/59//Outlines for a Theory of the Ideological(1979)[[1]](#footnote-1)

## Objective and Method

Outlines need to be filled in. Only historical studies or analyses of current material can bring this about. In this process the “outlines” will change. Provisionally, they serve as an orientation. They are the fruit of historical and material analyses, and of debate with different theoretical positions (as demonstrated in the *Theories on Ideology).* With a few exceptions this attempt to outline a theory will forgo a renewed debate with other theories.

In the limited space here it is hardly possible to present concrete historical explanations or to substantiate them with analysis of material. However, this is not necessary for the text’s purpose of providing a guideline. We thus ask the reader to put up with the theses-like form, which cannot avoid certain contradictions. Important problems will be pointed out rather than resolved. Nevertheless, a theoretical guideline seems to us to be of great significance, because its theoretical demands can prevent research from unknowingly adhering to spontaneous ideologies. The method of forming concepts proposed here is that of reconstructing genetically the phenomena to be understood, of deriving their development out of practical necessity. Criteria for its validity are its fruitfulness in dealing with empirical material and, in the area of politics, its applicability to problems of a democratic policy of alliances. Finally, the outlines are intended to contribute to improving the insight of intellectuals into their social position and into the meaning of their activities and products in the context of social practices. In this attempt brevity forces upon us a sometimes apodictic style, which could lead one to misunderstand as dogmatic maxims what is only intended as provisional results to be used heuristically.

One more word on standpoint and cognitive interest. The historical starting point as well as vanishing point of the analysis is the self-socialization of people in the sense of a communitarian-consensual control over social living conditions. This can be more than just an orienting model of thinking or a political goal only in a society that either has not yet developed class oppositions or has already abolished them. A theory developed from this standpoint, and in this /60//sense socialist, is anything but alien to or blind to reality; this is demonstrated by its usefulness in the ordering of concepts (their theorization) and in the analysis of concrete materials. This approach calls for an analytical separation between general-historical functions and their configuration, which is historically changing and specific to a particular societal formation. The traditional naturalization of historically-specific social forms can thereby be avoided. This naturalization is not confined to bourgeois theories; it appears also in socialist ones, above all in theories from socialist countries in which the effect of a naturalization of the forms and relations of socialist commodity production and state power becomes stronger to the degree the perspective of the classless society and of the withering away of the state fades or completely disappears. By acting constructively with regard to the realization of a classless society, a theory which maintains this perspective remains critical toward the transitory-necessary forms of socialist commodity production with a determining position of the state. It is vital to the theory as well as to practical movement that this tension between the long-range objective and the necessary intermediary stages is maintained, so that neither the immediate objectives are rejected in an utopian, destructive way nor is the radical long-term perspective opportunistically sacrificed to middle-range necessity. This contradiction, if it is consciously kept in mind, in no way hinders the pursuit of middle-range goals, but rather, if grasped correctly, becomes the source of strength for social movement.

## The Basic Structure of the Ideological, and the State as the First Ideological Power

Just as Marx brought about a Copernican revolution in the social sciences in general, he did likewise for ideology theory. Human essence is not something innate to the individual, but rather in its reality it is something external, historical: the “ensemble of the social relations” (“Sixth Thesis on Feuerbach”, MEW, Vol. 3, p.6; MECW, Vol. 5, p.4). Certainly, this “essence” needs to be realized by human beings, individuals, who realize themselves in this relationship as human beings (cf. Kühne, 1979). Thus human history is to be understood as the history of society, even though the driving forces are the individuals’ or classes’ necessities of life in particular social forms and relations and at a particular level of development of their productive forces.

The ideological is also to be understood within this paradigm. It is to be understood not primarily as something mental, but as a modification and a specific organizational form of the “ensemble of the social relations” and of the individuals’ participation in controlling these relations, or at least their integration within them. In its reality the ideological is hence to be sought and /61//analyzed as an external arrangement (Foucault’s concept of the *dispositif could* be thus re-articulated; cf. Foucault, 1980, p. 75) within these social relations.

The approach to the field of historical-materialist theory on ideology is made accessible by the concept of *ideological powers,* which Engels employs in his later writings when he once again takes up the theoretical drafts of *The German Ideology* and attempts to test them against empirical research published in the meantime, above all by Morgan.

The *first ideological power* is the state. Regarding the necessity for its emergence, Engels — and we agree with him here — understands the state as a *social power above society* or *alienated social power.* Several groups of factors effect the bringing forth of this *“Beyond* of society”, a *socially transcendent instance.*

Social antagonisms which transcend that which can be inner-societally settled in “horizontal” processes of building a consensus are a prerequisite for the formation of state power, as this in turn is the prerequisite for the fixation of opposite interests in the form of antagonistic social classes.[[2]](#footnote-2) The preconditions for the thorough transformations in natural living conditions (historically, above all the creation of irrigation systems) are larger units of social interaction, the central appropriation of surplus product, and the coordination of infrastructural projects (cf. Sellnow, 1978, p. 129f.). Wars forced further modifications of social relations toward the genesis of the state and toward class differentiation. Primitive communist forms of socialization, such as the particular position of the old people as opposed to the young, can serve as a starting point for corresponding transformations. Meillassoux (1973) traces /62// the transformation of this functional differentiation between young and old into a class domination with a state-formed exercise of power. Thus ancestor-worship arises, shifting a functional difference back to an “other-worldly” very-eldest and to a descendant in the primogenitary line, and becomes a condition for the extension of the number of “young” who are placed under an “eldest”. “Eldest” and “young” thereby become social categories which are applied to individuals irrespective of their natural age. The cult of ancestor worship with its “Beyond” becomes a functional necessity for the establishment of a real “Beyond” of society, ie, the state-like form of exercising power. But even though ancestor worship represents a bond “back” to this sort of decomposed primitive communism, being “reminiscent” of it, and can only function via this communal valence, it is also the instrument for destroying the basis of its effect.

The social power above society from the very beginning is ideological power and it could not stabilize itself unless it is above society. This holds — disregarding temporary borderline cases — even when the superordination is that of an army of conquerors. The ideological power of the state is armored with a coercive apparatus, but even this social apparatus above society represents structurally an ideological *factum* from the moment when individuals bow to the power of the facts.

What is briefly summarized here represents one of the most trenchant transformations in human history. It developed slowly and variably in a process extending over millennia and was full of conflicts. The decisive steps may have been taken under the pressure of deteriorated living conditions which could no longer be overcome by traditional methods (cf. Seibel, 1978, p. 203). The crucial point is that original competences which were part of the normal social capacity to act of all individuals were now withdrawn from society. Historically, competences of socialization (of labor and of other forms of life activity) are at first exercised “horizontally”, that is, between members of society without “vertical” intervention of a superordinated power. Later, these competences are transferred to superstructural instances and their apparatuses of officials. At the “base” of society forms of competence/incompetence arise at the same moment. On the one hand, these in/competences concern functions, above all, linked to the direct productive interaction with nature; on the other hand, they are forms of limited participation in socialization or in the dealing with conflicts, a participation that is regulated “from above”.

Thus the function of *socialization from above* either arises already together with the *ideal* (ie, mental) *socialization from above,* that is, with the ideological, or necessarily entails its development. The significance of coercion is always preserved in the process, although it can be relativized by the mentally coercive powers. But in general superordination does not follow from rever/63// ence but reverence from superordination. The reverence for the superordinated represents, however, as such, a fact which eliminates the causal context. The process should be understood primarily as a restructuring of social relations (whatever the reasons for its coming into being). The ideological becomes a fact of consciousness through individuals or newly-arising classes being consciously active in these forms of competence/incompetence.

