

Ideology

RELIGION and IDEOLOGY

Siddhatta Gotama “The Buddha” (? – 483 B.C.E.), *The Dhammapada*

“Preceded by perception are mental states
For them is perception supreme,
From perception have they sprung.
If, with **perception polluted**, one speaks or acts,
Thence suffering follows.”

K’ung Fu-Tzu “Confucius” (551 – 479 B.C.E.), *The Analects*

“In dealing with people, I once listened to their words, and then trusted them to do what they said. Now I **listen to their words**, and then **watch what they do** carefully”

Euripides (480s – 407-6 B.C.E.), *Hecuba*

“O Zeus, what can I say / That you look on man / an care? / Or do we, holding that the gods exist, / **deceive ourselves with unsubstantial dreams / and lies**, while random careless chance and change / alone control the world”

Fragment of *Sisyphus* (variously attributed to Euripides or Critias, 5th century B.C.E.)

“When the laws prevented men from open deeds of violence, but they continued to commit them in secret, I believe that a man of **shrewd and subtle mind invented for men the fear of the gods**, so that there might be something to frighten the wicked even if they acted, spoke or thought in secret...So, I think, first of all did someone **persuade men to believe** that there exists a race of gods”

Plato (427 – 347 B.C.E.), *The Republic*, Book II

“To be false in the most vital part of one’s being and about the most vital things is what no one willingly chooses, but one fears more than anything to have falsehood there...I only mean that in the soul, to be false and to be deceived and ignorant about **what is real**, and to have and keep the falsehood in the soul – no one would ever accept such a thing”

Plato (427 – 347 B.C.E.), *Phaedo*

“Precise knowledge on that subject is impossible or extremely difficult in our present life...One should achieve one of these things: learn **the truth about these things** or find it for oneself, or, if that is impossible, adopt **the best and most irrefutable of men’s theories, and, borne upon this, sail through the dangers of life as upon a raft**, unless someone should make that journey safer and less risky upon a firmer vessel of some divine doctrine.”

Marcus Aurelius (121 – 180 C.E.), *Meditations*, Book IV

“The world is nothing but change. **Our life is only perception.**”

St. Augustine of Hippo (354 - 430 C.E.), *City of God*

“The leaders of men (who were not men of integrity, but the human counterparts of the demons) **taught men as true, under the name of religion, things they knew to be false**. By this means they bound them tighter, as it were, to the citizen community, so that they might **bring them under control** and keep them there by the same technique.”

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469 – 1527), *The Prince*

“People are by nature fickle, and it is easy to persuade them of something, but difficult to keep them persuaded...therefore, it is necessary to arrange things so that when they no longer believe, they can be **made to believe by force**.”

“[A theocracy is] sustained by the ancient institutions of religion, which are so powerful and of such a quality that they **keep their princes in power** no matter what they do or how they live?”

Destutt de Tracy, *The elements of Ideology* (1801)

SCIENCE of IDEOLOGY

“[The science of ideas] may be called ideology, if one considers only the subject-matter; general grammar, if one considers only the methods; and logic, if one considers only the purpose. Whatever the name, it necessarily contains these three subdivisions...Ideology seems to me to be the generic term because the science of ideas subsumes both that of their expression and that of their derivation.”

Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (1845-46)

“We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of the real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process...The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness...Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.”

“The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force.”

Karl Marx, *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859)

“It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but the social existence that determines their consciousness...[the superstructure of forms of “social consciousness” is] the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of [the determining power of the economic base of reality].”

George Herbert Mead, “The Process of Mind in Nature” (1938)

“Mental processes are fragments of the complex conduct of the individual in and on his environment.”

John Dewey, *Experience & Education* (1938)

“All principles by themselves are abstract. They become concrete only in the consequences which result from their application.”

“A philosophy...like any theory...is a plan...like any plan, it must be framed with reference to what is to be done and how it is to be done.”

Karl Mannheim, *Ideology & Utopia* (1929)

“The problem implicit in the term ideology – what is really real?”

