1

The Nature of Ideology

This first chapter deals with three issues: first, a brief historical sketch of the concept of ideology will be presented; second, my own particular use of the concept of ideology is outlined; finally, and briefly, a synopsis of the structure of the book will be given.

This is not a book about the concept of ideology in its own right. It is a book about ideologies. However, it is impossible simply to leap into this task without saying something about the concept of ideology. The history of the concept of ideology is comparatively short – approximately two hundred years old – but complex. Like most substantive 'ideologies', the word 'ideology' dates from the French Revolution era of the 1790s. For the sake of brevity, the history will be broken down into a number of stages which have given rise to different senses. The discussion will begin with the inception of the word by the French philosopher Antoine Destutt de Tracy in the 1790s. It will move to Marx's usage in the 1840s and the ambiguous Marxist legacy into the twentieth century, then turn to the uses of the term in the 'end of ideology' movement of the 1950s. Finally, some of the more recent debates will be summarized.

The term 'ideology' was first coined between 1796 and 1798 by Antoine Destutt de Tracy in papers read in instalments to the National Institute in Paris under the title *Mémoire sur la faculté de penser*. His book entitled *The Elements of Ideology* was published later (1800–15). To some extent it is true that Tracy would probably now be a fairly obscure figure but for his association with the word 'ideology'. Oddly, there is no one unequivocal sense of the concept deriving from Tracy. In fact, four uses of the term can be discerned. First, there was Tracy's original explicit use to designate a new empirical science of ideas; second, the term came to denote an affiliation to a form of secular liberal republicanism; third, it took on a pejorative connotation implying intellectual and practical sterility as well as dangerous radicalism; finally, and most tenuously, it came in a limited sphere to denote 'political doctrine' in general. All these four senses moved into political currency between 1800 and 1830.

The word 'ideology' was a neologism compounded from the Greek terms *eidos* and *logos*. It can be defined as a 'science of ideas'. Tracy wanted a new term for a new science. He rejected the terms *métaphysique* and *psychologie* as inadequate.

For Tracy, the discipline of 'metaphysics' was misleading and discredited; 'psychology' also implied a science or knowledge of the soul, which could give a false, almost religious, impression. Tracy was both deeply anti-clerical and a materialist. Through the 1790s and early 1800s he was involved in bitter infighting with the Catholic Church, particularly over the control of education. Thus any term to describe his science had to be distinct from any taint of religion. It is also worth noting that the term 'ideology' more or less coincides with the early use of the term 'social science' (*la science sociale*). The latter term assumed, like ideology, an Enlightenment optimism in grasping and controlling, by reason, the laws governing social life for the greater happiness and improvement of human life.

Like many of the French Enlightenment *philosophes* and Encyclopaedist thinkers, Tracy believed that all areas of human experience, many of which had previously been examined in terms of theology, should now be examined by reason. The science of ideas was to investigate the natural origin of ideas. It proposed a precise knowledge of the causes of the generation of ideas from sensations. Innate ideas were rejected: ideas were all modified sensations. Tracy described ideology as a branch of zoology, indicating that the human intellect had a physiological basis. In the same rigorous empiricist vein as Bacon, Descartes, Newton, Lavoisier and Condillac, he proposed that the contents of such analyses should be carefully tabulated and detailed in terms of scientific procedures. Newton was particularly esteemed by Tracy.[1] Tracy's examination of the way in which ideas were generated, conceived and related to each other (in sum the 'science of ideas') might now be described as empirical psychology. In fact, one Tracy scholar remarks that he was a 'methodological precursor of behaviouralist approaches to the human sciences' (Head 1985, 4; see also Kennedy 1979; Head 1980). For Tracy, ideology was *la théorie des théories*. It was the queen of the sciences since it necessarily preceded all other sciences, which of necessity utilized 'ideas'.

Tracy, and those who admired his work, believed that such a science of ideas could have an immense impact, on education particularly. If the origin of ideas was understood, then it could be used with great benefit in enlightened education. It could diagnose the roots of human ignorance. It was potentially the foundation for a rational progressive society. Tracy and others thus advocated vigorously the social, political and educative uses of ideology. Between 1799 and 1800, under the Directory, Tracy was appointed Councillor of Public Instruction and issued circulars to schools stressing the role of 'ideology' in the curriculum. There was also the attempt, as in Bentham, to establish a 'science of legislation'. In pursuing these objectives, Tracy and the other *idéologues* became associated with a secular republican liberalism, stressing representative government by an enlightened elite. In this sense, ideology became, in the public perception, not so much an 'empirical science' as the political doctrine of a group of propertied liberal intellectuals. Hence, subtly, a second sense of ideology became prevalent – ideology became associated with a political doctrine, although of a very specific form.

Another lasting sense of the term 'ideology' derived from the political associations of Tracy and his compatriots. One of the early and brief honorary members of the *idéologues* was Napoleon Bonaparte. He appears to have had a stormy and ultimately

deeply hostile relation to the *idéologues*, later, when in power and pursuing his own autocratic ambitions, accusing them of fomenting political unrest. Bonaparte referred to them as individuals who wished to reform the world simply in their heads, armchair metaphysicians with little or no political acumen. He denounced them before the Council of State in February 1801 as 'windbags', who none the less were trying to undermine political authority. Once Bonaparte had re-established his credibility with the Catholic Church in a Concordat of 1802, he also predictably denounced the *idéologues* as a 'College of Atheists'. Madame de Staël remarked at this time that Bonaparte seemed to suffer from 'ideophobia'. This pejorative use of ideology – indicating intellectual sterility, practical ineptitude and, more particularly, dangerous political sentiments – tended to stick. The conservative, restoration and royalist circles in France focused critically on the *idéologues* in the latter use, denouncing the republication of Tracy's *Elements* in 1829 as part of the attempt to overthrow 'the ancient confraternity of throne and altar'. One final sense of the term began to glimmer through here. If ideology was partially divorced from the 'science of ideas' of Tracy, Condillac and the sensationalist school, and became associated, more importantly, with a political doctrine (secular liberal republicanism initially), it was but a short step to identifying the royalist critics as espousing another political doctrine, which could equally be described as an 'ideology'. Ideology thus became, in a limited sphere in France, equivalent to 'a political doctrine'. The other senses of ideology co-existed with this latter view.

It remains perennially puzzling as to why Marx chose to use the term 'ideology'. In his early writings he alluded to Tracy in two senses. First, he noted, as a simple historical observation, the existence of a group of thinkers, namely, the *idéologues*. Tracy, as a key member of this group, is mentioned as a minor vulgar bourgeois liberal political economist. In consequence, there are passing references to the fourth volume of Tracy's *Elements*, the *Traité d'économie politique*. Second, Marx employed the concept in the title of his early work, *The German Ideology* (1845) – unpublished during his lifetime – as a more pejorative label referring to those (particularly the Young Hegelian group) who 'interpret' the world philosophically, but do not appear to be able to change it. Marx might also have found some parallels between the Young Hegelians and Tracy, given the emphasis in both on 'ideas'. Put loosely, Tracy's thinking contained some suggestions of 'idealist' philosophy.