*Working definition: By the ideological we mean the operative network of ideal socialization from above.*

Hence this investigation of the ideological strives for changes in the “ensemble of the social relations”, through which individuals’ capacities and competences to act are determined with respect to the control over social living conditions. This theoretical orientation seems to us appropriate to specify decisively what is traditionally discussed in terms of the separation of mental and physical labor. As we will see, these determinations do not take place simply with “the” responsibility to act for the “whole” passing on to the ideological powers or their administrators. The ideological competences, too, are defined more or less by decisive incompetences. We will come back to this.

With Marx and Engels we understand the state as alienated communality. Its reality is based on the de-realization of primitive community. Marx and Engels try to grasp this contradiction by characterizing the state as *illusory communality.* The concept of the illusory, however, is misleading if it is interpreted in the sense of false, unfounded consciousness. This illusion has reality, *is* thus real illusion. It is the form in which the society members must comply with their social relations. It becomes the form of consciousness through conscious activity in these new forms of social relations. Having arisen “from below to above”, the new instance operates from above to below. The agents of the social power above society construct concrete ideologies in this form.

The state and the other ideological powers — despite the flexibility of relations between them — form an operative network whose fundamental and stabilizing pillar is the state with its coercive armor. Gramsci sets out the famous formula: Integral state = coercive state apparatus + hegemony. (Cf. Gramsci, 1971, p. 263) And for Althusser, all institutions of socialization, from the family to the labor union, are globally designated as *ideological state apparatuses.* We do not agree with him here; we prefer the category of ideological powers. We want to avoid a static, functionalist fixation of these phenomena, which is connected with the view from above to below. These phenomena are constantly shifting on account of the relations of forces determining them and he development of the productive forces. In some respect they have an almost transitory character, since different, even contrary functions are overdetermined in them. For example, in the school, which according to Althusser is the dominant ideological state apparatus in contemporary capitalism, only one — surely important — functional dimension is expressed in this category.

## /64// 3. Proto-ideological Material and Ideological Organization

The break in the genesis of the ideological is thus formed by the rise of a state superstructure, accompanying the rise of class domination. Though the ideological is bound to superstructure, superstructure is not bound to the ideological. A classless society, which has taken back all functions of its socialization, thus in which the state has withered away, therefore does not necessarily have to dismantle all structural differentiation of different praxes in the divisions of the superstructure. They lose only their state-like form and therefore their regulating superordination. In the perspective of a self-managing classless society, which Marx sketches in the third volume of *Capital* (MEW, Vol. 25, p. 828; *Capital,* Vol. 3, p. 958f), the superstructure can be conceived as the form in which the classless society organizes the “realm of freedom”.

The differentiation of competences aimed at establishing or reproducing the social nexus, the totality of arising specializations, ritualizations and imaginations transcending their basis in experience, etc., which are later “removed” and restructured by the detached power with its state-like form we call *proto-ideological material.* Its sharp distinction from the ideological is necessary, because only in this way can the relationship between continuity and discontinuity be conceived for a genetic reconstruction. Moreover, in the perspective of the re-appropriation of the extracted functions of socialization by a future classless society, this distinction makes it possible to differentiate between ideological forms and the contents which are not necessarily ideological and may even be generally needed in all societies.

The control over nature and the need to stabilize social relations are the most important reasons to develop proto-ideological phenomena. Social cohesiveness and the powers of plants and other natural substances exalt the positions of elders, medicine men and midwives, and lead to the development of magical techniques. But these tendencies toward exaltation remain bound within the basic structure of horizontal socialization, which has its own forms of non-transcendental consecrations. A sanctuary, a meeting place can embody the integration of a tribe without these places being connected with a religion that demands submission to an otherworldly, superordinated instance. The regulations connected with group sanctions of appropriation, of relations between the sexes, etc., are also only proto-ideological as long as they are not regulated vertically by a superordinated instance above society. All horizontally-developed and handed-down forces and forms of cohesion (common patterns of interpretation, manners of speaking and behavior, preferences and dislikes, etc.), which are “later” reorganized in an ideological form, are in themselves by no means ideological. Insofar as they are suited to being ideologized, we designate them by the concept of “proto-ideological”.

/65// This distinction holds not only in the genetic-diachronic sense, but also under conditions of ideological socialization. Horizontally-directed forces and forms of social cohesion are continually reproduced, and just as continually subjected to the organizing grasp of the ideological powers.

The dimension concerning the formation and the consented life of group identity, forms of life, in which individuals, groups or classes practice that which appears to them worth living and in which they conceive of themselves as the meaning and purpose of their life activities, we designate as the *cultural dimension* (cf. “Some Theoretical Problems in the Discussion of Working Class Culture” in this volume). This concept of the cultural, which differs from common usage as well as from many theoretical definitions of culture, has the advantage of analytically separating the cultural from the ideological. Empirically, the cultural occurs just as impurely under conditions of ideological socialization as the ideological does. The different forces and phenomena are mixed and superimposed constantly in everyday life. In order to learn to comprehend the contradictions of the ideological as well as of everyday consciousness, and thereby find an access for understanding their development, the distinction is analytically indispensable. “Ruling culture” may have a cultural meaning in the sense defined here for a ruling class, while having an ideological meaning for the ruled classes or peoples. Cultural flowers are continually picked by the ideological powers and handed back down from above as “unwithering” artificial flowers, integrated into the vertical structure of the ideological. Conversely, ideological phenomena can be “profaned”, appropriated by the popular masses and assimilated in their own process of culture and identity. Just as we can speak of cultural effects of the ideological in such cases, we can also speak of ideological effects of the cultural, if cultural elements, on the basis of their attractiveness — whether for the masses or for the ideologists — make their way into an ideological power, thus leading to changes there. In capitalist commodity production a third instance complicates the structure of everyday consciousness: *commodity aesthetics* calls forth the cultural effects, while inducing consumers actively to fill in its imaginary spaces. On the other hand, commodity aesthetics functions as a para-ideological power, making happiness and personal satisfaction the supreme attractions, subordinating to them all other possible attractions and cohesive forces, even ideological ones, and connecting them to the acquisition and consumption of particular commodities. “Ideological”, “cultural” and “commodity aesthetic” designate essential characteristics not of the material, but rather, of its organization which incorporates such material into an operative network. Not only the material as such is not ideological, but also its forces and functions of cohesion; rather, only the cohesion organized from above is ideological. We do not agree with Gramsci when he identifies the ideological with the “cementing function” without differentiating between /66// alienated and directly communitarian forms of establishing social cohesion.

In the attempt to differentiate the proto-ideological from the ideological, colloquial language obscures more than it is supposed to elucidate. This is especially the case for the concept of “value”. “Use value” and “exchange value”, as readers of *Capital* have learned from Marx, are to be distinctly separated even though the expression “value” appears in both terms. Both in turn are to be clearly separated from *ideological values.* Between slogans which articulate class interests (such as solidarity, job security etc.) and ideological values there is the same break in general as that which exists between horizontal and vertical forms of socialization. While empirical analysis presents us with overlaps and transitions, theoretically we must make sharp distinctions. The ideological value-form participates in the hierarchical character of the ideological which is patterned on state power. Concrete regulations of social life are derived from supreme abstract ideas, which re-present certain attrac- - tions but turned upside-down. This structure of derivation from supreme values is directed against the derivation from material interests, because it is the conflicts in interest which are to be ideologically regulated. Ideological values are always directed against the antagonistic articulation of interests. They often are confused with abstract expressions of interest because they originate in the removal and restructuring of expressions of interest by the ideological powers. (Also not to be overlooked is the spontaneous filling-in of the ideological forms from below.) Furthermore, highly-valued capacities and attitudes (from forms of self-discipline to the skilful manipulation of tools), i.e., horizontal virtues, are constantly turned into vertical ones and transformed correspondingly by the ideological apparatuses. These capacities and attitudes become values, however, only if the ideological apparatuses succeed in organizing consent. Only if this is the case can concrete regulations be substantiated; without this the ideological value-form would be reduced to mere orders from above. The ideological effect consists in the turning toward value as the turning away from interest.[[3]](#footnote-3)

