

Ideology, Education, and the Angel of History

Kaustuv Roy
Azim Premji University

Abstract

This paper argues that ideology implicitly implies the possibility of the non-ideological, and even though the critical discourses no longer seriously consider an “outside” of ideology, it is nonetheless essential to do so. Also, from the pedagogic point of view, it is entirely unsatisfactory to decline consideration of the non-ideological or the transcendent. If all of education is ideological then the question comes up: how do we envision a liberatory moment? In view of this, the argument here offers a praxis of dialectical tensions that through the clash of paradigms offers what it pedagogically claims to be a non-ideological moment.

Introduction

Today after decades of social criticism filtering through the social field one need not particularly be of the Marxist Left to admit that ideology or belief systems play a significant role in determining, say, for example, what is taught and received as education in institutions of formal learning, or how the earth is viewed by the average adult, or how women are treated in a particular society, and so on. At the minimum, the educated sensibility, it would appear, is willing to concede that: first, who or what we are socially and culturally tend to influence our perceptual susceptibilities, i.e. how we construe relations in the world; second, such construals regulate preferential schemas within social choice making; and third, some preferential schemas are

leveraged and universalized in social projects such as education and human development. Multicultural critique, elite theory, post-modernism, feminisms, Foucauldian genealogy, post-colonial voices, subaltern studies etc. have added weight to this key critical perception, albeit differentially, through their respective understandings of the workings of Power and Knowledge. And the thicker conversation has helped, it seems, to spread the understanding of how specific ideology guides and shapes *epistemes* as well as the social subject, and how advantaged social positions allow privileged groups and their *weltanschauung* to determine what is chosen as relevant framework of social action from the vast body of human experience.

Nevertheless, the central epistemological problem regarding the theory of ideology continues to remain unresolved, which may be simply stated thus: Ideology implicitly seems to suggest, perhaps intuitively, the existence of the non-ideological, that is, of objectivity, the other side of the binary relation. In other words, the mere use of the word seems to imply that we are somehow subconsciously aware of a non-ideological state and/or of the possibility of approximating to that state. Some neo-Marxists and relativists might argue that such is not necessarily the case; that all positions are ideological and there is no ideology-free moment. Nevertheless, the writer has found on numerous occasions during his lectures, that there is an incessant and unremitting suspicion that there might be a way to a non-ideological moment in social interaction. If we take that intuition seriously, the following questions would then reasonably arise: In a relativistic world, what is the non-ideological moment? How is the subject to rescue her/himself from ideology? How can we distinguish an ideological theory from a purportedly non-ideological one (is there even such a thing)? A theory of ideology ultimately will have to deal with these questions.¹ This paper intends to offer a concrete way of approaching the above set of questions.

Let us begin with a brief recollection of the concept of ideology. In *The German Ideology*, Marx writes that, unlike the belief

of the traditional philosophers, “Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life”.² In other words, the starting point of human development is not some transcendental consciousness but the actual material activities of real human beings and their empirical relationships, which determine the way consciousness itself develops.³ It would therefore be consistent to say that those who come to control or give direction to those activities are also in a position to give direction to wide-ranging social assumptions and mental representations of reality through the particular forms of organization of material activities. To recall the famous words: “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. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas.”⁴ In turn, such networks of thought or cognitive frameworks can also mask or systematically conceal the effect of dominant social relations and falsify the real situation of

¹To some extent Adorno’s work in *Negative Dialectics* approaches the problem but veers off without laying out a microsocial praxis.

² Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (London: International Publishers, 1970)

³Ibid. “The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill society with the industrial capitalist.”

⁴Ibid.

people. The on-going consciousness-shaping activity becomes inbuilt into social institutions that surround a person and becomes the mechanism through which s/he understands her/his role in the world as well as the forces that govern that world. Thus, the idealist position of humans constituting the objects of their perception is reversed and the constitutive individual is now seen as the *constituted* individual. This is at the same time a reversal of the empiricist position in which subject/object duality is maintained.

In general, therefore, the social institutions that shape a person's thoughts, ideas, and frameworks develop in such a way as to incorporate the ideological, i.e. the system of world-making values that surround one. Marx asserts that social mechanisms emerge in class society that systematically create distortions, errors, and blind spots in the consciousness of the non-privileged. That is to say, members of a subordinate class suffer from ideological oppression in that their mental representations of the social relations around them systematically conceal or obscure the realities of subordination, exploitation, and domination embodied in those relations.⁵ For

⁵Historically, ideology was first associated with negative meanings and generally understood as false representation and distortion of the social reality or legitimating power relations. Nevertheless, especially after V. I. Lenin and Antonio Gramsci, the concept of ideology has become a positive concept that implies an action-oriented set of beliefs, a collective system of meanings and representations peculiar to class relations, or more properly a totality of forms of social consciousness. In the 1930s, Gramsci significantly extended Marxist thinking about ideology and consciousness. He gave ideology a more active role in politics and history than classical historical materialism.

example, exploitative processes help to commodify value in a way that social relations between people are reduced to relations between things.⁶

Traditional Marxism used the base-superstructure model to explain the operation of ideology. The relations of production with exploitation as its central mechanism lies at the base. This is covered over by the superstructure of culture, religion, politics, education, and other ideological arrangements and institutions. Traditional way of thinking about ideology led Marxists to show how ideologies obscure the real world, meaning the true relations in the world. But according to the French Marxist Louis Althusser, ideology does not falsely reflect the real world but "represents" the "imaginary relationship of individuals" to the real world. Ideology is a second-order misrepresentation: the thing

He argued that the proletariat has the ability to influence the terms of its consciousness, so there is an extended struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat over the terms of the representation of the existing social reality.