Marx was obviously aware of something of the initial use of the term 'ideology', indicating a science of ideas. However, he paid scant attention to this. The only sense he utilized, at first, was Bonaparte's pejorative use. Crudely, he too considered the Young Hegelians as 'windbags' and armchair metaphysicians. In addition, he regarded both the *idéologues* and Hegelians as vulgar bourgeois liberals. This idea moves quite definitely away from the initial French royalist sense where the liberalism of the *idéologues* was regarded as a dangerous reforming radicalism.

Marx adds, though, in an unsystematic way, further dimensions to the meaning of the term, which take it into a different realm (see Seliger 1979; Parekh 1983). In Marx's work, ideology denotes not only practical ineffectiveness but also illusion and loss of reality. More importantly, it becomes associated with the division of labour in society, with collective groups called classes, and most significantly with

the domination and power of certain classes. Some aspects of this extension, specifically the illusory aspect, were implicit in Bonaparte's pejorative use of the term, but it was not made fully explicit until Marx. Paradoxically, something of the *idéologues*' use remains in Marx, namely, the belief that societies can be rationally and scientifically interpreted and that humanity is progressing towards some form of rational social, economic and political enlightenment. To grasp Marx's use it is necessary to unpack briefly the materialist theory in which it is couched.

Although it is an ambiguous truism, Marx is essentially a materialist thinker of a particular type. What is of primary importance to humans is their need to subsist. To do so they need to labour and produce. Thought is involved in this process, but it is practice-orientated and therefore of secondary import. The material human needs are primary: thought and consciousness in general enable them to be satisfied. When humans produce, they develop complex social and exchange relations with each other. Humans also produce more effectively in groups; tasks initially become separated to enable people to work more productively. Here we see the earliest forms of the division of labour.

Without outlining the whole theory, it is important to grasp that what is primary is our social and economic being. Marx has a materialist ontology. Our consciousness is by and large explained through that ontology. Thought can both reflect and misunderstand this process. Much of the problem of the earliest 'division of labour' is that mental labour, by priests and intellectuals, was distinguished from physical labour. Intellectuals and priests tended to serve their own interests by regarding their work as superior to physical labour. They also sought the protection and patronage of the major possessing classes, those who, at a particular stage in the development of society, dominate and control the means of production, distribution and exchange. Directly, or most often indirectly, in exchange for patronage, such mental labourers gave wide-ranging intellectual justifications of an existing order, placing their intellectual benediction (in the nineteenth century) upon capitalism and the bourgeois state. They also provided solace for those who suffered from the social and economic arrangements. Such mental labourers are in essence the ideologists of a political and economic order. Yet much of their production is illusion and a distortion of reality.

It is important to realize that the original philosophical source of this materialist ontology (and Marx's conception of ideology) was premised on a critique of religion. The German romantic and, particularly, Hegelian understanding is important to note here. The German tradition, from Kant, Fichte and Hegel, had placed considerable emphasis on the human capacity for self-constitution. In simple terms, the human mind is involved in the structuring of the world and circumstances. It is not merely receiving sensations passively, as Tracy would have argued. In Hegel especially, this self-moulding or self-constituting activity is viewed within an historical framework. Consciousness not only constitutes much of what we call reality, it does so in a slowly changing historical process. Consciousness changes and constitutes reality differently over historical time. The Young Hegelians, particularly Ludwig Feuerbach, accused Hegel of dwelling too much upon mind in general, on consciousness or on some notion of spirit in history. It is not 'general mind' or spirit which constitutes itself, but rather it is the individual sensuous human being with physical needs who constitutes reality.

As Feuerbach noted in a famous phrase, 'all theology is anthropology'. Humans create God, spirit or history in their own image. Marx adapted this argument to his own ends. It is labouring productive humans, in particular economic classes, at particular stages of history (determined by economic needs and modes of production), who constitute the world. However, this constitution can be a distorted image. Throughout history, intellectuals have produced a multitude of such distortions which obscure the basic domination and exploitation of one class by another. In one reading, given a particular stage of society, mode of production and configuration of classes, it might be the most accurate account that could be given, yet it is still a distortion. The centrality of economic activity to this process meant that Marx subtly combined Germanic philosophical concerns with both British political economy and French materialism.

Subsequently Marxism, almost before the end of the nineteenth century, came under certain pressures and diverse interpretations on the subject of ideology. A number of questions arose. In his early writings Marx appeared to be contrasting ideology (as an illusion) to reality as practice – a form of philosophical materialist ontology. Liberal capitalism was in an equivalent position to religion as a distortion of the human essence. Later this contrast became ideology (as distortion) as against science (as truth or knowledge). Alienation in Marx's early writings became, in the later writings, expropriation of surplus value and economic exploitation. However, it was not clear whether Marx was using science in the sense of 'natural science' or in the older German sense of *Wissenschaft* (a connected body of systematic knowledge). Some Marxists refer to the change that marked these two dimensions as the 'epistemological break' in Marx, differentiating the young philosophical from the mature scientific Marx. Even within these two dimensions it is not clear as to what comes under the rubric of ideology. In some writings, Marx suggested that 'consciousness in general', including every aspect of human endeavour, namely art and natural science, is ideology. In others, it appears as though he was thinking only of social, political and economic ideas which uphold and distort a political and economic structure. In addition, the early reference that Marx made in *The German Ideology* to the *camera obscura* image was not particularly helpful. Marx writes of ideology's view of human consciousness being like the *camera obscura*, where the world appears inverted. The image is deeply mechanistic, rigid, and presents a very misleading conception, which Marx himself did not really accept.

Marx also did not make clear the precise relation between ideas (often referred to as superstructure) and the economic base. At some points this appears as a case of a clear 'one-way' determinism, namely, the base determines the superstructure. Yet again, Marx never clarifies what he means by the word 'determine'. For example, it is not obvious whether 'determine' means that A causes B, affects B, or sets parameters to B. At other points, this relation changes into symbiotic or mutually affective relations between ideology and the economic base. Many qualifying letters from Engels are usually discussed at this point to justify this latter view.

The subsequent fate of the Marxist notion of ideology breaks down into a number of contradictory components. The Second International, dominated by the German SPD and under the tutelage of Engels, took up the crude distinction between Marxist

science and bourgeois ideology. Engels in particular coined the now notorious term 'false consciousness' for ideology, something that Marx did not do. The idea of true and false consciousness appears as too stark for Marx, at least in his more sensitive moments.

Lenin introduced another confusing dimension into ideology in works like *What Is to Be Done?* (1902). The pejorative connotations are suddenly stripped away. Lenin speaks confidently of socialism *being* an ideology, combating, in the general class struggle, bourgeois ideology. Lenin saw socialist ideology as a weapon of class struggle. This use comes close to that in France in the 1830s, and also to some contemporary usage, namely, in seeing all political doctrines *per se* as ideology. It certainly bears little resemblance to Engels' notion of 'false consciousness' or the laboured distinction of Marxist science against ideology.