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The ideological apparatuses — each within its area of competence which represents a particular mode of existence of the social in its entirety — organize the form of living and experiencing social relations. The bourgeois society is a *“société anonyme”* (Barthes, 1981, p. 137f1.), ie, an anonymous public company (stock corporation), which, expressed in Barthes’ play on words, ideologically de/nominates, thus ex-nominates itself as it names itself. The bourgeois ideological apparatuses organize the aggressive silence about capitalist class rela/67// tions. The exploitation of wage workers by capitalists can only be disclosed as **that** which is, so to speak, omitted from and rearranged in the bourgeois ideology/ies. The ideological apparatuses of bourgeois society organize the life **and** experience of class society as one of classlessness. In West Germany, the policy of *Berufsverbote* controls the access to the ideological apparatuses; it tries **to** prevent “class-struggle thinking” — as representatives of class domination **express** it in the language of their politics — from being brought into the university and school. This is the language of class struggle from above which denominates itself as a non-class-struggle, even as an anti-class-struggle, way of thinking (cf. the analyses by Haug 1976 (a)).

Inthe case of the bourgeoisie the effect of ideological integration is supported by the (not yet ideological) *objective thought -forms[[4]](#footnote-4)* in exchange relations ( the voluntary nature of exchange which the partners mutually recognize, the equality of agreed-upon values). Arising from the commodity-money relations arehistorically-powerful impulses of individual differentiation, of subjectivity, as well as forms of quantitative justice in exchange. These too represent forms of socialization (in this case, of labor), that is, of alienated socialization. In contrast to the equally-alienated ideological socialization, the market form is regulated not “from above” but instead “horizontally”. In a certain way it can be compared to the distribution of labor in the primitive community, but, in contrast, it is not consciously regulated and shaped from the start, but instead, afterwards and without planning: in the form of countless separate acts of exchange and in the reified way expended labor is dealt with in the form of commodity value. Marx attempts to express this structure of horizontal, but nevertheless alienated socialization with a metaphor taken from the spatial, /68// frontal ordering of the human visual apparatus: in the case of commodity-money relations, human labor is socialized “behind the producers’ backs”. In the case of the equally alienated socialization of labor in the form of labor services which are directed despotically from above, for example in order to build irrigation systems, the socialization occurs directly and before everyone’s eyes.

The objective thought-forms of the commodity-money relations are inevitably elaborated by those who do the exchanging: in how they articulate their interests and search for consensus. Taken purely as such an elaboration, this process, however, does not yet produce ideology. Only if these representations are articulated within the operative structure of the ideological powers and are ordered according to their rules is their processing to be called ideological in a strict sense. This may be done by the ideologists in the ideological apparatuses, but also by “ordinary mortals”, ie, the ideologically socialized, who think spontaneously and contradictorily within the ideological forms and in this way process their experiences in practical life. This can lead to the development of private *ideologems,* i.e., of ideologically structured, partial complexes of orienting conceptions. These ideologems enter into private *Weltanschauungen* within whose framework they can enter into a contradictory compound with unideological elements of experience — the heterogeneous elements remain partly disconnected and consequently the personality in question “is composed in a bizarre way”[[5]](#footnote-5) (Gramsci, 1975, p. 1376). *“Weltanschauung”* is an appropriate term for designating a general historical function of human life in constrast to “ideology” which represents a *Weltanschauung* organized from above within the vertical structure of socialization from above (which can also be affected from below). Private ideologems and elements of experience opposing these, which in the context of private *Weltanschauungen[[6]](#footnote-6)* can form a contradictory conglomerate — contrasting sharply with the coherence of elaborated ideologies — are often concentrated and fixated in particular social groups within the coordinate system of supra-individual and repetitive experiences that tend to be class-specific. Popular proverbs (which exist from every point of view), because they are full of latent struggles, represent in their contradictoriness a bizarre collection of such elements of *Weltanschauung.* Ideology and anti-ideology, from opposed class standpoints, exist here side by side.

Now we can examine the difference between particular ideologies and the ideological in general. The ideological in general is the basic structure of the alienated socialization from above, inextricably connected with the state-/69// formed reproduction of class domination and of the functions of the community. It is thus not primarily an edifice of thought or consciousness; nor is it to be conceived as an “objectification of mind”. Ideologies as complexes of practical norms and as edifices of ideas are formed within the framework of the ideological, in function of its operative mode. Just as the ideological is to be conceived as being called for by the decomposition of the community, hence secondary in relation to the development of the relations of production (whose further development, however, only then becomes possible), so the ideological edifices of thought are to be conceived as secondary in relation to the ideological. They are what is most variable and tactical, a site where all possible differences, even including the driving forces of individual ideologists, can be represented. Hence the wavering and competing variety of ideologies which appear at the same or different times, in contrast to the unity of the ideological.

The ideological in general exists as an operative network of particular ideological powers. These powers and their position and function in the operative network determine specific ideological forms. Marx enumerates the following main forms of the ideological: politics, law, religion, art, morality, and philosophy. Each of these forms defines a specific ideological praxis. The content of these praxes is the regulation of particular functional areas of socialization, and they always operate in the same alienated basic structure “from-above-to-below”.

## 4. Law as the Second Ideological Power — Celestialization and Idealization

Law, the second ideological power after the state, as Engels designates it, arises in direct connection with the state as a fundamental form of regulating intervention by the state into a social base interlaced with antagonisms. Functions of arbitration which were “previously” exerted horizontally, ie, firms of self-regulation of society, are removed from society and transposed into a new quality as vertical intervention:

The court undertakes to do what no arbitrator ever did: it presumes to ‘declare the law’. the aim of the arbitral agency was appeasement, while that of the court was to secure obedience.... The court is connected with the growth of the executive authority, which always relies upon force to settle all conflicts, and thus makes force the central reality. The mystery of the court is not so much how men came to accept this force, but how force was endowed with the quality of `lawfulness’ that is bound up with the conception of the state. (Seagle, 1946, pp. 61-62)

This is the question of the particular ideological form of law. Decisive for understanding this form may be the analysis of its character as an effect of /70// *condensation* (the concept will be explained further below), which originated in class struggles. The most general contradiction between state authority and subjects and the particular antagonisms between classes assume a “regular” form of movement characterized by its formal “independence”, resulting from the *displacement* of the social conflicts into a social-transcendental sphere, where the opposites are condensed according to the respective relations of forces. Developed law can only function by rendering itself to a certain degree (which can be very slight) independent of social domination and state power. For a general understanding of the genesis of ideological forms we can observe here how pressure from below amalgamates with the operative mode of the superordinated instance from above. It is the pressure from below which forces social domination into the ideological form, into which the domination then systematically integrates it. “Most of the lawgivers were members of the middle classes, since the nobility was naturally opposed to codification.” (Ibid., p. 112) In the forms, even formalities, to which the parasitical interest of the advocates (“badvocates”, the people will say) subsequently affixes itself, the interest of those dominated is *aufgehoben,* i.e., preserved and denied from the start. The formal character of law consequently represents something that is constantly struggled over. The efficiency of the displacement/condensation is based on making the origin of law other-worldly, comparable to making the origin of Royalty other-worldly. “Moses was not the only lawgiver who was believed to have received all the law of his people from a deity. There are the Hindu Manu and the Egyptian Menes....” (Ibid., p. 105). This *celestialization* of the origins of law only extends the operative axis of law, thus affecting the consciousness of those involved. As it operates from above to below, its origin is in the highest “above”. The bourgeois philosophy of law keeps trying to derive the law from the highest ideas or fundamental values, turning celestialization under bourgeois conditions into *idealization.*

Since these ideological forms of processing correspond to the vertical operation of law, those “subjected to the court” act ambivalently toward them. They waver constantly between a spontaneous-ideological conception of these relations, “as they now are”, i.e., from above to below, and a never-quite disappearing mistrust. This is articulated in all areas and in all forms of the ideological such as in “pious-fraud theories” which claim that the exploitation of superstition, i.e., the conscious deception of the people by egoistic priests, is at the origin of religion in general. And indeed, the forgery of law represents an indispensable component of the history of the written law (in predominantly illiterate societies) up to canonical law, whose development was essentially supported by a forgery (ibid., p. 115 and p. 124).