⁶This is the process of commoditization of labor in which value is detached from human activity and attributed to money. This means that commodity fetishism is at work in a capitalist marketplace through the mystification of commodity as a sacred object and making money the real criterion of value. In other words, commodity is in essence a product of labor that creates value to be determined by socially necessary labor time required for the production of commodities. However, the market mechanism in capitalism operates in such a way that labor is perceived and therefore exchanged as if it was just an ordinary commodity among other commodities. For Marx, this is a rejection of seeing labor as the genuine origin of value and reducing its status to a mere commodity that can be simply exchanged for money. Thus, commodity fetishism turns reality upside down, inverts the real order of causes, and conceals the essential mechanism of capitalism. Thus it is another aspect of ideology.

ideology falsifies is itself already at one remove from the real. In other words, we are always within ideology because of our reliance on linguistic and discursive habits of establishing our reality. Ideological differences, in this thinking, are nothing but different representations of our social imaginary. Althusser argues that ideology has a material existence because "an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices." In other words, ideology is not merely in the mind but are "inserted into practices." Cultural and religious observances, schooling, sexual behavior etc. each have ideology inserted into them. Ideology does not falsify the world through these practices but gives a twist to the always already linguistic representation of reality.

Ideology is also performative; it is in our performance of our relation to others and to social institutions that we are continually constructed as subjects. When the student responds to the teacher in a certain anticipated manner, or when the wife behaves towards the husband in a certain way both are performatively being shaped as subjects. It is not difficult to imagine that a child growing up in a ghetto would be fundamentally shaped by the ruling prejudices, perceptions, and deprivations of the ghetto just as a child growing up in a middle class neighborhood would be thoroughly conditioned by the biases, blindness, and excesses typical of his surroundings. The shaping of subjectivity continues through each apparently trivial act of recognition and "the rituals of ideological recognition guarantee for us that we are indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects." Thus

according to Althusser, the main purpose of ideology is in "constituting concrete individuals as subjects."⁷ The important thing is that we do not recognize ideology as ideology because it represents for us a stable reality and therefore we are not aware of our continual self-constitution. Instead the constituted subject is "interpellated as a free subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection 'all by himself'"⁸

This subtle mechanism of subjectivation Althusser called "Ideological State Apparatus" (ISA). For example, typical ISA's were religious, educational, family, and cultural institutions. But "what the bourgeoisie has installed as its number-one, i.e. as its dominant ideological State apparatus, is the educational apparatus, which has in fact replaced in its functions the previously dominant ideological State apparatus, the Church"⁹ Through education, groups become socialized and conditioned with the necessary beliefs, ideals, goals, and self-representation such that "each mass [...] is practically provided with the ideology which suits the role it has to fulfill in class society."¹⁰ Schools are probably the most comprehensive of the ISA since they hold children captive for better part of the day for five or six days of the week. "An ideology which represents the School as a neutral environment purged of ideology (because it is...lay), where teachers respectful of the 'conscience' and 'freedom' of the children who are entrusted to them (in complete

⁷ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: NYU Press, 1971) p.117.

⁸ Ibid. p.123.

⁹ Ibid. p.103-4

¹⁰ Ibid. p.105.

confidence) by their 'parents' (who are free, too, i.e. the owners of their children) open up for them the path to the freedom, morality and responsibility of adults by their own example, by knowledge, literature and their 'liberating' virtues."¹¹The ideology of schooling weaves a network of fantastic delusion: schools are supposedly neutral spaces, and teachers are supposedly interested in the critical development and freedom of thought of children, in a context of supposedly value-neutral knowledge, supported by parents who are supposedly ethically inclined and responsible in their own lives.

But neither Marx nor later Marxists have explicitly dealt with the question of how to visualize the non-ideological. Gramsci wrote extensively of hegemony and Georg Lucas brilliantly of false consciousness, but they did not give us any picture of a non-ideological or pre-ideological existential state. The early Marx spoke of *Gattungswesen* or human essence which might have led to a closer scrutiny of the above but he abandoned the notion later. Nevertheless, the consideration of the non-ideological has to be undertaken seriously, for it stands to reason that even to be aware of the ideological there has to be an intuition of a non-ideological moment. Just as there would be no reason to speak of light, if there was no perception of darkness whatsoever. Such a task however must be undertaken cautiously from the extremum, i.e. from the limit points of human experience, from displaced consciousness as it were, where theory does not go normally. Here it will be experienced through the exploration of three related

angles or questions: a) What is a pre-ideological moment? b) What is the path to it? c) What is its relation to education? Rather than positing a non-ideological moment I have preferred to consider the ontology of a pre-ideological moment here for reasons that will become clear.

It will be argued that in order to have an intuition into the pre-ideological, as the systems of world relationships rolls forward in time, the angel of history in each of us must simultaneously walk backwards each moment into the future.¹²This is the de-subjectivation process that allows the subject to retrace consciously the formal modes through which s/he becomes a subject. This process of walking backwards, a sort of reverse or negative becoming, must traverse through three different dimensions of human experience in order to divest itself momentarily of the ideological. The pre-ideological, it is claimed here, lies at the intersection of the three tensions: these are three dialectical pairs, like triangular spokes of a wheel these hold up the wheel of time but at the centre of the whole system is a point of stillness which is non-dialectical and non-ideological. Metaphysically the point of stillness assumes great importance

¹²In his "Theses on the Philosophy of History", Walter Benjamin writes of Paul Klee's painting "Angelus Novus", interpreting its central figure as the angel of history, whose "face is turned toward the past": "Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress". Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Knopf, 1969), p. 257.