The problem of ideology in Marxism is further complicated when we move into the twentieth century. With writers like Georg Lukács, dialectical materialism was accepted as an ideology, though it was seen, casuistically, as more scientific than bourgeois ideology. Also, for Lukács, ideology was more deeply embedded in social, economic and political life than Lenin had appreciated. In Antonio Gramsci we see the most sophisticated, if equivocal, treatment of ideology. For Gramsci, domination under capitalism is not achieved simply by coercion, but subtly through the hegemony of ideas. The ideology of the ruling class becomes vulgarized into the common sense of the average citizen. Power is not just crude legal or physical coercion but domination of language, morality, culture and common sense. The masses are quelled and co-opted by their internalization of ideational domination. The hegemonic ideas become, in fact, the actual experiences of the subordinate classes. Traditional intellectuals construct this complex hegemonic apparatus. Bourgeois hegemony moulds the personal convictions, norms and aspirations of the proletariat. Gramsci thus called for a struggle at the level of ideology. Organic intellectuals situated within the proletariat should combat this by constructing a counter-hegemony to traditional intellectuals upholding bourgeois hegemony.

In Gramsci we find refinements and qualifications to the Marxist science and ideology thesis (a science which Gramsci dismissed with the curt term 'economism'), dialectical materialism, simple-minded determinism, the false-consciousness thesis and, finally, the idea of socialist ideology. In Gramsci, ideology appears to be more generally applicable to political doctrine, although it is deeply embedded in all language and culture. Despite the subtlety of Gramsci's approach, it still asserted, behind complex and elusive argumentation, the 'truth' of Marxism as against other approaches. In this sense, the old distinctions might be said to be reappearing, but in a transformed apparel. Subsequently these apparels have mutated. Some writers, such as Terry Eagleton, Stuart Hall or an early Edward Said, were more straightforward if imaginative expositors of Gramsci's ideas. Gramsci's arguments have, though, often been blended in unexpected and sometimes perplexing ways with discourse analysis, as in the writings of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; see also Laclau 2006). In Althusser, ideology also developed a quasi-autonomous life of its own as a symbolic controller and imaginary representation, which functioned semi-autonomously from the material base, although in the

final analysis it was still a dimension of the mode of production and an organic aspect of class struggle. Knowledge about ideology was therefore still, for Althusser, knowledge about the 'condition of its necessity' (Althusser 1969, 230). One prevailing theme has remained, however, with all these later Marxist and post-Marxist theories, namely, the intricate connection between ideology, power and domination.

One of Lukács' students, who utilized the Marxian terminology from within, but completely transformed its intellectual status, was Karl Mannheim. Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia* (1929) can be used to take the discussion on to later phases of the concept of ideology. Mannheim's theory will not be discussed here, but one important question in Mannheim needs consideration. Paul Ricoeur calls it 'Mannheim's paradox'. Ricoeur formulates this paradox in the following question: 'What is the epistemological status of discourse about ideology if all discourse is ideological?' (Ricoeur 1986, 8). The question is asking Marx to justify his own thought in relation to his suppositions concerning ideology. The effect of following through the logic of the question is devastating on one level.

In the course of attempting to extend Marx's insights, Mannheim tried to formulate a comprehensive theory of ideology. There are six main components to it. The first element need not detain us, despite its intrinsic interest. Mannheim examined both ideologies and utopias. Ideologies, in the main, act to defend a particular established order, although they can in some circumstances be made subversive. Utopias (which, unlike Marx, Mannheim suggests are equally as important for social life as ideologies) tend to be forward-looking and a challenge to existing social reality, suggesting wide-scale change (see Geoghegan 2004; Kumar 2006).

Mannheim's notion of ideology distinguished between *particular* and *total* conceptions. The particular conception approached an 'individual', examining their psychology and personal interests, often in a polemical manner, in order to show the weakness of an opponent's position. The total idea approached ideology in terms of the assumptions of a complete 'world-view' of a collective culture and, possibly, an historical epoch. In other words, it dealt with a total structure of thought. In Mannheim's view, Marx had, comparative to much previous social theory, fused these two elements and shown that the expressions of individuals needed unmasking in order to unpack the total ideology of a culture. It was precisely at this point that Mannheim asked Marx to justify his own ideas in Marxist terms, something that Marx would have found difficult to do. As Mannheim remarked:

> it is hardly possible to avoid this general formulation of the total conception of ideology, according to which the thought of all parties in all epochs is of an ideological character. There is scarcely a single intellectual position, and Marxism furnishes no exception to this rule, which has not changed through history. … It should not be too difficult for a Marxist to recognize their social basis. (Mannheim 1960, 69)

This question led Mannheim on to the third element of his theory. If Marxism imploded in this inquiry, then we still should not abandon its insights into ideology. Rather, we should become self-conscious concerning our own ideological beliefs, life-expressions and their historical situation, so preserving Marx's insights within a

disciplined academic frame. Mannheim called this new academic frame the 'sociology of knowledge' – examining knowledge and every 'knower' in a particular social and historical context. As he remarked on the Marxist notion of ideology: 'What was once the intellectual armament of a party is transformed into a method of research in social and intellectual history' (Mannheim 1960, 69).

Mannheim claimed, fourthly, that his theory was not relativistic. Relativism was drawn distinct from what he called relationism. Some commentators suggest that this distinction does not really work (Ricoeur 1986, 167; Williams 1988, 26–8). Mannheim suggested that whereas relativism was linked with a static, ahistorical notion of truth, relationism 'takes account of the relational as distinct from the merely relative character of all historical knowledge' (Mannheim 1960, 70ff). In relationism, knowledge and epistemology were not separated from an historical or social context (as appears to be the suppressed premise of relativism). Fifth, Mannheim makes further elaborate additions to the above theory, distinguishing, under the rubric of a 'relational total conception of ideology', non-evaluative and evaluative approaches. For Mannheim, the latter 'evaluative' approach took a full self-conscious account of the situation of both the object studied and the observer, and was thus the most appropriate method for the sociology of knowledge. Finally, and probably most controversially, Mannheim suggested that this new discipline could only properly be studied by relatively classless individuals, who were both intelligent and capable of such self-analysis. He calls these, following the terminology of Alfred Weber, the *freischwebende Intelligenz* (the socially unattached intelligentsia) (Mannheim 1960, 137ff).

Mannheim has met with a very mixed, usually very critical, response: some totally dismissive of him; others at least appreciating his courage in facing the problematic issues of historical thought. His separation of relativism and relationism is not really adequately explained. In addition, the role of the intelligentsia is presented in only a very sketchy format. Finally, there are unexplained elements in his theory: was he suggesting that all thought, including science and mathematics, was socially and historically relative? This remains unclear. Also, by using the highly academic title 'sociology of knowledge', was he trying, despite the general thrust of the theory, to smuggle in a more objectivist 'social scientific' account, with all its subtle implications of a neutral observation language? There is a sense in which this latter criticism is partially valid and appears to turn the circle fully on Mannheim. We find him paying court to the very paradigm of truth which he has gone out his way to reject.

In another, rather oblique sense, Mannheim paves the way for the next phase of the concept which appears in the post-1945 era, often titled the 'end of ideology' (see McClellan 1986, 49). The gradual assimilation of active political ideology into the sanitized academic discipline of sociology not only means the loss of earthy, emotive ideological debate, but also the potential loss of utopias or forward-looking values. Political life becomes absorbed into a closely reasoned social science, conducted by expert intellectuals.

