The fundamental problem of sociology is the dialectic between systems of value and structures of power. I use the word dialectic hesitantly because it has been so overworked in recent years as to have become virtually a cliché. I also use it broadly without the presupposition that a system is carried through by it necessarily from lower to higher levels. What the sociologist sets out to understand is how in every society people single out certain things in life for special attention, things that they hold dear, that they cherish or value; how they try to protect these from distortion and corruption by the existing powers; how they strive for power themselves so as to achieve a fuller realization of their cherished values; and how, having attained power, they distort and corrupt these very values or seek to suppress the cherished values of others.

Thus, no matter what specific meaning we may decide in the end to give to it, the context for the discussion of ideology must be a broad one. An ideology cannot be understood simply on its own terms, in terms of either its argument or its vision, howsoever important these might be. Ideologies seek to connect the universe of values with the realm of power, and it is essential to see what is involved in this. Before doing so, it may be useful to try to place this problem of connecting the one with the other in its modern setting.

A characteristic feature of the modern world is its preoccupation with ideologies, one’s own as well as those of others. This remained true even while pronouncements were being made in the fifties and sixties in influential academic circles in America about the “end of ideology”. As events soon afterwards were to show, ideology had by no means been banished from America, not to speak of Europe. As for the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America—the

* I am grateful to M. N. Srinivas, Gopal Krishna and Ravi Dayal for their comments on a draft of this paper.

so-called Third World—ideology, far from being dead, was gaining a new lease of life from the challenges of a post-colonial era. The talk about the end of ideology only confirmed intellectuals from these countries in their opinion about the pervasiveness of the ethnocentric bias in so much of what passes for sociology in the western world.

In saying that the preoccupation with ideologies is a characteristic feature of modern times, one must emphasize the extent to which this preoccupation is conscious and articulate. Every age and every society has had its particular dialectic of ideas and interests, but in our age it has become part of a much larger consciousness than in the past. Even while saying this, one must proceed with caution for nothing is more easy—or more tempting—than to exaggerate the uniqueness of one’s own age, particularly in the matter of consciousness.

Much has been said about the moral certitude that is believed to have prevailed in past societies in contrast to the moral incertitude characteristic of present ones. Perhaps there was a measure of moral certitude in Christian and Islamic societies of old, at least so long as they were not seriously disturbed by sects and heresies that challenged or threatened the established order. It is difficult to say as much of traditional Indian society, where Hinduism tolerated—some would say encouraged—the co-existence of a diversity of sects and philosophical systems. Certainly, the degree of heterodoxy permitted in Hindu India was on the whole far larger than in Stalin’s Russia or in Hitler’s Germany, although nothing definitive can be said about the political implications of this permissiveness.

The practical activity of the contemporary intellectual is directed in a large measure to the political order and in only a small measure to the religious order—these two terms being used in their conventional sense. This is no less true today of intellectuals in the so-called traditional societies than of their counterparts in the so-called modern societies. The Indian example illustrates the point very well: professional intellectuals—academics, journalists and, to a lesser extent, creative writers—feel perfectly at ease in discussing politics, but almost embarrassed to speak or write about religion in a serious way.

**Ideologies, Political Order, and Religious Order**

The withdrawal of active intellectual interest from established religion does not necessarily imply the disappearance or even the decline of what may in a broad sense be described as the sacred. Indeed, a concern for the sacred is precisely what modern ideologies have in common with traditional religions even though the manner in which this concern is articulated may be different in the
two cases. A major preoccupation for intellectuals in all societies of the past has been with problems of immortality and of life after death. This is hardly an area of practical concern for the contemporary intellectual whose attention is focused to a far greater extent on the political order here and now. The distinctively modern attitude towards the sacred is to consider that what partakes of the sacred has to be realized in this world, for there is no other world in which to realize it.

The concern with the political order here and now is accompanied by what Mannheim (1960) described as the “intellectual restiveness” characteristic of our times. There has been first of all a phenomenal increase in the number of intellectuals, and a corresponding diversification in their roles. Secondly, there have arisen massive movements of intellectuals across classes, across regions and across the countries of the world. All this has created unprecedented possibilities for direct communication between intellectuals and the people for and about whom they write.

