that we may live. Now, in order to live, says Nietzsche, it is more useful to believe than to know. For example, it is useful to believe optimistically that reality conforms to our standards and to confuse the Good and the True.

There are no eternal realities which have always particularly aroused the attention of the philosopher. As Nietzsche writes, “All concepts have become.” There are no eternal concepts, so that philosophy is historiography (*Historie*)²² in the broad sense this word must have from now on. That is not relativity: it does not mean. “On man, on the Beautiful, some have thought this, and in a different epoch, others have thought that on the same point. Just try, then, to determine which is correct!” Because the point in question is not the same: these thoughts are not the discouraging exegesis of the same natural object. Let the genealogical analysis be applied to any object and it will be seen that this object was only the chance configuration of multiple wills to power during a moment in history.²³

²² *Werke*, Ed. Kröner. XIII, 21, n. 46, cited by Granier.

²³ M. Foucault, “Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire,” in *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1971, pp. 145-172; cfr. M.

So thought cannot doubt itself in order to recover itself; it cannot make a clean break, take its place in universal doubt. If it did, it would not finally recover the truth.²⁴ It would recover nothing at all, it would no longer think. It has only limited doubts, it does not know its own limits and it thinks within those limits. After the comedy of methodical doubt, it recovers its prejudices. From whence the "Jacob effect": the discovery of the microscopic world was for long without influence on biological science. An upheaval in this science was required before biologists could realize facts which had been discovered long before.²⁵

Knowledge is the prisoner of systems of thought of which it is unaware. It is therefore necessary to welcome an unexpected predecessor of contemporary philosophy in the person of St. Augustine, author of the treatise *De utilitate credendi*.²⁶ Classical philosophy in fact considers that as eldest sons of the Truth we must have evidence if we are to accept truth, and we only believe what we have rational reasons to believe: likewise, classical thought considers that the model for knowledge is physics or mathematics. It scorns history, that hearsay knowledge which is not susceptible to rational certainty.²⁷ Which amounts to saying that classical thought bases its philosophy of knowledge on a type of knowing which represents a tiny fraction of what we know, of what we "believe." Because, finally, it is not through proof, St. Augustine says, that I know

Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir*, Paris, Gallimard, 1969, pp. 52, 64-5: genealogical history "veut, bel et bien, se passer des choses."

²⁴ G. Bachelard, *Le rationalisme appliqué*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1949, p. 50.

²⁵ F. Jacob, *La logique du vivant*, Paris, Gallimard, 1970; Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir*, p. 61.

²⁶ *De utilitate credendi* has recently been translated in *Les oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, Paris, Desclée De Brouwer, 1^e série: *Opuscles*, VIII, "La fois chrétienne," 1951. "To what point is it permitted to believe confidently, without having examined the reasons for believing?" Origen asks in *Against Celsus*, I, 9 and III, 38. And furthermore, to what point is one still a Christian, if one knows nothing of the dogma of his religion and is content to trust the Church, which "knows" for its faithful ignorant? The question has often been discussed: B. Groethuysen, *Origines de l'esprit bourgeois en France: l'Eglise et la bourgeoisie*, Paris, Gallimard, 1927, p. 12.

²⁷ We must at least make an exception of Leibnitz: *New Essays*, IV, 20, which precisely incorporates *De utilitate credendi*.

who my parents are, but through hearsay: I have confidence in what everyone, beginning with my parents, affirms to me on this point, just as I believe in the existence of Caesar and the existence of foreign cities where I have never been.

That is the kind of belief that I bring to the majority of the things I know: reason does not enter into it. If I demanded proofs for them all, it would be impossible for me to live. It is thus useful and necessary to believe, that is, to believe non-rationally. And certainly we do not deprive ourselves of it: St. Augustine was able to establish undeniably that it was sufficient for him to "condition" people, to force them to believe, for them to end in *sincerely* believing what was told them. The Bishop of Hippo concludes from this that it is legitimate and praiseworthy to persecute heretics. Had he not seen misguided souls, which had been forced to return to the bosom of the Church, one day come to thank their bishop for the violence which had been done them because it had opened their eyes to the Truth? With the aid of Divine Grace, of course. St. Augustine draws an original apologetics from this: since in any case we cannot do without believing what we are told, we are not inconvenienced and believe even more strongly; we believe the Church rather than the Manicheans...²⁸

Carried away by his proselytizing zeal and his authoritarianism of a choleric intellectual, St. Augustine went beyond the limits of classical philosophy, because what he tells us is astonishing: it is useful to *believe*. If that were advice, obviously of an interested kind, it would be irregular: usefulness does not require us to go so far as to believe, it only asks that we conform our actions, that we behave *as though* we believed, while withholding our consent. But if, instead of being advice, it is a description of our actual conduct, then we may hail in St. Augustine a thinker of the first rank. Because it is a fact that we behave as though we believe. When we open our eyes on the world, we do not observe a methodical doubt relative

²⁸ On this sociology of knowledge, applied to dogmatism, and on St. Augustine's justification of persecution, see especially the *Letters*, nos. 93, 173, 185 and 204; and the recent works by Peter Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of St. Augustine*, 1971; *Vie de Saint Augustin*, translated by Mme. Marrou, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1974.

to the myths and norms of our tribe, in expectation of more rational proof. We do not adopt, while waiting, a provisory moral code by which we would externally conform our attitudes to local customs, if necessary. Not at all: we believe at the outset, firm as steel, in local beliefs and norms. What am I saying—we defend them indignantly against objectors. Even more, we are so profoundly imbued with them that we are not even aware of these customs, we take them as the natural way to behave. In brief, we accept the culture, we become members of society; and culture (it is rather generally known) is not nature... What is useful, we believe to be true.

If the aim of knowledge were to content our impartial curiosity, we would be like tourists: we would swing from left to right, according to local customs (one has to accept them) but without believing, observing the strange ways with detachment. But we do not behave that way: we follow the custom and believe in it. Which means that knowledge is not intended to satisfy our curiosity, but to permit us to live in a certain fashion.²⁹ It does not make us reflect: it makes us act or adapt.

²⁹ G. Durandin, *Les fondements du mensonge*, Paris, Flammarion, 1972, p. 157.