The 'end of ideology' school was a product and phase largely of the Cold War era, although the basic premises of the movement would still be upheld by many who regard themselves as social and political scientists. Some scholars, such as Francis

Fukuyama, were hasty in anticipating liberal capitalism's triumphant vindication in the turbulent late 1980s with the collapse of Eastern European communism and the turn to liberal market economies (Fukuyama 1989). The 'end of ideology' debate appeared first in the American social science establishment, although it was not without relation to certain developments in European thought. It has parallels not only with the 'death of political theory' movement but also with the more sinister McCarthyite anti-communist purges in the USA.

It is worth noting that this argument coincided with a number of different but resonant intellectual positions of the time. Within movements such as ordinary language philosophy and logical positivism during the 1950s, both political philosophy and ideology were seen as lifeless. Ideology was equivalent, in some perceptions, to morality or aesthetics, premising itself on emotion, with little or no rational substance. In a different format the political theorist Michael Oakeshott, in books such as *Rationalism in Politics* (1962), drew a distinction between a traditionalist and ideological stance in politics. A similar idea appears in the contemporaneous writings of Leo Strauss, Eric Voegelin and Hannah Arendt. The philosophical roots to this distinction need not concern us here (see Vincent 2004, 65–73). The basic point was that ideology represented a simplification, abstraction and what Oakeshott calls an 'abridgement' of social reality. Ideologists selected, and consequently distorted, a much more complex reality. Unsurprisingly this approach, which is portrayed as non-ideological, philosophical and more academic, and which also appreciates the subtle complexity of the totality of social reality, is a form of conservatism. Oakeshott's basic distinction appeared, with some qualifications, in the work of a number of writers in the 1980s (see Manning ed. 1980; Graham 1986; Williams 1988, especially ch. 3; Adams 1989).

Another important argument which resonated with the 'end of ideology' was the assertion that 'politics' was distinct from ideology. Ideology denoted a totalitarian mentality which prevented all political discussion other than on its own content. Ideology is distinct from a pluralist, free, tolerant and rational society, where 'politics' takes place. Writers as diverse as Ralf Dahrendorf, J. L. Talmon, Bernard Crick, Karl Popper and Raymond Aron, in their different ways, all spoke of 'totalizing ideology' and closed societies (fascism and communism), as distinct from tolerant civil politics and open societies. Ideology, in this reading, becomes an intolerant, unfree and limited perspective in comparison to forms of non-ideological, open and tolerant politics.

The initial impetus to the mainly American form of the 'end of ideology' derived from three main sources. First, there was clear belief in the 1950s among a generation that had lived through the 1930s and 1940s – with the wars, Gulags, show trials, Nazism, Jewish pogroms, Stalinism – that ideological politics was a set of dangerous delusions. These apparent delusions focused on Marxism-Leninism in the Cold War period. It was thus accepted that ideological politics was at the root of much of the mass of pain, misery and warfare of the mid-twentieth century. Some of the writers of the 1950s were in fact Jewish intellectuals who reflected with deep uneasiness on the fate of the Jews under ideological dogmas in the 1930s and 1940s. Active ideology appeals to the Don Quixote of politics, tilting at imaginary evil giants.

Second, in spite of the fact that ideologies serve a function in developing immature societies, it was held that in industrialized democratic societies they no longer served anything more than a decorative role. Consensus on basic aims was agreed. Most of the major parties in industrialized societies had achieved, in the welfare, mixed economy structure, the majority of their reformist aims. The Left had accepted the dangers of excessive state power and the Right had accepted the necessity of the welfare state and the rights of working people. Consensus and convergence of political aims were seen in many industrialized countries. As Seymour Martin Lipset remarked, 'This very triumph of the democratic social revolution of the West ends domestic politics for those intellectuals who must have ideologies or utopias to motivate them to political action' (Lipset 1969, 406; see also Bell 1965; Shils 1955 and 1968; Waxman 1968). Basic agreement on political values had been achieved. Politics was about more peripheral pragmatic adjustment, gross national products, prices, wages, the public-sector borrowing requirement, and the like. All else was froth. As Lipset commented, 'The democratic struggle will continue, but it will be a fight without ideologies, without red flags, without May Day parades' (Lipset 1969, 408).

In addition to this, the 1950s saw sustained productivity and growth in the GNPs of many developed industrial economies. In one sense, the 'end of ideology' episode was a partial reflection of the improvements and growth of the Western economies during this period (Duncan 1987, 649). Living standards rose and greater affluence was experienced by a larger number of citizens in America, Britain and Europe. Economic and social divisions in society were no longer seen as so pivotal. Economic prosperity, combined with the growth of the welfare state, was diminishing social, economic and political differences (see Butler and Stokes 1974).

Third, the 'end of ideology' coincided with the heroic age of sociology. American sociology, in particular, 'offered the world the prospect of freedom from ideology, for it offered a "science" of society, in place of superstition' (see Goldie in Ball et al. eds 1989, 268). In some ways this was a partial return to Tracy, although the terminology had changed. In Tracy, ideology was the science to unravel superstitions. In the social sciences of the 1950s, ideology *was* the superstition which needed unravelling. Despite the altered terminology, the impetus to both was remarkably similar, namely, contrasting an Enlightenment-based rational scientific endeavour with superstition and intellectual flummery. The development of empirical social science demanded a value-free rigour, scepticism and empirical verification, unsullied by the emotional appeals of ideological and normative political philosophy. A neo-positivism rigidly separating facts and values lurked behind these judgements.

In this context it was argued that ideology had literally ended in advanced industrialized democratic societies. Ideology was contrasted with empirically based social science. The latter was the path to political knowledge; the former connoted illusion. As Edward Shils commented: 'Science is not and never has been part of an ideological culture. Indeed the spirit in which science works is alien to ideology' (Shils 1968, 74).

There were a number of problems with the 'end of ideology' perspective. In many ways it was a temporary phase in industrialized societies reacting against the extremes of the war years. Populations identified themselves with material affluence, consumption and economic growth after the austerity of the preceding period.

Ideology was linked in complex ways with the memories of austerity. However, on a more general theoretical level, as Alasdair MacIntyre commented, the 'end of ideology' theorists 'failed to entertain one crucial alternative possibility: namely, that the end-of-ideology, far from marking the end-of-ideology, was itself a key expression of the ideology of the time and place where it arose' (MacIntyre 1971, 5). The views propounded by the 'end of ideology' school contain certain evaluative assumptions about human nature, how rationality ought to function, the value of consensus, and details on the characteristics of a tolerant, pragmatic civil society which ought be cultivated. To try to claim that these views are premised simply on a social scientific perspective and that all else is ideology is intellectual chicanery. The 'end of ideology' was an ideological position committed to a form of pragmatic liberalism. There was a clear failure, which permeated the 'end of ideology' perspective, to analyse liberalism as ideology.

Despite the resurgence of interest in the thesis in the late 1980s, the 'end of ideology' movement is now regarded with more scepticism, as a phase in the development of the concept of ideology. Yet the assumptions behind the 'end of ideology' movement still, almost unconsciously, pervade discussion and writing in the social science establishment.