¹¹ Ibid.

and is not merely metaphorical but ontological. The three dialectical pairs are as follows:

1. Mythic-historical
2. Psychic-rational
3. Ethico-political

The task of this paper is to explicate the above three-fold framework that allows us to visualize the desired pre-ideological moment both ontologically as well as in terms of participatory micro-social praxis. Let us begin by considering the above individually.

Three Dialectical Pairs

1. The Mythic-Historical: All ideologies are the children of time. Progress as ideology, humanism as ideology, gender and race as ideology and so on must be historicized as epistemic acts. But the angel of history must also step out of time for a moment challenging the flow and the framing of events in time, otherwise we move from one reaction to the next in an endless chain. Therefore an inquiry into time is necessary to shock the perception out of the world-as-routine. Kantianism does not permit this as time is the *apriori* of sense experience.¹³ Therefore we have to reach beyond Kant. Myth transcends time; time itself is made the subject of experience in the mythic dimension. Hence history must be countered by myth, just as myth was once countered by history. But myth can also be the source of ideology, can it not? Take, for instance, Brahminism. Caste supremacism traces

caste privilege to Manu and thinks of it as timeless edict written in stone. But the very attempt to trace it to Manu is a process in time, a linking on the temporal plane trapped in time. It is not an accession to the timeless. The temporal cannot seek legitimacy in the a-temporal. On the contrary, an ontological exercise in a-temporality is the experience of time itself by a momentary recoil from the passage of events and their description through liminality. It is a momentary release, a retreat from the relentless stream of events and eventalizations that push human beings along set trajectories.¹⁴

Modern subjectivity is created out of time. The quality and character of the modern individual is a temporal construction and hence the temporal coordinates of our subjectivities need close attention in any emancipatory project. Modernity is not simply an epochal category. Peter Osborne writes that “the conditions for an abstract sense of the historical meaning of the present appear to have developed in five main stages” and I shall take the liberty to quote him extensively on this point. Osborne writes: “The word *modernus*, meaning 'of today' as opposed to 'of yesterday' - what is over, finished, or historically surpassed - first came into use in the course of the fifth century AD at the time of the collapse of the Roman Empire, when the cyclical

¹³ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Dover Publications, 2004).

¹⁴ The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze coins the term “eventalization” to mean the process of selection and formation of events from the surrounding melee of phenomena. For example, what history calls the French Revolution is in reality a construct made out of thousands of part events and myriad singularities that over time have congealed into a single event in the social imaginary covered by an overarching designation.

opposition of 'old and new' characteristic of pagan antiquity was replaced by the sense of an irreversible break with the past. (It derived from modo, meaning 'recently'.) Generational conflicts about the prestige of ancient writers had appeared in Antiquity (in Horace and Ovid, for example), but as Le Goff points out, 'they did not have a word for "modern", since they did not contrast novus with antiquus.' The sense of the present as new which emerges at this time became the basis for the conflicts between Ancients and Moderns that punctuated the Middle Ages, from the second half of the twelfth century to the beginning of the Renaissance."¹⁵ Modern consciousness was born of a struggle over establishing the overweening significance of the new. The ideology of the "new" seems to strongly suggest the "fresh" or an authentic beginning which did not owe anything to the past. The mythic, on the other hand, denies the supremacy of the new. "Mythic consciousness as defined by Mann involves...a pervasive awareness of oneself not only as an individual, but also as the temporary manifestation, or embodiment, of an age-old and ongoing continuity. Individual life is part of a greater continuum: the transient sequence of antecedents and descendants, extending back into the past and forward into the future. One is part of a process, or procession; and it is to this, not to its particular ephemeral form at any given moment, that one's obligation lies. And from such a perspective, death is almost

incidental."¹⁶ In sharp contrast to modernity, in mythic consciousness the individual is part of a flow with no particular significance attached to the bounded entity. Unlike modern consciousness which hides from death, which tries its best to deny the facticity of death, mythic consciousness does not see death as a finality or as a problem but as a continuity with life. Here lies the key to deconstructing individuality and therefore one thread in the escape from ideology. The practice of realigning vision to comprehend oneself as part of a continuum that is neither synchronic nor diachronic is stepping out of time which is the foundation of all ideology.

Next, Osborne writes, "[a] major semantic shift took place with the consciousness of a new age which developed in Europe in the course of the fifteenth century. This was initially registered in three ways: by the emergence of the terms 'Renaissance' and 'Reformation' for ideas denoting the threshold of a new (unnamed) period; by the designation of the preceding epoch, now taken to be definitively over, as the Middle Ages; and by the fixing of the term 'Antiquity' to denote the pagan culture of ancient Greece and Rome. In the process, a new relationship between the antique or ancient and the modern was established at the expense of the Middle Ages, since the Renaissance gave precedence to the ancient over all other cultures. Here, modern is opposed to medieval rather than to ancient, and the

¹⁵ Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 1995), p.9.