## /71//5. Condensation, Displacement and Compromise-Formation

Freud worked out the concept of condensation in the context of his dream analyses. The processing of particular conceptions, wishes, memories, etc. in theform of dreams he designated as dream-work. The manifest dream is the result of dream-work, the elaborated impulses he understands as the latent dreamor as the “material of the latent dream-thoughts” (Freud, Vol. XV, p. I 71). Dream-work is performed under antagonist conditions of censorship, repression, defence against instinctual impulses which contradict the superego (i.e.**,** the internalized instance of the social order of domination represented by the father) or endanger the ego with its necessary effort of mediation between the (ideological) instance of the superego, the (subjected) instance of the instinctual basis (“id”) and the social conditions of activity (“reality”). Dream-work is understood as a transformation of the repressed as a condition for its emergence. As *displacement* Freud understands the regularly-appearing fact that

Things that lie on the periphery of the dream-thoughts and are of minor importance occupy a central position and appear with great sensory intensity in the manifest dream, and*vice-versa.* This gives the dream the appearance of being displaced in relation to the dream-thoughts, and this displacement is precisely what brings it about that the dream confronts waking mental life as something alien and incomprehensible. (Vol. VIII, pp. I (i3-164.)

Which peripheral appearances of the repressed (i.e., that which is pressed into latency) are those that are suited to become central to the official manifestation? They must be just as peripheral (and hence of relative dis-concern) to the oppression as to the oppressed and at the same time are a link between several chains of association “so that an element in the dream corresponds to a nodal point or junction in the dream-thoughts, and, as compared with these latter, must quite generally be described as ‘overdetermined’.” (Vol. VIII, p. 163.) What is “compressed” or “condensed” in these elements is therefore present and absent in them at the same time. The manifest dream, says Freud, is a kind of “an abbreviated translation” of the latent one (Vol. XV, p. 171).

If the intersecting chains of association are contrary, “the newly-created common elements of condensation” (Vol. VIII, p. 163) will be servants of two or more masters:

Among the most surprising findings is the way in which the dream-work treats contraries that occur in the latent dream. We know already that conformities in the latent material are replaced by condensations in the manifest dream. Well, contraries are treated in the same way as conformities, and there is a special preference for expressing t hem by the same manifest element.... This connects with the further fact that a representation of `no’ — or at any rate an unambiguous one — is not to be found in dreams. (Vol. XV, p. 178.)

/72// Effects of condensation pave a way for what Freud called *compromise formations.* They represent a condensation of antagonistic forces under the dominance of one of the two sides or at least in the framework of the structure of domination. With this Freud conceived the constitution of neurotic *symptoms.* “The two forces which have fallen out meet once again in the symptom and are reconciled, as it were, by the compromise of the symptom that has been constructed. It is for that reason, too, that the symptom is so resistant; it is supported from both sides.” (Vol. XVI, pp. 358-359.) Where Laplanche and Pontalis interpret the compromise-formation as a “form which the repressed makes use of in order to be admitted to the consciousness” (1977, p. 255), they are apparently thinking spontaneously within the structure of and from the perspective of domination. The symptomatic compromise-formation must be interpreted as a form into which the dominated forces are compelled by the system of domination and in which the system of domination concedes them an outlet. This is one form of rebellion in the framework of domination, the evil *ad majorem gloriam Dei.* Insofar as Freud can say of the condensation in the dream-work that in it “latent elements which have something in common [are] being combined and fused into a single unity” (Vol. XV, p. 171), this formulates also the condition for the compromising of contrary forces to the symptom. A point of contact between domination and dominated, peripheral to class antagonism and yet connected with this antagonism and the two antagonistic forces by chains of association, thus a point of peripheral intersection, becomes the point at which both sides are melted in the basic form which we understood in the framework of our theory as that of the ideological. The precise melting point is dependent on the relations of forces.

Freud’s concepts are so astonishingly transferable to problems in the social sciences, because he himself analyzes social relations using symptomatic material — even though the analysis is, so to speak, dreamily displaced to the “psychic life” of the individual. The use of his concepts only analogically, however, would remain helpless, speculative, arbitrary; the phenomena of the internalization of domination must be reconstructed social-scientifically, and the Freudian concepts must be reinterpreted within this framework. The superego is the representation of the external instance “super-us”.[[7]](#footnote-7) The “father” — the father of the ancestor cult as a transitional form as well as “God the Father” or “Father of the People” — is to be conceived as a condensed compromise-formation in which the “above” operates in the form of the /73//’below” (and vice-versa). “Overdetermination” (cf. the Freud quotation above) and “rendering relatively independent” are here two sides of the same coin. The “rendering independent” of the fused antagonistic forces explains also the particular kind of reality and operative power of the ideological compromise-formations. The ideological achieves the cohesion of the social ensemble by reproducing class antagonism and class domination in the form of ideological compromise-formations within the hierarchical ordering “from above to below”. The young Marx designates the ideological processes as the “dream-history” of a people (MEW, Vol. 1, p. 383; MECW, Vol. 3, p. 143) and notes that religion, the “register of the theoretical struggles of mankind” (ibid., p. 345), as well as the other ideological forms, are forms in which “the world has long possessed the dream of a thing of which it only needs to possess the consciousness in order really to possess it” (ibid., p. 346; *Selected Writings,* p. 38).[[8]](#footnote-8) This is more than an arbitrary metaphor. While it has become fashionable to interpret the ideological processes in light of psychoanalysis, we intend to reinterpret the psychoanalytic theory of the dream-work in light of a theory of the real “dream-history” of the people.