The present status of ideology is complex and reflects all the phases that have so far been discussed. The most pervasive theme is still the fierce contrast between 'truth and ideology'. Many who discuss ideology would claim for themselves a non-ideological neutrality. The usual claimants for such neutrality or impartiality are commonly the natural and social sciences, philosophy and political theory. The complexity is intensified when we realize that many liberals, conservatives, feminists, Marxists, and so on, would also claim to be on the side of truth as against ideology.

It has been particularly characteristic of the Anglo-American approach to try to maintain a distinction between science and ideology. This is the deeply entrenched attitude which came to full self-consciousness in the social sciences in the 'end of ideology' movement. As one commentator complains: if the notion of ideology is linked with 'belief systems' in general, then 'such a definition simply fails to discriminate between different kinds of ideas. … It fails to discriminate between science and ideology' (Hamilton 1987, 22). The basic position is that for social or natural science to work, there must be some ultimate, and persistent, and objective foundation to our knowledge. This foundation is the yardstick for truth. It can be confirmed and acts as a final court of appeal. It is unaffected by our values and beliefs. The truth of our beliefs – that which enables us to characterize them as knowledge – is that they correspond as nearly as possible to this objective foundation. Rationality is also usually seen as possessing agreed and consensual universal standards, enabling us to establish correspondences. In social science, particularly, this scientific foundationalism must be kept distinct from the more subjective, emotive values and beliefs characterizing ideology. There is no external foundation to which ideologies correspond. Ideologies remain tied to 'theories'; their logic is therefore circular and cannot be tested against the world. Science, on the other hand, has a specific direction since the theory can be falsified by external foundational facts.

The problem with this view of science is that it is outdated and contested. The complex debates within the philosophy of science cannot be dealt with here. However, the work of philosophers of science like Thomas Kuhn, Paul Feyerabend, Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, and Mary Hesse, among many others, moved the whole discussion of the nature of science beyond the above views.[2] Science, for Kuhn, does not progress by accretion and empirical confirmation; rather, 'dominant paradigms' are seen to take over, via gestalt switches or quasi-religious conversions. Paradigms determine the nature of the puzzles to be solved and what is, or is not, regarded as good or normal science. Once a paradigm is established, the scientific community works within it for a time. One paradigm does not 'fit' better than another; instead, a different paradigm creates different criteria and a different sense of reality. The history of science is not, therefore, a slow, progressive growth but rather a series of periodic paradigm-changes which alter the whole nature of science and its perception of reality. Feyerabend, on the other hand, describes claims to the impartiality and independence of natural science as a 'fairy tale' promulgated by the scientific community, often for the social and economic benefits which accrue to such claims. He contends that every standard of scientific method, whether it be rationality, verification or falsification, has been violated in the course of major discoveries in science. There are therefore no necessary or sufficient conditions to authenticate scientific behaviour and theory choice. These arguments throw a critical light on the supposedly hard-and-fast distinctions still sometimes drawn between science and ideology, particularly in the social sciences.

The situation becomes more fraught in the relation between ideology and political philosophy. The question usually turns on the nature of philosophy itself. There is no space to deal with all of these philosophies, thus some selective examples will have to suffice.

It is hazardous to generalize on broad and intricate philosophical movements; however, early twentieth-century analytic philosophy traditionally associated the path of political philosophy with a second-order function of solving identifiable conceptual problems, usually arising out of the pre-eminent areas of first-order knowledge in the natural sciences (judged in more traditional sense). Philosophy works via ethically neutral, rigorous conceptual analysis. It analyses the nature of necessarily true propositions about the world. The key assumption here is that it is only in the pure natural sciences that we find such knowledge. Ideology, like morality, aesthetics or religion, is another non-scientific, value-orientated, often emotive mode of theorizing. It exhorts actions and persuades rather than critically analyses (see Adams 1989, xxiii, 3; also Corbett 1965; Plamenatz 1971).

This latter point is fortuitously connected to a pervasive view of political philosophy during the twentieth century, namely, to see it as a higher, more critical calling. The most characteristic conception of ideology (in this perspective) is that of a sullied product which lacks the merits of political philosophy. In this interpretation political philosophy is generally marked out by a reflective openness, critical distance, a focus on following the argument regardless, and an awareness of human experience which transcends political struggles. Ideology would be viewed as the opposite. It closes reflection, throws itself into partisan struggle; its ideas are designed

instrumentally to manipulate actors, close argument and ultimately to achieve political power. It has no concern with truth. In this case ideology has to be separated from the real. It was this kind of distinction which formed the intellectual backdrop to the bulk of Anglo-American political philosophy from the mid to the late twentieth century.[3] This general conception of political philosophy remained a subtext in the arguments of late twentieth-century normative philosophical liberalism, that is, the work of, for example, John Rawls, Robert Nozick, Ronald Dworkin and Brian Barry.

This latter conception was subject to a number of counter-pressures. First, linguistic philosophy, stemming particularly from the later writings of Wittgenstein, altered our perspective on the nature of language, truth and knowledge, reminding us of their social dimension. To formulate a concept implies having a speaker who knows how to use a language in a particular context. Languages are not discovered, but are socially constituted. The words embodied in languages do not hook on to things in the world but are subject to a prodigious diversity of uses within 'language games' or 'forms of life'. Learning a concept is not grasping its essence or mastering a mental image, but understanding its various uses in a publicly available language. Concepts do not, therefore, correspond to precise things in the world. In fact, the character of most of the concepts we encounter is their essential contestability (see Vincent 2004, 95ff; also Newey 2001). Meaning becomes a matter of the rules governing use within particular language games. One effect of this is to bring ideologies back into circulation under the rubric of language games. Ideology is not necessarily a distorted image of the world, but is rather part of the world of language and action. This conception has hampered a clear distinction between ideology and philosophy.

Second, intellectual movements such as postmodernism and hermeneutics have also raised doubts concerning any clear distinction of philosophy from ideology. Thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Richard Rorty and Paul Ricoeur have all, in their different ways, cast doubts on the comfortable distinctions concerning ideology which have often pervaded the social sciences and mainstream analytical philosophy. Language is not viewed as a transparent conveyor of meaning. Ricoeur, for example, considered 'The interpretative code of an ideology as something in which men live and think, rather than a conception *that* they pose. In other words, an ideology is operative and not thematic. It operates behind our backs, rather than appearing as a theme before our eyes' (Ricoeur 1981, 227). Further, Foucault in developing his own unique poststructural critique, even suggested abandoning the concepts of ideology and political philosophy altogether. They would be replaced by painstaking genealogical explanation, which examines how certain discourses and regimes of truth (*epistemes*) come about. For Foucault, all knowledge relates to power. As he stated:

> what one seeks then is not to know what is true or false, justified or not justified, real or illusory. … One seeks to know what are the ties, what are the connections that can be marked between mechanisms of coercion and elements of knowledge, what games of dismissal and support are developed from the one to the others, what it is that enables some element of knowledge to take up effects of power assigned in a similar system to a true or probable or uncertain or false element, and what it is that

enables some process of coercion to acquire the form and the justification proper to a rational, calculated, technically efficient, and so forth, element. (Foucault in Schmidt ed. 1996, 393)

Knowledge always conforms to restraints and rules; power also needs something approximating to knowledge.[4] Thus neither political philosophy nor ideology represents any external objective reality. In a similar vein, Richard Rorty suggested the utter uselessness of 'the distinction between "ideology" and a form of thought … which escapes being "ideology" ' (Rorty 1989, 59). In this context, there are no clear criteria to differentiate them. If political philosophy still claims a special insight into reality, as distinct from ideology, then it is simply mistaken and abstracts itself further from the realities of politics.