¹⁶ Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, *Secret Germany* (New York: Random House), p.124.

modern has a right to preference only insofar as it imitates the ancient.”¹⁷ An interesting periodization takes place towards the end of the fifteenth century. The temporal watershed is marked as the Middle Ages. Certain attitudes and aspects of elite behaviour epitomized by the Church and foisted upon the commoner by the landed gentry become the symbols of medievalism. These are now seen as bigoted and obscurantist, and rejected as irrational. Now, classical Greece and ancient Rome become the sought-after symbols of high art and culture; incipient modernity aligns itself with this vision and looks to establish a continuity with Hellenic cultures once rejected by Christianity as pagan. The period overlooked and shunned in the process are the centuries that begin to be called the Middle Ages. But a closer reading of the micro-history of the period, say, of the practices of those denounced as witches, or of the cathartic lives of groups reveal a very different picture of the period, belying the picture of an age of dead beliefs and obscurantism.¹⁸ Thus, intellectually having leap-frogged over a few intervening and inconvenient centuries, elite identifications establish modernity semantically. Mythic consciousness, on the other hand, does not pick and choose epochs to suit its mien. In the mythic, there is no vantage point from where to privilege one age over another. This creates another opening for the task of desubjectivation: the loss of privileged observation for ‘cherry-picking’.

¹⁷Osborne, *The Politics of Time*, p.10.

¹⁸See Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

The next point Osborne makes is that “In the third stage, which roughly runs from the sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth, the threshold concepts of Renaissance and Reformation through which consciousness of a new age was initially registered, were transformed into ideas descriptive of now completed historical periods. This called for a term denoting the new period as a whole which followed the Middle Ages. It is at this point that the phrase *neueZeit* comes into use - although only in a neutral, chronological sense at first - signifying that the times are ‘new’ by contrast with the Middle Ages or *mittlereZeiten*. There is no specification of a criterion of newness here. *NeueZeit* is thus not, at this stage, a category of historical periodization in any substantive sense. Rather, it stands in for the absence of one, along with the continuing *lise* of *modernus*. The connotations of *neue* are, however, sharper than *modernus*, since it had acquired what Le Goff describes as ‘an almost sacred baptismal character’ in the context of medieval Christianity, for which novelty unconnected to the primordial values of the origin was sacrilegious. As Berman has recently reminded us, for the Bible it is God alone who ‘makes all things new’. This is, of course, also the period of the famous Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns, or the ‘Battle of the Books’ as it came to be known. If the Renaissance is to be characterized by the replacement of the authority of the Church by that of the Ancients, it was this latter form of authority which now, in turn, became the object of

attack.”¹⁹Modernity treats symbols literally, either as true or false representation of reality. Hence it is not surprising that self-conscious modernity becomes impatient with the figures and ideology of the Renaissance and attacks the Renaissance as the new authority. By contrast, “the mythic image is not to be taken literally and concretely as it would be in the belief-system of a particular religion, nor is it to be dismissed as 'mere illusion,' as often happens in scientific circles. Instead, we must approach myth symbolically as revealed eternal 'truths' about mankind's psychic existence — about the reality of the psyche. 'Once upon a time' does not mean 'once' in history but refers to events that occur in eternal time, always and everywhere. The world of myth has its own laws and its own reality. Instead of concepts and facts that make logical sense, we find patterns of irrational imagery whose meaning must be discerned or experienced by the participant-observer. Discovering these patterns of meaning is what Jung meant by the *symbolic* approach to religion, myth, and dream.”²⁰The symbolic meanings are not epochal but timeless in the sense they are not associated with any particular age, in fact they take one beyond the temporal to a different order of individuation and a different equation with reality about which we will say more in the next section.

Next, “It was only during the fourth phase, the Enlightenment, that the initially neutral phrase *neueZeit* came to acquire the sense of a qualitative claim about the newness of the times, in the sense of their being 'completely other, even better than what has gone before'. The condition for this transformation of the sense of the relationship of the present (and its immediate past) to the more distant past - from being a simple addition in a linear sequence of chronological time, to a qualitative transcendence of the past of an epochal type which is more than the mere rebirth of a more ancient spirit - was a reorientation towards the future. This reorientation could only take place once Christian eschatology had shed its constant expectation of the imminent arrival of doomsday, and once the advance of the sciences and the growing consciousness of the 'New World' and its peoples had opened up new horizons of expectation. Only at this point was a conceptual space available for an abstract temporality of qualitative newness which could be of epochal significance, because it could now be extrapolated into an otherwise empty future, without end, and hence without limit. The distinctive structure of the temporality of modernity may thus be seen to derive from a combination of the Christian conception of time as irreversible with criticism of its corresponding concept of eternity.”²¹It must be added that the “new horizons of expectation” did not come from scientific discoveries and their promise alone. The

¹⁹Osborne, *The Politics of Time*, p.10.

²⁰ Donald Kalsched and Alan Jones, “Myth and Psyche: The Evolution of Consciousness,” C. G. Jung Foundation for Analytical Psychology Inc. website available at http://www.cgjungny.org/d/d_mythpsyche.html.

²¹Osborne, *The Politics of Time*, p.12.

consciousness of a “New World” was extrapolated on the backs of slavery, conquest, and colonialism. Uncertainty was deflected on those who found themselves on the wrong side of history, and consequently, non-Whites were available for “meditations on Terror.”²² Accordingly, the individuality of modernity can be seen to be derived from this ‘frontier’ amalgam of futurism and exploitation, of freedom and oppression, of fear and domination. The Hegelian idea of the dialectic propelling us toward a ‘higher’ future is encoded throughout the ideology of modernity. But for Hegel, the heroic personality was the true historical actor, and it was morally justifiable for the heroic actor of history to bring disaster on his people and on others in the name of historical progression. Hegel called it “the cunning of reason.”²³ Thus the contradictory individuality of modernity receives philosophical sanction and at the same time the idea of the ‘chosen people’. Mythical consciousness is not constituted of time, consequently there is no idea of progress, and no room to invoke the “cunning of reason”; in myth, the individual is not pitted against time but against eternal ethical choices.