Students of western society and culture have commented widely on the increasing diversity of class backgrounds from which intellectuals are recruited, and the implications of this for the development of a reciprocity of perspectives. Again, in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries the “intelligentsia” are described as a stratum and not a class for the very reason that they originate from various sections of society, so that presumably they do not represent the interests of any particular section. There can be no denying the extent to which intellectuals have become mobile in the modern world, but whether this has led to a true reciprocity of perspectives or merely to “intellectual restiveness” is not an easy question to answer.

Even more than in the case of persons who move from one class to another, the exposure to a variety of intellectual perspectives has a marked effect on those who move from one civilizational context to another. This can be seen quite clearly in the situation of the western-educated intellectual in the countries of Asia, Africa and also Latin America. This situation itself differs from one country to another, depending, firstly, on the scale of the exposure to the intellectual culture of the West, and, secondly, on the richness and vigour of the indigenous intellectual tradition in the country concerned.

The ambiguities in the situation of the western-educated intellectual in the Third World are exemplified by the case of India which has, on the one hand, the largest number of such intellectuals outside the West, and, on the other, one of the oldest and most elaborate intellectual traditions of the world. From the end of the 19th century onwards Indians began to travel to England and, later,

1. The best statement of this problem, as far as I know, is in Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, pt. I, bk. II, ch. v and vi; in the dialogue between Father Zossima and Ivan Karamazov, Ivan says: “There is no virtue if there is no immortality.”
to America in order to study in the centres of higher learning, and some of them stayed there long enough to become closely involved in western society and culture. The volume of this traffic has, if anything, increased since independence, and there must now be literally thousands of Indian intellectuals—scientists, scholars and writers—who have had professional employment in both India and the West.

What are the ideals of a universal intellectual community? Whatever they may be, the faith of Third World intellectuals in such ideals becomes all the thinner as they confront the realities of the distribution of power among nations. Nor can they easily turn back and create a new and satisfying set of ideals out of the tribal or hierarchical worlds that they have inherited from the past. And so, the restiveness grows.

It would be a mistake to regard this restiveness as being simply a problem of the distribution of power. It is above all a reflection of the failure to find any satisfying intellectual solution to this problem. No intellectual solution can be found satisfying today if it addresses itself, as it often did in the past, to a world beyond the earthly one or even to a remote future. It has to relate itself to the present world of day-to-day realities, to this generation or at most the next. Hence the immediacy of the link between ideas and the realm of power.

The intellectual has thus come to define his responsibilities in a new way. There is today, particularly in the Third World but also elsewhere, a kind of frenetic urgency to make intellectual activity “socially relevant”. Again, it is not as if intellectual activity anywhere at any time could remain wholly detached from its social context. But either the “ivory-tower intellectual” actually existed in the past, or else he is a figure of fiction created by the present-day intellectual to offset the new role that he would like to assign to himself.

No matter what the case might have been in other times, a considerable amount of intellectual activity is today directed towards the existing order of society and in particular the existing distribution of power, explicitly, openly and self-consciously. Intellectuals have been seized with the idea that the world can and must be changed, and that they must create the climate for change despite the resistance of those in power. This is the broad context in which the problem of ideology has to be considered.

Ideologies of Change and of the Status Quo

It is essential, in my opinion, to start from the position that an ideology, like a religion, is not necessarily evil even to one who does not have an ideology (or a religion) of his own. Clifford Geertz (1964: 47-76) was right in pointing
out that to describe ideology as distortion is like describing religion as superstition, and in both cases the description obstructs discussion instead of facilitating it. But that perhaps is not the point: the point is whether those who would object, with good reason, to ideology being described as distortion might not also object to its being compared with religion.

However, it is not true that people have in general a negative view of ideology. This might have been so in the United States at the time when the collection of essays entitled Ideology and Discontent (1964) was being put together; it certainly is not so today in the countries of the Third World, in western Europe and perhaps even in the United States. Indeed, the pendulum seems to have swung to the opposite extreme; in India at least it is the intellectual who disclaims any ideological attachment who may be required to account for his peculiar insufficiency.

A newspaper headline in The Statesman, one of India’s leading dailies, reads: “Janata Has No Ideology, Says Chavan.” Mr. Y. B. Chavan, leader of the Congress party, now in opposition in the Indian parliament, was attacking the ruling Janata party in an idiom whose meaning would be at once understood by any Indian intellectual and indeed by any intelligent reader of The Statesman. For a government or a party or a leader, to have no ideology is to betray the lack of a coherent vision of the future and an articulated plan of action—in short, a lack of principle. To admit to a lack of ideology is for the intellectual no less than for the politician to come dangerously close to drawing on oneself the charge of opportunism.