## 6. Contradictions of the Ideological in the Example of Religious Compromise-Formations

Just as law develops — leaning against the state apparatus — so do the other basic forms of the ideological with their apparatuses and specific ideological praxes. Constantly, *proto-ideological* functions and forms of the primitive community are torn away from society, removed and transformed into specific competences for regulating the functions of socialization from above. Constantly — in long drawn out struggles, rearguard actions of the primitive community —a corresponding incompetence arises at the base of society. This incompetence is implanted and maintained directly by force and other forms of coercion. But the mere fixation on force would set narrow limits on the unfolding of the operative network of the ideological. The new structures of c competence/incompetence change individuals. In order to become capable of social action, they must win in place of the competences extracted from society, new kinds of competences which allow them to act within the forms of ideological socialization that are surrounded and regulated by the state. This ideological capacity to act by individuals rests upon the formation of psychic /74// instances, which can be appealed to by the ideological powers and which affect the way motivations to act become realized. These psychic representations of the ideological powers enable individuals to voluntarily submit to these powers. They provide the basis for ideological subjectivity, which although ideological, is nevertheless a form of subjectivity, i.e., it is anything but just a passive reflex of social relations. The *aufrechter Gang* (“upright posture”) of which Ernst Bloch spoke and ideological submission (subjectification) are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Conscience and belief under particular historical conditions can move mountains or break down the wall of a particular form of domination. Only in this way are revolutionary ideologies -- the ideological assumed in the sense developed here — conceivable. It is the compromise-character of the ideological that makes possible the contradictory effectiveness of ideological submission in the form of self-activity. As expressed by the young Marx, the “sigh of the oppressed creature” (MEW, Vol. 1, p. 378; MECW, Vol. 3, p. 175) fuses with the organization and reproduction of its oppression. Concerning the illiterate peasants of the Middle Ages, who were largely excluded from the acquisition and communication of education, one can say, “Just as they were held in bondage to the feudal lords, they were spiritually bound to the church”. (W. Lenk, 1978, p. 18.) But this spiritual bondage as a base for physical bondage functioned only because the “protest against real distress” (MEW, Vol. 1; p. 378; MECW, Vol. 3, p. 175) was *inscribed* into its religious transfiguration: “The first will be the last” and “it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” In the cult of the goddess Nanshe in the state of Lagash at the end of the third millennium the same strong language of protest was spoken against real distress:

In order to comfort the orphans and to prevent wives from becoming widows [the state’s conduct of wail, in order to create a place of doom for the powerful, in order to surrender the powerful to the weak, Nanshe scrutinizes the hearts of the humans. (Quoted in Sellnow, 1978, p. 156f.)

Sellnow interprets this document as follows:

The emergence of social-critical conceptions in religious garments in the literature of the ruling classes is one of the early examples of a `second culture’, of elements of a democratic culture of the popular masses. (Ibid, p. 157.)

Sellnow fails to discuss the contradiction between this religious example and her general functional definition of the religious:

The world of the gods represented a projection of the images of the ruling class into a fictitious higher world. Religion became an integral component of ideology and a spiritual tie for the masses which burdened them for millennia. (Ibid., p. 147.)

The religious aspect in the cult of the goddess Nanshe is not a mere garment but the form in which to expect the redemption from the oppressive order by a /75// superordinated instance. As long as the people expect the overthrow of the exploiter’s order to take place from *above,* this maintains the “order” of oppression.

In the Christian doctrine — as in other high religions — the antagonistic forces are not uniformly condensed. The history of the changing struggles expresses itself as a juxtaposition of compromises which are due to different relations of force. The struggles over interpretation will be led by these differences.

The Beyond, Heaven, God the Father and Mother of God, etc — all of these imaginations arise from the forms and competences of the social community which are displaced into the imaginative Beyond by the real Beyond of society, that is, society’s regulating state-like form from above, as it is necessitated by class-domination and exploitation. The effectiveness of “spiritual bondage” is due to this construction alone. This does not simply mean subjection but rather imaginary participation in the subjection of everything worldly under therule of Heaven. Thus the operative direction of faith, “from deep inside outwards”, corresponds to that of the “from-above-to-below”. This inner subjection endures because the social-transcendent instance of the religious contradicts everything social — including social domination as well — even if the contradiction is displaced onto “the Lord’s inscrutable decree”. With Christ against the corruption of the world; against the domination of “Klinghart, Richart and Gebehart”, as expressed in a widespread 14th-century work. (W. Lenk, 1978, p. 30.) This interpretation of Christian ideology is not only directed against capital but also against greedy state rulers and even against the head of the church (cf. the vivid material in W.Lenk) .The condition for the effectiveness of the religious, its compromise-character, is determined not so much by a lack of social struggle as by a displacement of such struggles onto the ideological level. This is the concession that must inevitably be made for a subjection which has to function by means of the self-activity of the subjected.

To keep this self-activity within narrow bounds, the apparatuses of the ideological powers develop more-or-less rigid rules accompanied by sanctions. These rules reserve for the powers the primary ideological competence in the framework of their specific form — law and religion are the most important strategic instances here — and keep the “laymen” in a status of secondary ideological competence, at best. The borderline between the authorized officials of the ideological apparatuses and “ordinary” society members must be maintained, otherwise the ambiguity of the ideological could slip away from **the** structure of domination. At the same time there is a constant contradiction between the “pure doctrine” and the apparatus managing it. As the apparatus is first of all a social formation which appropriates the surplus product and seeks to increase its share, there is also an incessant internal struggle for advancement, power, privileges, etc. The apparatus of the holy is necessarily /76// unholy. This contradiction regularly leads to demands from below to purge the apparatus, to subject its *modus operandi* to the pure doctrine. Splits take place (sects). The name of one of these splits which emphatically insisted on such a purge (catharsis) became the general term for all those who put a too strong emphasis on the “transcendental” aspect of the contradiction of the ideological powers: the word *“Ketzer”* (“heretic”) comes from “Cathar”. Many heretic movements and sects assail the removal of competence of socialization from society into a detached apparatus. Ernst Bloch can hence say: “The best thing about religion is that it makes heretics.” (Bloch, 1972, p. 9.) Revolutionary religious sects will retrieve the removed competences in an “alienated” form by appointing every individual a potential priest. This form of protest against alienation is still alienated because it, so to speak, includes everyone in the form of the exclusion of all. The threatened ideological powers strike back with annihilating force against the “heretics”, and the consequence of this form of so-called “religious war” was often genocide. There are other, different forms of religiously-motivated warfare, such as wars between religions which are always wars between state apparatuses. The sects, when they do survive, tend to develop their own autonomous religious apparatuses.

## 7. Literature as Ideological Form

In analyzing ideological praxes, we must not forget that their content cannot be reduced to their ideological form. The ideological powers become and remain powers only by appropriating and exercising in their own particular form the socially necessary functions, which have a general-historical significance independent of their socially-specific form. The ideological form of their exercise in class society is only of transitory necessity.

Literature becomes a specific ideological form not simply “as a relation between people, as social action” (Schlenstedt, 1975, p. 40), although without doubt it has to be understood as a particular kind of social relation and action. The ideological aspect of literature can only be grasped in the state-like form of the “conditions of literary production, mediation and reception through which is determined which works are produced and mediated, which works are read, and how”, thus of the “literary relations which themselves form a part of the `ensemble of the social relations’“ and “through whose interaction the autonomy of the literary processes as well as the relativity of this autonomy becomes explainable” (Naumann, 1975, p. 25). We take issue here with Thomas Metscher who attempts to grasp the character of literature as an ideological form in that “[it is] objectified, social consciousness” in its “historical-social fixation”. (Metscher, 1978, p. 149) Metscher touches upon our concept of the determination of the object of the ideological when he attempts /77// to understand literature as “`ideological praxis’ in the context of its distribution and institutional mediation”. (Ibid.) “As parts of the ideological state apparatuses they serve (this is their normal function in bourgeois society) to reproduce given relations of domination....” (ibid., p. 149ff). For Metscher, however, the ideological seems to be independent of its integration and structuring by the ideological state apparatus. One approach to understanding the ideological function of bourgeois literature is its significance for the development of national language and identity. This can still be seen today in the importance of literary instruction in the educational system, the “most highly, so to speak, ideological sphere of social life, the sphere in which `pure’ national culture or the national cultivation of clericalism and of chauvinism has the freest play....” (Lenin, LCW, Vol. 20, p. 35). By means of censorship and prizes, National Academies for language and literature, literary criticism and theory, aesthetics, the literary education of the ideologists active in these institutions, etc. — the literary process functions as an organization for the interpretation/experience of literature and through this, of the social living conditions. In its state-like form literature is organized as a specific form “to mediate the practice of social subjects (Kühne, 1975, p. 342). This practice is formed by the ordering of social relations; it becomes ideological praxis through the overlapping of class domination and state power set up above the society and, dependent on this double structure (even if contradicting it), It rough the formation of a specialized ideological apparatus. There is nothing ideological in the fact that social subjects mediate their practices by themselves. On the contrary, the ideological is conceived in the mediation from above. Ideologies of the beautiful are formed within this general structure. This de facto *idealization,* however, is mystified as discovery of supposedly eternal and supreme values. The literary text is conceived as the incarnation, application and configuration of the beautiful. The literary *condensation,* however, leaves open a particularly large space for “horizontal” forms of experience and processing, particularly contradictions. Especially prominent in the contradictory material of the literary process are the experiences which contradict the praxes and imaginations of other ideological powers. Another important contradiction is that between art-ideological idealizations and capitalist exploitation and greed, which does not care at all about the eminent instances, values and ideals of the ideological powers, and which invariably enters bourgeois literature as a threatening element. Like the other ideological superstructures the literary superstructure arises in the last instance from antagonisms in production; the narration and experience of social relations, within the structure of the ideological, are removed from these antagonisms and organized by idealized instances, which render them extremely non-antagonistic. It is precisely this ideal lack of antagonism which is the symptom Of the underlying antagonisms. Nevertheless the ideological power of litera-/78//ture remains — like religion and more than law which “teaches the common man to submit to authority” (Seagle, 1946, p. 129) — thoroughly contradictory. Even the ideological lack of antagonism can become a force against competition, exploitation, oppression and war.