The most sophisticated treatment of this issue can be found in the work of Michael Freeden. For Freeden, ideologies are not the poor relation of political philosophy. On the contrary, they provide equally valid insights. Ideologies are also far more subtle and pervasive than commonly understood. Freeden calls his approach to ideology 'conceptual morphology'. This is semantically based, focusing on the question, 'what are the implications and insights of a particular set of political views, in terms of the conceptual connections it forms?'[5] For Freeden, meaning is always dependent on frameworks of interpretation. An ideology is 'thought-behaviour', embodied in ordinary spoken and written language.[6] Ideologies, in effect, are conceptual maps for navigating the political realm; they contain core, adjacent and peripheral conceptual elements.[7] Core concepts are the non-negotiable aspects of all ideologies: for example, liberty for liberalism or equality for socialism. Other concepts are relegated to the periphery of an ideological scheme and will sometimes drop out of use or migrate to other ideologies. Adjacent concepts flesh out the core concepts and confine their ability for over-interpretation. All concepts are essentially contested, although the majority do embody internal logical constraints on how far meanings can be stretched. However, each ideology (to use Freeden's term) will try to 'decontest' the core and adjacent components. Meanings of core concepts will thus be *fixed* within each ideology.

Concepts are arranged in such as way as to form a unique ideology; this ideology is an historically contingent conceptual pattern, a pattern governed by the proximity and permeability of concepts. These patterns can be rearranged within alternative ideological schemes – almost like modular furniture. Concepts such as liberty or equality have manifold meanings; different aspects of these meanings will be fixed, then utilized and arranged within different ideological frameworks. We should not be surprised therefore to find what looks on the surface like the same concept functioning as either a core or adjacent term within dissimilar ideological structures. Liberty, for example, is not *owned* by liberalism; it can reappear legitimately within other ideologies. This gives rise, in turn, to protracted competition over concepts between ideologies. This last point underpins another aspect of ideologies for Freeden, namely, they will often be (due to the manifold meanings of concepts) subject to vagueness and ambiguity. This does not imply deception. On the contrary, ideologies are often masterful at integrating and accommodating ambiguity or

vagueness. In fact, in ideological discussion, vagueness can be functional, allowing latitude for interpretation, which is often a crucial prerequisite for political activity.

For Freeden, ideology 'includes, but is not identical with, the reflections and conjectures of political philosophers' (Freeden 1996, 2). Political theory is seen as a capacious category containing political philosophy and ideology as sub-categories. Freeden thus separates out the history of political theory, political philosophy and ideology. The easiest way of looking at the relation of these terms is to articulate, briefly, Freeden's view of the advantages of morphological study of ideology. It combines a *diachronic* approach (which traces in effect the historical development of language and records the various changes) with a *synchronic* approach (which examines language as it is actually is at a point in time with no reference to historical argument). Morphology balances both dimensions (Freeden 1996, 5). This provides a handle for understanding both political philosophy and the history of political theory. Political philosophy has often tended to be overly focused on the synchronic dimension, whereas the history of political theory has been predominantly diachronic. Ideology, among other things, balances both dimensions. Ideologies also contain a mixture of emotion and reason and occasionally flawed logic and vagueness. They are focused on the need to attract the attention of larger groups, not to persuade a small group of intellectual colleagues. They stand in the midst of tense, often contingent political debates, both within and between groups. In addition, they are, strictly, neither true nor false. This conclusion obviously leads to a degree of relativism, which Freeden considers inevitable.[8]

One problem, though, for Freeden is that Anglo-American liberal political philosophy (Rawls, Dworkin, and so forth), since the mid-twentieth century, has often tried to open up a chasm between itself and political ideology (see Freeden 1998). Freeden takes the primary functions of political philosophy as justifying, clarifying the consistency, truth and logicality of political theories and evaluating ethical prescriptions. However, this role should not be performed to the exclusion of ideological study. Ideology is not imperfect political philosophy. Further, an over-emphasis on synchronic abstracted reason and logic can lead to a virtually semi-private professional academic language, which bears little or no relation to politics. Overall, Freeden puts in a plea for theoretical ecumenism, mutual fertilization and tolerance between these realms. It is important, in all this welter of argument, to realize that studying ideologies, in this context, is not the same as producing them. We should not confuse these practices.

There is one issue in Freeden's position which remains problematic, but it brings us pretty much up to date with certain key current debates. Is there any way of ascertaining what is and what is not ideological? Further, is there any sense in which we can disaggregate a notion of a political reality independently of ideology? Earlier theories had their own way of resolving this issue, drawing a distinction between, for example, social science and ideology or political philosophy and ideology. Ideology, in these latter senses, is seen to blur or distort the real. Freeden's argument, like those in the postmodern and hermeneutic positions, does not have this facility. He stresses, in fact, that the notion of the political *cannot* be formed independently of the ideological. A related question is: can certain ideologies

mislead us more than others? This question implies there is some notion of political reality (independent of ideology) which allows us make this judgement. Additionally, how could we criticize ideologies which appear, to all intents and purposes, as unpalatable or just appalling? Some critics would suggest we need some standard – external to ideology – to make any secure judgement. Therefore, is there some way of distinguishing between a sense of a political reality as against political ideology? Certain contemporary writers have their own specific (if quite different) answers to this question.

This chapter will not resolve this latter question; however, one example of such a critique has been Jürgen Habermas's arguments concerning the necessity for a *critique of ideology*. Basically ideology fails to do justice to the real communicative structure of social relations. Ideology, for Habermas, is implicitly in conflict with the comprehensive 'power of reflection': that is to say, genuine communicative reasoning in Habermas is distinct from ideology (Habermas 1996, 170). Without trying to unpack the detail of Habermas's theories, there are a series of arguments which suggest that there is a form of underlying consensual reality present in the way that we communicate with one another, which is embedded in ordinary human discourse and knowledge claims. This reality is essentially concerned with what we *presuppose* when we speak and try to genuinely rationally understand each other. Habermas argues that there are common normative consensual underpinning rules which function in any discourse and these in turn embody ethical and political implications. The gist of this perspective, for Habermas, is that any speech act raises 'universal validity claims … that can be vindicated'. The validity claims are notions such as comprehensibility or intelligibility, truthfulness, sincerity and rightness. Insofar as anyone wants to 'participate in a process of reaching an understanding, [the agent] cannot avoid raising … validity claims' (Habermas 1979, 2). The normative content is thus presupposed in all genuine communication. In point it is only by engaging in such intersubjective communicative practices that we can arrive at any conclusions about what constitutes a morally worthwhile or autonomous life. Distortion-free dialogue and reasonable communication are the heart of Habermas's enterprise.[9]

To turn immediately to ideology, it is clear for Habermas that not all speech acts are aimed at genuine communication; many are purely strategic, instrumental or manipulative, aiming to further an agent's or a group's interest. A truly *communicative* use of language is thus wholly different to a *manipulative* use of language. Unfettered rational reflection (the power of reflection) will usually in fact reveal the power and manipulation implicit within certain language use – this is the essence of what Habermas sees as ideology critique.[10] If we wish to grasp ideology, we have to see it in the field of power, manipulation and distorted communication. Ideology is pseudo communication. In essence, ideology is about the subjugation of the communicative structure of reality. Thus communicative reason is equivalent to the 'real' and is distinct from ideology, understood as something which is manipulative and instrumental.