Futurism is an ideological part of modernity’s utopia. The mythic consciousness, on the other hand, invites humans to examine themselves as they are, to discover what they are against the deepest

traces of submerged cultural forms and events, without any fantasies of moving forward on an empty time line. Reflecting on Franz Kafka, Giorgio Agamben notes: “In the Reflections on Sin, pain, and the True Way [Kafka writes]: ‘Only our concept of time makes it possible for us to call the day of The Last Judgment by that name; in reality it is a summary court in perpetual session.’ For man it is always already the day of the Last Judgment: the Last Judgment is his normal historical condition, and only his fear of facing it creates the illusion that it is still to come. Kafka thus replaces the idea of a history infinitely unfolding along an empty, linear time with the paradoxical image of a *state of history* in which the fundamental event of the human condition is perpetually taking place.”²⁴ Mythic consciousness endlessly reproduces the sum total of the human condition in each moment, demanding that we face it without running away from it.

Finally, “It is this full sense of a ‘newest time’ (*neueste Zeiten*), opening up a new period by virtue of the quality of the temporality it involves, which was condensed and generalized in the second half of the nineteenth century into the ideas of *Neuzeit* and *modernite*, therewith coming to be understood as constitutive of the temporality of modernity as such. It is this, the temporality of Baudelaire’s and Flaubert’s, Simmel’s and Benjamin’s late nineteenth-century modernity, the historical

²² Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

²³ G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956).

²⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p.113

force of the fundamental objects of which 'lies solely in the fact that they are new', which has been the focus of recent attention to modernity as an aesthetic concept, and more broadly, as a form of social experience. The logic of the new, fashion, and aesthetic modernism as a 'rebellion against the modernity of the philistine' which nonetheless works within the same temporal structure, may thus be understood as the result of an aestheticization of 'modernity' as a form of historical consciousness and its transformation into a general model of social experience. In the course of this generalization of an epochal form of historical consciousness into the temporal form of experience itself the dialectical character of the new as the 'ever-same', articulated philosophically in Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence, and deciphered economically in Marx's analysis of the logic of commodity production, is revealed for the first time."²⁵ Modernity as an aesthetic idea, and the aestheticization of modernity as part of its ideological make-up, requires special attention in considering the subjecthood of the modernist individual. In the theology of modernity, expressed in popular Darwinism, "the good is the well-adapted, and the value of that to which the organism adapts itself is unquestioned, or is measured only in terms of further adaptation."²⁶ The aesthetic individual is one who is well-adjusted to the collective and to his outer conditions. He does not question the value or the ethics of

that to which he is required to be adjusted. Unwillingness or incapacity to adjust become signs of neurosis or hysteria. The predisposition at the heart of this adjustability is mimesis or the capacity and inclination to imitate. The self-preservation instinct together with popular Darwinism (ape those who seem to be the fittest) confers on mimesis an artistic form. Uniformity, homogeneity, and replication thus become the pillars of modernist aesthetics and the arsenal of its ideology. But, rather than adjustment to some contingent collectivity, or proclivity to mindless repetition, myth presents to us the precious possibility of evaluating ourselves from a truly different vantage point. The above is in no way a valorization of mythical consciousness but the construction of a limit. Historical reasonableness must be used as a critical limit for the appropriation of myth, just as myth must be used critically as a deconstructive platform for modernist rationality. The two readings of time, the historical and the mythical, must be set against one another. The greatness of Stoic thought, for example, was the realization of two readings of time—*Chronos* and *Aion*. *Chronos* represents the present, moving from contraction to contraction, repeating indefinitely, giving us temporality of the event. Whereas *Aion* represents the decomposition of time into infinite divergent pathways that do not repeat.²⁷ Modern historical consciousness has privileged the former and eliminated perception of the latter. The deconstruction of ideology

²⁵Osborne, *The Politics of Time*, p.13.

²⁶Max Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 1974), p.88.

²⁷See Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, transl. M. Lester & C. Stivale (New York; Columbia University Press, 1990).

requires that we pay attention to both readings of time, the sequential, and the anarchic.

2. The dialectical pair to be considered next is the Psychic-Rational: Karl Gustav Jung, the famed psychologist, has written that the emergence of rational consciousness is a comparatively recent event in human history, but in modernity it has taken precedence over all other cognitive functions such as intuition, sensation, and feeling.²⁸ The effort toward the pre-ideological must next traverse a “negative dialectic” between the psychic and the rational.²⁹ The tension between the two poles will show up as an important de-ideological tool. Rationalist ideologies like scientism must be made to face the other and much older side of human experience, namely the intuitive. The psychic traces back to the source events of human history and looks from there at the *eschaton*, minimizing the importance of the material developments in between. Whereas the rational mind focuses on the material expansion of the in-between, on the relation between means and ends, overlooking the meaning of the source events and the consequences these foretell. Therefore, each, that is, the rational and the psychic, must

generate conscious opposition and act as the limit point of the other in order to reach beyond the ideological.