Brecht’s concept of literature helps to elucidate the ideological form of literature in that it is directly opposed to this form — which is not to say that Brecht’s works are not continually caught up by this ideologization and hence must be just as continually freed from it and directed against the ideological. Brecht — and today, among others, Volker Braun, for instance, in his play *Great Peace —* attempts to avert literature from the idealizations and from the function of engendering, above all, “emotions” in the reader. Plays should show the contradictory conditions and possibilities of action to an audience of world changers for their critical examination. Eisler attempted this in the field of music; to designate the reversal of the operative structure, he and Brecht even invented their own words “Thaeter” and “Misuc”. Rilke expresses the counter position:

Die Kunst ist über jeden Inhalt groß  
Er gilt nicht mehr, sobald sie ihn ergreift and ihn verwandelt

which amounts to saying that art transcends all its contents; they lose their meaning as soon as art seizes them and transforms them.

Only by investigating how literary texts and processes act within and toward the structure of the ideological, thus toward socialization from above, can the “specific process of transformation” (Schlenstedt, 1975, p. 41) that occurs with respect to “content” be understood. “In it ... a certain kind of impressions, knowledge, value-relations, interpretations, projects, which are won in the struggle with nature and society, are transformed socially into effects on social reality”. (Ibid.)

## 8. Ideologists and Intellectuals

The ideological powers, with its respective specific ideological forms and praxes, define the “forms of individuality” (cf. regarding this concept Sève, 1978) of those who are educated in the ideological forms and engaged in them professionally. These are the ideologists. As an ensemble they were occasionally characterized by Marx as the ideological professions *[Stände[[9]](#footnote-9)]* (MEW, Vol. 3, p. 53; MECW, Vol. 5, p. 77; MEW, Vol. 26. 1, p. 274; and TSV 1, p. 300f1) and even as ideological classes (MEW, Vol. 26. 1, p. 146; TSV 1, p./79//175). He deals with them in the context of the *Theories of Surplus Value,* because they live off surplus value, and especially in the connected analytical complex of the differentiation between productive and unproductive labor.

This is the language of the still revolutionary bourgeoisie, which has not yet subjected to itself the whole of society, the State, etc. These transcendent and time-honored occupations — sovereign, judge, officer, priest, etc. — with all the old ideological professions *(Stände]* to which they give rise, their men of letters, their teachers and priests, are from *an economic standpoint* put on the same level as the swarm of their own lackeys and jesters .. . (MEW,Vol. 26. 1, p. 273; TSV 1, p. 3006.)

Adam Smith, in whose works Marx finds this bourgeois-revolutionary view, sparked an assault of indignation by distinguishing between productive and unproductive labor. Behind the indignation lay the anxiety “of the `spiritual’ labourers ... to justify the large share which they draw out of material production.” (Ibid., p. 267: TSV 1, p. 295.)

The great mass of so-called `higher grade’ workers — such as state officials, military people, artists, doctors, priests, judges, lawyers, etc. — some of whom are not only not productive but in essence destructive, but who know how to appropriate to themselves a very great part of the `material’ wealth partly through the sale of their ‘immaterial’ commodities and partly by forcibly imposing the latter on other people— found it not at all pleasant to be relegated *economically* to the same class as clowns[[10]](#footnote-10) and menial servants.... This was a peculiar profanation precisely of those functions which had hitherto been surrounded with a halo and had enjoyed superstitious veneration. Political economy in its classical period, like the bourgeoisie itself in its *parvenu* period, adopted a severely critical attitude to the machinery of the State, etc. At a later stage it ... learnt from experience that the necessity for the inherited social combination of all these classes, which in part were totally unproductive, arose from its own organisation. (Ibid., p. 145; TSV 1, p. 174ff.)

In institutional practice as well as in public opinion the profanation or de-sanctification of the “higher” functions is taken back again and a new sanctification is built up. “Bourgeois society reproduces in its own form everything against which it had fought in feudal or absolutist form.” (Ibid., p. 198; TSV 1, p. 175.) In spite of all the specificity of the bourgeois society’s “own form” the general character of all class societies — “that the antagonisms *(Gegensätze]* in material production make necessary a superstructure of ideological strata *[Stände]”* (MEW, Vol. 26. 1, p. 259; TSV 1, p. 287) — is asserted within bourgeois society.

The forms of individuality of the ideologists regulate their discursive structure and in general their practice. In so far as these forms of individuality represent the praxis-form of the ideologists, specific objective thought-forms arise from them — mediated by the activity in them. To the extent that intellectuals act and think in these forms, their practice is ideological. Intel-/80//lectuals are not automatically ideologists, although they are, as “specialists of the general” above the system of the division of labor, a creation of class society and its state-formed removal of the competences of socialization. In the perspective of a horizontal socialization all people are intellectuals without them exercising the specialized function of intellectuals within the division of labor (cf. Gramsci, 1971, p. 8f.). How the question of the class basis of the intellectual’s form of individuality is answered depends above all on the reply to two questions: (1) the perspective of the superstructure and the capacities cultivated and personified there, and, (2) the place and position of the production of scientific knowledge. If, for example, the collective worker *[Gesamtarbeiter][[11]](#footnote-11)* encompasses the scientist, then the different accentuations on the shares of “general” and “specific” labor lose the specific weight given them by class society with its division — heightened to an antagonism — of mental and physical labor which leads to the special status of the intellectuals.