Unexpectedly, there is also a subtle distinction between the Real and the ideological present in the writings of Slavoj Žižek, although it is a *very* different

'Real' to Habermas's.[11] Žižek's account is not being compared on the same level as Habermas, insofar as Žižek's ideas are mediated largely through his reading of Lacan's psychoanalytical work. The political is thus viewed via the psychoanalytical. The Real in this case is something which signifies an internal dimension of unstructured and unconscious desire. It is outside the realm of language and 'reality' – a reality which is characteristic of the linguistic phantasy of ideology. This 'Real' (as distinct from reality) is felt as a form of internal lack and anxiety in the individual. None the less, it can still for Žižek stand as a negative antagonism to the imaginary and symbolic character of ideology. The Real is not a knowable thing in itself – as an anxious lack – it is, if anything, something that we try to escape from in the complex imaginary fantasies of ideology. Ideology thus always represents phantasy, a complex set of symbolic meanings that we invest in the world – a world which in the end always surpasses the reach of our phantasies.[12] The reality of ideology, however, shapes this world. The phantasies constituting ideology also make up our ordinary desires. Desires are never, though, simply *our* desires; desire is largely constituted (or interpellated) via the phantasies of inter-subjective ideologies. Ideological phantasies are a kind of impossible and ultimately flawed gaze, which constitute our political world, sometimes in dangerous and very alarming ways.

The Real therefore signifies for Žižek an antagonism which bears witness to the fragility of our ideological phantasies. It disrupts the fixity of the meaning of ideologies. It embodies a *negative* gesture of withdrawal from ideologies which constitute the external realities of our political world. Given this gesture of withdrawal, the Real, for Žižek, represents a space which is distinct from ideology (see Žižek 1995).[13] Not that this 'space' represents anything, since the Real is unknowable. Further, we have nothing to replace the phantasies of ideology; we see reality though the language of ideology. However, the Real represents an inevitable and endless struggle with the realities of ideology.[14]

The present position of ideology still remains profoundly contested and open to broad interpretation. Most, though not all, of the meanings that we have considered are still canvassed. It is no longer used to indicate an empirical 'science of ideas'; not that the aspiration to have such a science is not still present, under different names, in some areas of psychology. In addition, the term would not be used in the French royalist sense, to denote atheistic republicanism. Ideology is, however, still used pejoratively or negatively, indicating a limited perspective, a subjective value bias, a linguistic distortion, a symbolic phantasy or, most commonly, an illusory view of the world. Furthermore, ideology can simply denote an individual's political perspective, a conceptual map which helps groups to navigate the political world, a specific set of hegemonic views which tries to legitimate power (as in the belief structures of a particularly social class), or indeed all political views. Ideology can also signify the generic ideas of a political party, a total world-view, or indeed human consciousness in general, encompassing all beliefs, including art and science. The latter might imply the politicization of all ideas or simply that interpretative concerns permeate all our claims to knowledge. The permutations here are extremely diverse (see Thompson 1984).

Cautionary Points

In my own understanding, ideologies are bodies of concepts, values and symbols which incorporate conceptions of human nature and thus indicate what is possible or impossible for humans to achieve; critical reflections on the nature of human interaction; the values which humans ought either to reject or aspire to; and the correct technical arrangements for social, economic and political life which will meet the needs and interests of human beings. Ideologies thus claim both to *describe* and to *prescribe* for humans. The two tendencies are intermingled in ideology. Ideologies are also intended not only to legitimate certain activities or arrangements, but also to integrate individuals, enabling them to cohere around certain core conceptual themes, and to enable groups to navigate the political realm. Each ideology undoubtedly has certain core formal themes; however, all such themes are mutable and often interpreted in very different ways by schools within each ideology. I therefore call these *formal themes*, insofar as they gain substance and force only in the context of the arguments of the differing schools within ideologies.[15]

There are a number of critical points on ideology which need to be unpacked. Primarily, one of the criticisms that is made of ideologies is that they are far more action-orientated, and far less self-critical and rigorous, than philosophy. Occasionally some ideology looks like crude phrasemongering or propaganda. This is only a half-truth. Many philosophical and scientific ideas have often been integrated within ideologies. Ideology can be found in phrasemongering as well as, occasionally, within the more abstract philosophical arguments. Some ideological writing can indeed be immensely sophisticated theorizing, yet the same basic ideas can be expressed in the crudest form of propaganda. Also, whereas some ideology remains at a sophisticated theoretical level, some practical philosophy can claim a strong action-orientated role. The theme of Plato's philosopher-kings has been echoed throughout the history of philosophy to the present. It is therefore difficult to make any hard-and-fast distinctions here. Ideological ideas can be vapid or profoundly urbane.

A related point is that we should not, in consequence of the above, always expect to approach ideologies as coherent clear constructs. Ideological themes can be found on a continuum from the most banal, vague, jumbled rhetoric up to the most astute theorizing. This is probably one of the more significant issues arising, for example, from Michael Freeden's work on ideology: namely, that ideology functions very broadly within politics; however, a great deal of its basic work functions at the level of politicians, policy-makers, political activists and indeed everyday speech. It is at the more philosophical end of the ideological continuum that we could expect to find a strong stress on theoretical coherence. However, we should not always expect such coherence in ideology; we should therefore not rule out the functional role of vagueness and ambiguity in political success. We search for coherence but we should not always expect to find it. Further, coherence and sophisticated argument are not necessarily always the safest guides to ideological accomplishment.

One issue for the student of ideology is that a great deal of the 'durable' ideological work from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been written down in pamphlets

and treatises; that is to say, we tend to familiarize ourselves with the genealogy of ideologies at the more theoretical end of the ideological continuum. This writing is not necessary done by academics, but certainly by intellectuals of one stripe or another. It is this kind of intellectual production which then gets whittled down, in particular historical circumstances, into policy, party programmes, political activism, sloganeering and indeed ordinary speech. The problem for the student of ideology is to find a balance here. On the one hand, in discussing ideologies, one has to articulate ideas at a certain level of moderate coherence, which can none the less still be grasped by ideological activists as representing their core beliefs – although it may still be thought of, in some renditions, as lacking theoretical sophistication. On the other hand, if one believes that ideologies are primarily real-world products, symbolic structures which mobilize collectivities and are rooted in policy and ordinary political discourse, then one faces a different critical unease. That is to say, in trying to maintain a moderately lucid ideological construct and concentrating on certain coherent texts, one thereby risks not grasping the 'real-world' empirical character of ideological speech. There is, though, a different potential danger in stressing this 'real-world' empirical dimension of ideology, and that is of entering into a particularized, micro-world of everyday discourse analysis, where one can lose sight of what makes the ideology function intellectually.[16] This present book tries to forge a middle path; however, it none the less continuously strays into both the more philosophical discourse, on the one hand, and the more ordinary real-world discourse, on the other hand. Overall, though, it tries to hold some balance.[17]

Another related concern is the level at which ideology works. This issue throws more light on the problem of coherence within an ideology. Martin Seliger drew a distinction between the *fundamental* and *operative* levels of ideology. Although arguing that 'politics is inseparable from ideology', Seliger maintains that the distinctive mark of ideology, as compared with philosophy, *is* the action-orientation of ideology. This latter point has been disputed. However, for Seliger, the fundamental principles, beliefs and prescriptions of ideology are faced continually by the demand for action or operation in the world, which inevitably involves compromises.[18] The result of this is a constant tension between the fundamental and operative/technical spheres of ideology. Fundamental principles are often changed or revised, not only through conflict with other fundamental principles, but also via technical and operative demands. On the other hand, the operative and technical questions are also examined, judged and modified before the stringent court of moral and ideological purity.