Let us begin with a brief review of the path of reason. Max Horkheimer writes, “When the idea of reason was conceived, it was intended to achieve more than the mere regulation of the relation between means and ends: it was regarded as the instrument for understanding the ends, *for determining them*. Socrates died because he subjected the most sacred and most familiar ideas of his community to the daimonion, or dialectical thought, as Plato called it. In doing so, he fought against the subjective, formalistic reason advocated by the other Sophists. He undermined the sacred tradition of Greece, the Athenian way of life, thus preparing the soil for radically different forms of individual and social life. Socrates held that reason, conceived as universal insight, should determine beliefs, regulate relations between man and man, and between man and nature.”³⁰ Contrary to the present view of reason, which is more or less instrumental, the earlier view regarded it as a motive force that was an end in itself. Plato’s Socrates saw the task of reason as subjecting the most cherished beliefs of his society to critical scrutiny and through that finding the life of non-contradiction. It was not simply about linking ends to means. Socrates dared to go beyond the Greek pantheon to posit the *daimon* or soul-spirit and made it the arbiter of truth. The *daimon* was at the same time an awakened reason, a

²⁸Karl Gustav Jung, states: “Since every man, as a relatively stable being possesses all the basic psychological functions, it would be a psychological necessity with a view to perfect adaptation that he should also employ them in equal measure.” See *Psychological Types* In *Collected Works of C. G. Jung* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

²⁹The Hegelian dialectic produces a moment of synthesis (identity) of opposites, whereas the negative dialectic suggested by Theodor Adorno produces a moment of non-identity.

³⁰Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, p.6.

living intelligence that was human essence itself.

But through various stages, especially in modern times, reason has mainly emptied itself of such dialectical content. It has become the handmaiden of positivism and the scientific outlook. “Reason has become completely harnessed to the social process. Its operational value, its role in the domination of men and nature, has been made the sole criterion... Any use [of reason] transcending auxiliary, technical summarization of factual data has been eliminated as a last trace of superstition. Concepts have become ‘streamlined,’ rationalized, labor-saving devices. It is as if thinking itself had been reduced to the level of industrial processes... in short, made part and parcel of production. What are the consequences of the formalization of reason? Justice, equality, happiness, tolerance, all the concepts that were in preceding centuries supposed to be inherent in or sanctioned by reason, have lost their intellectual roots. They are still aims and ends, but there is no rational agency authorized to appraise and link them to an objective reality. Who can say that any of these ideals is more closely related to truth than its opposite?” Over the centuries, reason has become completely externalized, used as a tool of deduction, verification, indication, and summation. The concepts of reason have settled down into mere signifieds without self-criticality, hollow words without living content. Words like democracy, freedom and suchlike have come to signify a certain bureaucratic-

technocratic order and not a living struggle of forces. The loss of phenomenological significance has divorced reason from the experience of reality. And “[the] more the concept of reason becomes emasculated, the more easily it lends itself to ideological manipulation... Vested interests opposed to the traditional humanitarian values will appeal to neutralized, impotent reason in the name of ‘common sense.’”³¹ The emasculation of reason has served the ideology of modernity very well and it has become an ally of the politician and the technocrat, who equate reason to common sense. But as Plato’s Socrates showed again and again, reason is the enemy of common sense; it subverts the perilously settled nature of things. To recover that possibility one must go back to the *daimon* to once again recognize in reason the lost potential for inner mobilization. We have to go beyond the instrumentalization and colonization of thought; we have the task of relinking reason with the other parts of the being.

The becoming of the human is much more than the random chatter of the ego-personality, it is an expression of life itself that we have to take seriously and assist in every possible way. To oppose the impotency of reason, we have to enter the depths of the human psyche and through the revelation of the structure of consciousness understand our real relations to self, society, and the world, for the path to an ideologically free moment can only be accessed through the discovery of true relations: “Through the investigation of

³¹Ibid. p.13-15. Text rearranged.

these different avenues leading into the hidden depths of the human being and through the revelation of the motives and influences at work there, although astonishing to the uninitiated, a very clear and definite conception of the actual human relationship of all humankind is obtained. It is this recognition of these common factors basically inherent in humanity from the beginning and still active, which is at once both the most hopeful and the most feared...It is disliked by those individuals who have prided themselves upon their superiority and the distinction between their reactions and motives and those of ordinary mankind. In other words, they attempt to become personalities through elevating themselves and lowering others, and it is a distinct blow to discover that beneath these pretensions lie the very ordinary elements shared in common by all. On the other hand, to those who have been able to recognize their own weaknesses and have suffered in the privacy of their own souls, the knowledge that these things have not set them apart from others, but that they are the common property of all and that no one can point the finger of scorn at his fellow, is one of the greatest experiences of life and is productive of the greatest relief.”³²Ideology has generated the false consciousness of superior human beings and inferior. Elite and dominate groups in charge of propagating this false consciousness, and who benefit from it in countless ways, resist the idea that beneath the outer armory of reason the drives, motives, and inner structures of the psyche are the same throughout humanity. Unfortunately,

beneath the supremacist ideologies and posturing, lie elements such as fear, desire, and insecurity, undistinguishable and common to all. At the same time, for the oppressed, this knowledge is a source of liberation. So the first thing one must do to have a glimpse beyond ideology is to acknowledge the hidden aspects of the psyche which are common to all. This undermines and dethrones Power to a large extent since Power rests on the assumption of superiority and in turn it loosens an important hold of ideology.