“We must realize once and for all that the meanings which make up our world are simply an historically determined and continuously developing structure in which man develops, and are in no sense absolute”

“Whatever source we get our meanings, whether they be true or false, they have a certain psychological-sociological function”

“Each group seems to move in a separate and distinct world of ideas and that these different systems of thought, which are often in conflict with one another, may in the last analysis be reduced to different modes of experiencing the ‘same’ reality.”

“We are thoroughly aware of the limited scope of every point of view”

Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change* (1935)

“Stimuli do not possess an absolute meaning...Any given situation derives its character from the entire framework of interpretation by which we judge it. And differences in our ways of sizing up an objective situation are expressed subjectively as differences in our assignment of motive...The relationships are not realities, they are interpretations of reality – hence different frameworks of interpretation will lead to different conclusions as to what reality is.”

Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (1945)

“Men seek for vocabularies that will be faithful reflections of reality. To this end, they must develop vocabularies that are selections of reality. And any selection of reality must, in certain circumstances, function as a deflection of reality. Insofar as the vocabulary meets the needs of reflection, we can say that it has the necessary scope. In its selectivity, it is a reduction. Its scope and reduction become a deflection when the given terminology, or calculus, is not suited to the subject matter which it is designed to calculate.”

Clifford Geertz, "Ideology As a Cultural System" (1964)

"It is thus not truth that varies with social, psychological, and cultural contexts but the symbols we construct in our unequally effective attempts to grasp it...The sociology of knowledge ought to be called the sociology of meaning, for what is socially determined is not the nature of conception but the vehicles of conception."

"Symbols or symbol-systems...are extrinsic sources of information in term of which human life can be patterned – extrapersonal mechanisms for the perception, understanding, judgement, and manipulation of the world. Culture patterns – religious, philosophical, aesthetic, scientific, ideological – are 'programs;' they provide a template or blueprint for the organization of social and psychological processes."

Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (1976)

"Cultural transmission is analogous to genetic transmission in that, although basically conservative, it can give rise to a form of evolution...a new kind of replicator has recently emerged on this planet...memes...a unit of cultural transmission...We have the power to defy the selfish genes of our birth and, if necessary, the selfish memes of our indoctrination...We are built as gene machines and cultured as meme machines, but we have the power to turn against our creators. We, alone on earth, can rebel against the tyranny of the selfish replicators."

Terry Eagleton, *An Introduction to Ideology* (1991)

"Ideology is a realm of contestation and negotiation, in which there is a constant busy traffic: meanings and values are stolen, transformed, appropriated across the frontiers of different classes and groups, surrendered, repossessed, reinflected."

"Ideology is a subject-centered view of reality; and as far as theory is concerned, the whole perspective of subjectivity is bound to get things wrong, viewing what is in truth a center-less world from some deceptively 'centered' standpoint."

Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (2002)

"culture is a tool for living."

J. M. Beach, *Studies in Ideology: Essays on Culture and Subjectivity* (2005)

IDEOLOGY AS PROCESS: In any given society there is a complex of socially determined ideas, beliefs, and values (def #1), which by the definition of "complex" is not a monolithic and static structure, but an active and dynamic process wherein socially significant groups or classes (def #2) promote and legitimate their competing worldviews (def #3). Eventually a dominant group or class arises and promotes and legitimates not only their worldview, but their own dominant position as well (def #4), and this inevitably incorporates distortion or dissimulation (def #5) and is related to the material structure of society (def #6), which the dominant group or class exploits for their own advantage. An individual also has a role in shaping and creating his/her own worldview in cooperative or antagonistic relation to the existing group/class worldviews (whether dominant or marginalized) and the individual has a role in shaping his/her own material existence in cooperative or antagonistic relation to the existing material structure of society. Ideology is the constitutive medium binding the individual to society and is, therefore, an "indispensable" part of human existence. In its positive sense, Ideology seems to be a foundation concept in explaining the biological and social functionality of the human being, and, it could be argued, it is a tool intimately tied to language that derives from our evolutionary development, which can positively serve to unify, organize, and inspire human beings in their struggle for survival.