Some ideologies, such as liberalism, have been more concerned with and more adept and successful at operationalizing their concerns. Others, such as anarchism, have remained for various reasons more caught up in the area of fundamental principles. Comparatively, anarchism has had far less chance to face technical operational questions than has liberalism or socialism. This can give rise to the mistaken judgement that liberalism is basically a more truthful, pragmatic and non-ideological doctrine, whereas anarchism lives in a world of ideological fantasies, which cannot be put into practice. However, it is a question not of truth here, but of the level at which an ideology has tended to function, coupled with the interpretative judgement

that liberalism enables one to cope better in the world. Yet even if an ideology has functioned more operationally, this still does not diminish the tension that exists with the fundamental theoretical level within that ideology. The history of liberal policy-making is continually punctuated with the question: is this really liberalism?

The above fundamental/operational distinction is also useful in discussing ideological change. Change can occur in both the operative and the fundamental dimensions, but most often in the latter, partly because it is most subject to strain from the contingencies of the world. Contingencies can both reinforce and undermine fundamental principles. The only point to add to this is that the perception of contingencies still relates to ideological views. There are no absolute unmediated contingencies to which ideologies must correspond. As the affiliates of conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*) have argued, one must understand political change conceptually. We live in a world of words; words determine who and what we are. We are thus tied by words and all we do 'is deeply delimited by the conceptual, argumentative and rhetorical resource of our language. The limits of my moral and political language, we might say, mark the limits of my moral and political world' (Ball 1988, 4). All perceptions of the necessity of contingencies are thus conceptually mediated.

A further point to note is the interweaving and overlapping of ideological continuums at both fundamental and operational levels. Often, the same basic core or adjacent idea, argument or thinker will be used by apparently quite alien ideologies for different reasons and outcomes. This overlap and interweaving increases the problem of clear identification and often gives rise to compounds such as liberal socialism, liberal conservatism, Marxist feminism or communist anarchism. Ideologies are complex structures of discourse which carry immense amounts of inherited, interwoven baggage. Every ideology is therefore a conjunction of intellectual hybrids.

Such overlapping of themes must lead to scepticism concerning ideologists who claim to be the inheritors of *a* true doctrine. Such a mentality appears, though, in all the ideological positions.[19] One consequence of this is the desire to maintain the objective purity of an ideology. A related problem can be called the 'need for ancestors'. Most ideologies claim ancient lineage, indicating in some cases that they correspond to perennial ahistorical human needs, implicit in human nature. This gives their theories more *gravitas*. Thus it is contended that the liberal market economy best matches human interests; that we are all naturally anarchists or conservatives; that palaeolithic or tribal peoples were genuine ecologists; that national identity is intrinsic to the human condition; or that the 'woman question' has existed since the dawn of time. In my own reading, ideologies are *all* comparatively recent forms of thought, stemming from the immediate post-French revolutionary era. In addition, there are no pure doctrines. All ideologies are internally complex, intermixed and overlapping. Claims to purity, as claims to greater truth, are usually bogus.

We examine ideology as fellow sufferers, not as neutral observers, although we do none the less need to acknowledge a distinction between ideology and the study of ideology. However, it is a central contention of this book that there is no given world to which ideologies do, or do not, approximate. There is also no way of excluding our own presuppositions. Embodying our own assumptions, we encounter ideologies as

conceptions of reality. We cannot step completely outside these conceptions and compare or validate them with some definite external thing, although we can critically compare worlds. Ideologies do not stand side by side with something objective or real; rather they subtly constitute this reality. However, even though we are sufferers, we are not complete sufferers. We can, in the study of ideology (rather than the promulgation of an ideology), distance ourselves in the very fact of theorizing self-consciously.[20] Studying ideologies is a process of encountering a number of such worlds, some of which are quite febrile and limiting, others of which are expansive. The study of ideology itself is an attempt to fuse self-consciously and dialogically our scheme of understanding with that of another, which can be an enriching experience. In this context it becomes more problematic to speak of the truth or falsity of ideologies. Rather, some ideologies enrich us, some diminish us. Some appear to enable us to cope and function in the world; others less so.

The Text

There are multiple dangers when walking into the field of ideology, not least that there are many who claim proprietorial rights to the ground and become enraged that others should ramble there. It is also a field filled with snares and hidden hollows. Yet I make no apologies for rambling. The rights of way remain unsettled. The book is designed primarily for courses on ideologies. In such a controversial area, one cannot help but interpret, and there is a series of arguments running through this work which mark out certain idiosyncratic views.

Each chapter is written in a structured manner. In this sense it is hoped that it can be read in discrete sections if necessary. There is an initial introduction and examination of the particular terminology (i.e. fascism, liberalism, etc.), followed by a brief review of the accounts of the origin and history of the ideology at issue. The next section deals with the nature of the ideology. Under this rubric one main issue is discussed which is crucial for grasping the sections that follow. The ideology at issue is broken down loosely into various internal 'schools of thought' which are unpacked and clarified. The etymological character of the particular ideology, the history and origins, and the analysis of the nature of the schools vary in complexity between ideologies, thus the length of this section will fluctuate from chapter to chapter. There then follows a series of sections which encapsulate the more general and formal themes characterizing the ideology. These themes are then fleshed out by the varying contributions of 'schools of thought' and individual thinkers. Some of the more complex issues of differing intellectual interpretation and overlap are dealt with in these sections. Each chapter concludes with some brief critical remarks.

An ideologies course can be both a deeply rewarding and a highly frustrating experience.[21] On the one hand, the student tries to articulate the coherence of a body of thought, assuming that it has some kind of identity. On the other hand, dealing with this body of thought requires examining both differing schools of thought 'within' each ideology *and* contributions by individual thinkers and the manner in which that is reflected in ordinary discourse. This task places multiple problems of

interpretation before the student. Further, does one approach the ideology via thinkers or thinkers via the ideology? Both paths carry dangers. The danger of the former method is of becoming lost in a morass of interpretation and contextualist questions. The danger of the latter is of circumscribing the richness of the intellectual content. Finally, what are the ideological views of the interpreter? Do they impinge on the ideological study? An ideologies course often moves along with these internal tensions, which can both exacerbate as well as enliven and enrich debate.