## 9. Science and the Ideological Confinement of Practices

One of the reasons why the ideological powers have the kind of “power” they do, as we have seen, is their internal contradictoriness. The same holds true for the contradictions *between* the various powers. The overall effect is the organization of consent to the antagonistic relations. Individuals stabilize their identity and restricted capacity to act by establishing a plurality of forms of experience which are relatively separate and independent of one another. The articulated competence/incompetence structure of social relations creates its internal representation in the individual. Just as the theologians are not to mingle in politics and the politicians not in theology, and neither in business, so the individual’s corresponding spheres of practices are to remain separate from one another in order to be able to function in the sense of the ideological. It is not that the lines of demarcation run unambiguously and were effortlessly given once and for all. There are constant encroachments on the boundaries which must be warded off if the borders are not to be displaced. Rolf Nemitz, in his analysis of conservative ideologists’ interpretation of this “function of frontier defence”, pointed out the contradictions that necessitate the maintenance of strict barriers of competence, above all, between morality, politics and science. It is this divisional structure of experiencing which provides the ideological subjects with a type of “multiple-entry bookkeeping” underlying their uncontradictory consent to the contradictory relations. (Nemitz, 1979, p. 73.) If politics is moralized, if morality is politicized, the capacity of both /81// spheres to mediate consensus is endangered. Science also threatens to invert theideological structure from its head onto its feet if it analyzes the earthly (oasis of celestializations and thus leads to antagonistic interests breaking into therealm of morality. (Cf. Nemitz, p. 70.) We must therefore understand the ideological system both as an elastic operative network of instances, which are to a certain degree autonomous, and as a field of untiring and manifold activity of an army of specialized intellectuals who are as ambivalent as their activity, inwhich specific ideological functions overlap and fight with general-societal functions. The melting point of the class-antagonistic compromise-formations varies depending on the struggles and the relations of force between classes and their intellectuals in the various fields of the superstructure. In capitalist society the success of horizontal forms of socialization and of the “translation” of democratic impulses “from below to above” depends decisively on the strength, politics and culture of the labor movement.

The decisive factor in the fate of science and the labor movement is the (im-) permeability of the demarcation line separating them. The process of science, in its essence, is the production of knowledge, a production proceeding in a form of labor whose rules and results are horizontally communicated and controversially examined without any closure. There will never be a definite lastword. In itself, the core structure of science is anti-ideological. Historically**,** the process of science appears with the direct rejection of all authoritarian imperatives from above. Its development took, and takes, place to the degree it rejects interferences from above. Science is nevertheless ideologically determined in so far as the ideological powers sever it from the production process, and from the decisions concerning the conditions of society as a whole. A communitarian organization with a conscious planning of social life processeswhich would be within the competence of all society members would release science from its ideological barriers. The structure of domination defines areas of practice and marks out corresponding (in-)competences. With all its power the structure of domination induces (and constrains) the scientific production of knowledge to constitute “knowledge” into the space of these limited practices and competences. This arrangement of science ideologizes it. Althusser (1975, p. 85f1) pertinently showed how in the philosophy of science the ideological instance fights out corresponding class struggles in theory, and attempts to turn methodological regulations into ideological verticality. The social apparatus of science with its manifold rituals stabilizes science in its ideological limitations. The contradiction between the production of knowledge and its ideological constitution pervades science; the precise way in which it becomes acute depends on the social movements and their policies of science and culture. The tighter the demarcation which separates Academia ‘tom other forms of social labor the more difficult it is for everyday consciousness to appropriate scientific thinking.

/82// Capital, however, and the State find its results in a form which pre-destines them for their appropriation — if we leave aside the question of scientific transfer, which arises on quite another level. It is the way in which scientific thought is inscribed within the social structure of (in-)competences which puts its results spontaneously at the disposition of capital and the state and at the same time withdraws them from mass consciousness.

The same structure of demarcation lines encompasses the various directly ideological praxes as well as the scientific ones. In this regard, we should elaborate on what Marx spoke of in his *“Theses on Feuerbach”:* the ideological character of thinking is connected to its contemplative position. It is contemplative insofar as its restricted ideal activity is condemned to inactivity with regard to the practical context in its entirety. Within the respective and specific limits of the ideological praxes the access to the control over social living conditions (or the participation therein) is closed. The ideologists therefore inevitably take up a contemplative position above the entire social context and speculatively construe it according to the rules of their ideological form. Thus the priests interpret the secular proceedings under the aspect of the heavenly powers and the holy texts. The philosophers interpret history according to their subjective reasoning because they lack the possibility to take part in rational historical practice. This kind of (non-)intervention in the social problems being treated constitutes the specific ideological languages (“discourses”) about them.

## 10. Provisional Results — Open Questions

We understand the ideological as ideal socialization from above. Our method of genetic reconstruction can be summarized in the following general rules:

(1) proceed from below to above,  
(2) proceed from the society to the individual,  
(3) proceed from outside inwards,  
(4) proceed from practical necessity to the development of solutions, and  
(5) always analyze mediations by the activity of individuals, groups, classes.

This scenario of investigation and of the concepts briefly summarized here leads to a break with certain representative left positions. We will mention them here only in their slogan-form. The identification of the ideological with partisan or class consciousness, as it is represented in Leninism, fails to grasp the operative effects. The same is true for the identification of the ideological with false consciousness. Ideological phenomena are always condensations of opposites; antagonistic partisanships are overdetermined within ideological phenomena in function of the relations of forces. And a theory is not ideological just because it is partisan (cf. Haug, 1972). False consciousness, in the sense of /83// inverted ideas thought from above to below and which are derived from celestializations or idealizations, is without a doubt contained in everything logical insofar as it organizes consciousness. But what is more interesting theory and praxis is the effect of ideological socialization. Just as the identification of ideology with class consciousness gives up an effective weapon of criticism, the identification of ideology with false consciousness, if it does not leadto a resigned elite writing-off of the “stupid” masses, tends to lead to an iconoclastic frontal attack on the ideological as such and is incapable of productive critique and alliance. Such a policy of alliances does not just have a tactical meaning, but also a strategic one. This can be seen in the fact that the ideologicalforms already contain elements of community and needs directed towardthis alliance. Radical left-wing intellectualism inevitably runs into isolation. Hence, following from the analysis outlined here, it is crucial to breakwith all economism and class-reductionism. The sites, contents and operative modes of the ideological should be taken seriously in their specific quality as sites and stakes of class struggle. By declaring the ideological to be nonsense, class-reductionism and other forms of economism and vulgar materialist reflex-theories[[12]](#footnote-12) translate everything back into economic class interests.It is a verbal-radical call to desert all battlefields except that which theirrepresentatives conveniently think of as direct class struggle. Thus the only thing left for them is to wait for “the crisis” which, as if by reflex, will sudddenly open the eyes of all those who are still trapped in the mystifications of commodity fetishism. These vulgar materialisms, however, are still on a high leveI in comparison to the banal reduction of the ideological to a dependence on the social and historical. The representatives of such a sociologism do not know what an absurd nothing they presuppose in the form of a “truth” which would have no site, no historical time and which would not be determined by a concrete reality and situation. They ignore the senselessness of such a “truth” because they would probably reject the reflection on its condition as being itself ideological. Other, more solid representatives of the history of political doctrines, to whom it seems spontaneously plausible to agree to the given order, call any aspiration to other conditions “ideology”. For them, wanting anything definite in history at all is already ideology.

High above this are those Marxists who integrate their social criticism within a psychoanalytic framework. For them, all socialization mediated by psychic, independent of the societal formation, is ideological, and the ideological consequently is omni-historical. The concept of the *ideological state apparatuses,* which was worked out by Althusser in this context, has been extremelyfruitful for the theoretical discussion because it moved thediscussion away from a fixation to consciousness and turned it to the /84// material mode of existence of the ideological in the shape of apparatuses, praxes, rituals. However, we are opposed to certain implications of his concept and its formation in so far as he works from above to below, in an analytical-reductive way, and draws out the essence of the finished results without reconstructing their development out of practical necessities, without tracing their construction from below to above. Therefore, intuition, in the form of esoteric passwords, dominates his way of teaching, and the functionalist schema dominates his concepts. His theory is of little use for the necessary attempt to reconstruct the inner composition of ideological phenomena, to grasp their non-reducibility to the determinations of ideological form and function, and to locate a starting point for both ideological class struggle and the transformation of social relations. Because of the perspective from above, Althusser arrives at a rather resigned position for a historical materialist. By leaving the competence for the ideological in general in the hands of psychoanalysis he has removed the dismantling of the ideological from the agenda of a Marxist project.