The second task is to examine the nature of our thinking and its relation to language for ideology is coded in thinking and its language: “We have two forms of thinking—directed thinking and dream or phantasy thinking. The first, working for communication with speech elements, is troublesome and exhausting; the latter, on the contrary, goes on without trouble, working spontaneously, so to speak, with reminiscences. The first creates innovations, adaptations, imitates reality and seeks to act upon it. The latter, on the contrary, turns away from reality, sets free subjective wishes, and is, in regard to adaptation, wholly unproductive.”³³Linear, directed thinking, whose prime example is scientific and technological thinking, has learnt to operate sequentially on reality to produce ordered, intentioned effects. But this is comparatively of recent origin. A more ancient form of thinking consists of phantasy thinking that relates to primal terrors and desires. Jung writes: “Should we go further back into history, we shall find

³² Beatrice M. Hinkle, “Introduction” In C. G. Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious* (New York: Moffat, Yard & Co., 1917), p.xliii.

³³ C. G. Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious* (New York: Moffat, Yard & Co., 1917), p.22.

that which today we call science, dissolved into an indistinct cloud. The modern culture-creating mind is incessantly occupied in stripping off all subjectivity from experience, and in finding those formulas which bring Nature and her forces to the best and most fitting expression. It would be an absurd and entirely unjustified self-glorification if we were to assume that we are more energetic or more intelligent than the ancients — our materials for knowledge have increased, but not our intellectual capacity. Our knowledge has increased but not our wisdom. The main point of our interest is displaced wholly into material reality; antiquity preferred a mode of thought which was more closely related to aphantastic type. Except for a sensitive perspicuity towards works of art, not attained since then, we seek in vain in antiquity for that precise and concrete manner of thinking characteristic of modern science. We see the antique spirit create not science but mythology. Unfortunately, we acquire in school only a very paltry conception of the richness and immense power of life of Grecian mythology.”³⁴ The first attitude of ideology is that somehow modern culture is superior and the inhabitants of modern culture are more intelligent. Unfortunately, the correspondence of thinking with reality proves neither. It is true that we see the sun as a ball of burning hydrogen and not as a mythical god or we see lightning as electrical discharge and not some vindictive arrow from the bow of divinity—both contemporary views are more accurate than the antique views of phantasm—but neither brings us closer to the things-in-themselves

or take us beyond facticity. Therefore a vital realization is that wisdom does not necessarily accompany the concrete accuracy of thought. This realization, so far removed from the usual self-glorification of modernity, results in a momentary stilling of thought and therefore in the upsetting of ideology.

A serious inquiry into ideology also requires a different perch than the directed thought of modernity. The Angel of History must step back into phantasm in order to develop the critical eye for the self-appraisal of reason. Phantasm is available to us through dreams, reverie, half-waking states etc. and we have to pay some attention to this altered way of apprehending reality not to valorize phantasm but to strike the right distance from the dominant ways of thinking about relationships within reality: “With this we affirm the important fact that man in his phantastic thinking has kept a condensation of the psychic history of his development. An extraordinarily important task, which even today is hardly possible, is to give a systematic description of phantastic thinking. One may, at the most, sketch it. While directed thinking is a phenomenon conscious throughout, the same cannot be asserted of phantastic thinking. Doubtless, a great part of it still falls entirely in the realm of the conscious, but, at least, just as much goes along in half shadows, and generally an undetermined amount in the unconscious; and this can, therefore, be disclosed only indirectly. By means of phantastic thinking, directed thinking is connected with the oldest foundations of the human mind, which have been for a long time beneath the

³⁴ Ibid. p.24.

threshold of the consciousness.”³⁵ Here Jung names the main theatre of the phantasm as the Unconscious. Some have likened the conscious-unconscious relation to a floating ice-berg which has only a small part above the sea and most of it submerged. The unconscious is the submerged part of our being. Ideology is always a fragment that dominates other fragments. Countering ideology pedagogically requires that we have to mobilize all parts of our consciousness to whatever extent possible in order to overcome the overweening influence of any particular fragment. This makes new openings for the psyche to grow in unexpected ways freeing and transforming libidinal energies attached to erstwhile ideological forms.

The call is not for the rational to leave the stage to impulse, but to realize that there are other equally powerful and equally important ways of relating to and constructing reality. This realization is essential to take us to the point of stillness that we identified at the beginning as pre-ideological. From within the ideological it is hard to realize the extent to which we are colonized by objective reason at the expense of other parts of our being, “when the thought of mankind had achieved that independence of the idea which could resist the aesthetic impression, so that thought was no longer fettered by the emotional effects of the impression, but could rise to reflective observation. Thus man entered into a new and independent relation to nature whereby the foundation was laid for natural science and technique. With that, however, there entered in for the first time a displacement

of the weight of interest; there arose again real-transference which has reached its greatest development in our time. Materialistic interest has everywhere become paramount. Therefore, the realms of the spirit, where earlier the greatest conflicts and developments took place, lie deserted and fallow; the world has not only lost its God as the sentimentalists of the nineteenth century bewail, but also to some extent has lost its soul as well. One, therefore, cannot wonder that the discoveries and doctrines of the Freudian school, with their wholly psychologic views, meet with an almost universal disapproval.”³⁶ At a point in history, rational thought became capable of emptying itself of cathartic content and rose to reflexivity arriving at conclusions by, of, and about itself. Primordial affects were redirected onto nature-substitutes and the material world became the new obsession. The new ideology of materialism displaced and rejected any reference to the spirit leaving the world bereft of a whole dimension of life connected to the source events of a culture.

3. Next we take up for consideration the third and last dialectical pair the Ethico-Political. Why is this duo framed as a dialectical pair and what is their relevance to ideology? Politics is seen as synonymous with ideology; it is virtually impossible to take a political position that is free of ideology. Wherever, doctrines, ideals, principles, and symbols are involved, as in politics, the domain becomes ideological by definition. Modern politics is Machiavellian without a theory of ethics which makes it

³⁵ Ibid. p.35.