In contrast, the understanding proposed here of the Marxist method is to conceive Marxism as “anti-ideological per definition” (Muñoz, 1978, p. 219). It is anti-ideological because it is for that which is *confined* within the ideological form and which is to be regained for the associated members of society.

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As we are all too aware, these programmatic theses are not achievements but rather goals. The theoretical outlines presented here are not only still fragmentary but also contradictory, and they leave a whole series of questions open. Some of these will be at least sketched as questions and tasks. Though we do not agree to the letter with the English proverb, “Better a ounce of history than a pound of theory”, because history driven without theory remains trapped in ideologies that are reproduced spontaneously and not recognized as such, we are aware that these outlines must be improved and further developed, above all, through historical research and concrete studies. Only in this way can we concretize our understanding of the — in the last instance — determining effect of the economic, not as a mere doctrine but as a concrete understanding of its operative mode, its mediations, etc. Furthermore, the interaction between economic pressure, violence and the ideological is still unclear. Our concept of ideological power is still ambiguous; the precise relationship between ideological powers, apparatuses and praxes needs closer investigation. The significance of rituals organized by the ideological apparatuses — correctly emphasized by Althusser — is not given sufficient importance in our “Outlines”. The transposition and operative mode of the ideological in the individual has not been researched to a great extent; a Critical Psychology of /85// the ideological, to catch up to the theory of socialization, is still a *desideratum.* We are also not yet in a position to distinguish clearly enough between an instrumental relationship to the ideological — as in propaganda — and practice positioned in ideology. How does propaganda — for example, of fascism or right-wing populism — actualize ideological subject-effects and organize corresponding political effects?

Even the basic concepts lack clarity. While it is clear to us that the state, law and church are to be understood as ideological powers, what about the family? What about the school? Is the latter to be understood as a relatively autonomous ideological power — like the church — or merely as a specialized state apparatus? And so on. Considering the ideological powers’ relative independence from one another, we do not yet grasp precisely enough the making of relative uniformity in the sense of the dominating ideology — in order not ply to claim it or read it off from the results, as is frequently done in Marxist literature. How, then, is class domination translated concretely into the system of ideological powers, apparatuses, praxes, etc.? In striving first of all to line the foundations and to break with the theories of ideology dominant until now, we have neglected the enormously important problem of analyzing different levels and forms translating class-specific positions into the logical and, above all, the production and deterioration of ideological *hegemony***.** Also lacking is a more exact understanding of the inner contradiction expressed by the question how to lead the *ideological* class struggle from an *anti-ideological* position as it should be characteristic for the Marxist labor movement. To understand this contradiction means to transform it from a paralyzing entanglement into a conscious main-spring. On another level, Volker Braun in his play *Great Peace* presented the contradiction of pursuing the politics of “horizontal” self-socialization in a necessarily “vertical” form ruling from Above-to-below. In the case of socialist ideology we must understand the difficulty of turning the “vertical” of state power back into the “horizontal” of theclassless community; or in the words of Friedrich Engels: *Only when human beings**themselves no longer merely reflect, but also act and guide, will ideology be at an end.*

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1. Translated by Karen Ruoff Kramer (Stanford University) and Suzan Brown. Published in W.F.Haug, *Commodity Aesthetics, Ideology & Culture*, New York and Bagnolet (France): International General, 1987. Page numbers of this original edition are marked /page//. The translation is slightly corrected by the author. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In Eder, 1973, p. 8, the state, which we conceive as both a result and pre-condition of class structure, is robbed of its dialectic and its pre-conditional character is absolutized when Eder says, one of the “decisive structural elements which the development ... toward class relations can make possible” is “the formation of centralized regulating instances (the state’s forms of organization)”. What we understand as alienation of society, ie, as a decisive restriction of its self-regulation, Eder formulates as a development “of new capacities of self-regulation on the level of the system’s formation” (p. 8). To this level Eder adds the level of “forms of consciousness”, which “determine the structure of possible development through their own logic” (ibid.). Social evolution,

   according to Eder, is conceived as the development of a system overdetermined by the logic of forms of consciousness (ibid.). The “constituents of social systems” Eder generalizes as being (1) exchange-processes for the purpose of system integration; (2) familial socialization for the purpose of social integration (against external enemies and internal “deviant behavior”); and (3) cognitive structures of learning for the purpose of dominating nature (p. 1511). The exchange-form is naturalized here just as spontaneously as the conscious competence for controlling social living conditions is dislocated to a superordinated instance, ie, the state-like form of socialization. The family, with its social-integrative function as the “motivation anchor for social behavior” (p. 16), appears here as a general-historical site of the ideological. The terminology hides the need to distinguish between the forms of socialization belonging to particular social formations and those which are general-social functions. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In my text “The Antagonistic Reclamation of Community” published in this  
   volume, I try to show that this assumption is somewhat over-simplified. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Translator’s note: Marx’s concept of *“objektive Gedankenformen”* (cf. MEW, 23, p. 90) emphasizes that the commodity-form of the product of labor is also the necessary form in which the producers spontaneously perceive the context of the relations of prodüItion. In order to remain close to Marx’s text we have translated the concept as “objective thought-forms”. In the following two translations of the passage referred to above *“objektive Gedankenform”* does not appear as the significant, compound concept that it really is in Marx’s text:

   (1) “The categories of bourgeois economy ... are forms of thought expressing with social validity the conditions and relations of a definite, historically determined mode of production, viz., the production of commodities.” (Cf. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy.* Vol. I. Translated from the 3rd German edition by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling. Friedrich Engels, editor. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977, p. 80.).

   (2) “The categories of bourgeois economics ... are forms of thought which are socially valid, and therefore objective, for the relations of production belonging to this historically determined mode of social production, ie, commodity production.” (Cf. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy.* Vol. I. Introduced by Ernest Mandel. Translation by Ben Fowkes. New York: Vintage Books, 1977, p. 169). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Our translation of “mode bizzare”. The English translation reads that the personality concerned is “strangely” composite (cf. Gramsci, 1971, p. 324). [Translator’s note.] [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Regarding the concept of “scientific *Weltanschauung”* and “private *Weltanschauung”,* see the controversy between Tomberg (1976, p. 621ff) and Haug (1976(b), p. 662ff). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Erich Wulff shows in his *Transcultural Psychiatry* that “ego” and “superego” in the Freudian sense are Eurocentric categories, because they refer to a private ego (Wulff, 1979, p. 8ff; 1969, p. 234ff). If one proceeds from a horizontal network of social relations, in which the “ego” is situated, as well as from the real “super-us”, then the categories “ego” and “superego” can be reinterpreted in a way that overcomes the spontaneous Eurocentrism. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. We have not quoted the *Collected Works* here, because its translation is not as close to the German original: “... the world has long dreamed of possessing something of which it has only to be conscious in order to possess it in reality.” (Cf. MECW, Vol. 3, p. 144.) [Translator’s note.] [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The German *“Stände”* (“estates”) is a basic category of medieval society, ofits social order and representation within the feudal state. Its meaning is not what we associate today with the term “professions”. [Translator’s note.] [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. In the German original Marx wrote “buffoons” and “menial servants”. [Translator’s note.] [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Cf. Capital, Vol. 1, p. 458. [Translator’s note.] [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Hereis meant theoretical positions that conceive of ideas and activities as mere rellexes of economic categories. [Translator’s note.] [↑](#footnote-ref-12)