³⁶ Ibid. p.36.

opposed to a proper evaluation of the true interest of human beings. The assumptions of political culture in most nation-states today can be summarized as follows: “The first of these features [...] is the traditional concept of politics as amoral, ruthless statecraft, or a dispassionate pursuit of self-interest...Second, it is taken for granted that the values governing politics would be largely inconsistent with those governing other areas of life.”³⁷ Third, *realpolitik* does not have to rise above contradiction, in other words, it does not have to reconcile different aspects of its own functioning, but can proceed according to the dictates of ‘common sense.’ Fourth, the political elite who take decisions on behalf of the people actually represent the will of the people. And finally, it is alright for politics to be a zero-sum game. From the ethical standpoint we can see how each of the above is either a dangerous or a bogus assumption. But each is cloaked in a certain ideology, each naturalized and normalized by a certain political discourse till its conditions of possibility have become completely obscured, and all of them together form the basis of the reward system of the political State.

It is because of this disappearance of the horizon that in the search for a pre-ideological moment we look for the ethical, and I find no position more suitable for this purpose than that of Gandhi who opposed politics with a transcendental ethics. Gandhi did not run away from politics but sought to

infuse it with the tension of the ethical. What Gandhi resisted most of all was the increasing encroachment of the modern State in every walk of life, replacing the fluid, intimate loyalties of natural communities with standardized ones backed by the ideologies of nationalism and secularism. Gandhi’s “social theory was not the result of philosophical analysis of social concepts, but the consequence of his engagements with the historical and social forces of his time.” Gandhi did not appeal to some romantic golden age to work out his vision. Instead “he appealed to the mythological characters, cultural symbols and social systems of India's past to reconstruct India's present, not a past that is idealized but a past that embodies the essential and the ultimate values of life. His primordialism involved a faith-epistemic in constructing a society that is holistic, and that cares for the self-realization of the individuals. The master symbol of his social theory was ‘swaraj’.”³⁸

Gandhi understood that man-made statutes and grand declarations of freedom do not actually bring freedom. Instead, freedom had to be earned by each individual by means of the toil of her/his own soul, mind, and body. “Swaraj presupposes the interdependence of the individual on others, nature and the ultimate. This inter-dependent nature of realities, this inter-relatedness and being-with-others constitutes the very core of the individual. Hence inter-relatedness is not an additional quality of the individual arrived at through a social contrast for the

³⁷AshisNandy, *Exiled At Home* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.48-9.

³⁸George Pattery, “Pluralist Society: A Gandhian Perspective” In *Civil Society in Indian Cultures*, VI. Ed. Asha Mukherjee et al, The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, Washington, 2001.

sake of socialization. The individual is related. This inter-relatedness presupposes pluralism which is not simply a philosophical concept, but an operational principle which immediately gives non-violence its legitimacy. The individual should not violate the Truth in others. This respect for the truth in others, and this relatedness with others non-violently is the path of self-rule or *swaraj*. It is the very striving after *swaraj* that takes care of *Swaraj*.³⁹ The practice of *swaraj* is built on serving the Truth and not on serving political masters. The discovery of truth in every instance of life and thereby the overcoming of narrow self-interest forms the core of *swaraj*. The ethics of *Swaraj* also stresses *maitri* (non-personal friendship) and *karuna* (compassion). These two form the ambience and the very ether of community life. We can see that the care for the other, and in this case not just the human other but all beings in nature, is the ethical paradigm. This is opposed to the paradigm of self-interest which is politics. Power is resisted by adherence to truth, calculation is resisted by compassion. Thus is a dialectical opposition proposed between the political paradigm and the ethical paradigm.

Pedagogy and Ideology

In linking the question of ideology to education, the major assumption I make is that the purpose of education is inner mobilization, and the discovery of a liberatory moment within oneself requires the discovery of the non-ideological.⁴⁰ No doubt such a position is informed by a

Socratic-Platonic vision, but the precise movement of praxis has to be worked out through the paradigms in every epoch. In other words, time itself affords us the pedagogy of the timeless. The tensions set up here between the dialectical pairs are selected from the significant domains of experiences of modernity and the tensions must be sustained in order to grow and touch a pre-ideological moment. Such a praxis is a movement of the in-between and not directed towards the student alone. The deconstruction of the ideologies of the self is the task of both student and teacher. That is to say, it is a paradigm that is always trying to reach beyond the artifice of the teacher-student binary (which is political). Each dialectical pair, namely, the mythic-historical, the psychic-rational, and the politico-ethical are suggestive of an inner dynamic as well as an outer one. In other words, each is transcendent as well as immanent; each evaluates events and phenomena at one level (of the pragmatic) and at the same time retreats to the fluid state from where events are constructed. No single paradigm suffices to carry out this praxis, hence each is opposed to a second. The teacher of history must be aware of the subjectivity of time inherent in her/his discourse and therefore attempt not to balance but to oppose it with the mythic. Likewise, the teacher of science must attempt to include the complex intuitive mode of the psyche in order to temper the subjectivation of rationality. Similarly, the political discourse must be opposed by the ethical. Although I begin with the teacher, in each case it results in the displacement of the teacher authority since the basic assumptions of the favored discourses are upset by the contrasting paradigm. The

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ This "oneself" must not be understood as some private self, but as an existential interrelatedness.

Angel of history comes to rest at the point of
dynamic stillness intersected by the three
tensions.