In India and perhaps also elsewhere, whether one has a positive or a negative attitude to ideology depends in some measure on the role one sees it as playing in the process of change. To criticize a person or a party for having no ideology is also to say that the party or the person has no clear vision of a future better than the present, and hence neither the will nor the ability to construct a better society. In this kind of usage the ideology is seen as a pledge, as it were, of this will and this ability. Without an ideology change will lack direction and, lacking direction, it will quickly run its course.

But this is not the only usage of ideology. Considered as an engine of change, it can also be seen as an instrument of the status quo. The resistance to change comes not only from established political authority and entrenched economic interests, but as well, from habits of mind set in the mould of particular ideas and beliefs. These ideas and beliefs which support the existing order of society have also their systematizers, but their role is perceived as being somehow covert and subtle in contrast to the open and forthright positions adopted by those who propound ideologies of change.

Of all the distinctions that may be made among ideologies today, it would

appear that the most important is the one between ideologies of change and of the status quo. The contrast is sharpest in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America where the former are aggressive and the latter, at best, apologetic. When Mr. Chavan says that the Janata party has no ideology, what he means is that they are not "progressive", that they are unable and unwilling to disturb the status quo; no doubt they also harness ideas and beliefs to achieve their purpose, but such an assortment of ideas and beliefs can hardly be dignified with the name of ideology.

The aggressive postures of the ideologies of change and the defensive ones of the ideologies of status quo make it extraordinarily difficult to bring them on to the same plane of analysis. Few would admit today, perhaps even to themselves, to being ideologists of the status quo while, on the other hand, it is difficult to restrain the enthusiasm of those who believe themselves to be ideologists of revolutionary change. All of this involves some evasiveness and much self-congratulation and it is thus that, despite Geertz's eminently reasonable admonitions, it is not always easy to resist the temptation to dismiss all ideology as mystification.

The meaning of the word "ideology" has undergone strange transformations in its passage over the centuries and across the continents. Much has been said about Napoleon's dismissive attitude to ideologies and ideologists as being concerned with unreal, impractical and trivial matters. Today ideologies are not necessarily or even generally considered impractical: political leaders defer to the need for them and some intellectuals at least are inclined to regard everything else as trivial if not impractical. In the 20th century both Lenin and Mao not only made their own revolutions but also wrote their own books. (Gandhi was not a revolutionary in the same sense, but he wrote profusely as also did Nehru who was more self-consciously an intellectual.)

Today in the ex-colonial countries ideology is thought of—by both politicians and intellectuals—as an indispensable instrument of change whereas a hundred years ago in Europe it was more typically considered to be an obstacle to change. For Marx ideology was above all "bourgeois ideology", i.e. a form of false consciousness which obstructed the development of true, i.e. proletarian, consciousness. The contrast was typically between bourgeois ideology and proletarian consciousness.

It was no doubt in deference to this usage that Mannheim (1960), who was otherwise a critic of Marx, sought to introduce the distinction between ideologies and utopias, the former oriented to the status quo and the latter to change. But history has overtaken the usage, and it would be precious to insist that there is no communist ideology, only a communist utopia or that there is no capitalist utopia, only a capitalist ideology. When Mr. Chavan says that the Janata party has no ideology, people understand at once what he means; were he to say that the Janata party has no utopia, they might be puzzled.
Ideologies, Abstract Values, and Realpolitik

Even fifty years ago Mannheim (1960: 30 sq.) was able to note no more than a "pseudo-unity" among the various meanings given to the word "ideology". From what I have already said it should be evident that since Mannheim wrote, the range of meanings has expanded rather than contracted; new meanings have come into play without the old ones becoming wholly obsolete. It will serve little purpose to try to fix a single, unvarying meaning to the term, and to hope thereby to banish other meanings out of court. A term such as ideology—like terms signifying other key concepts such as class, race or nation—must take into account a series of changing referents if it is to serve as a useful basis of discussion. When the reality itself is ambiguous, there is the risk of leaving out some important dimension of it in the zeal for giving it a tight and rigorous definition.

But granted that there is no real unity among the various meanings attached to the term ideology, it is not necessary to take into account all its available meanings in discussing the subject here. To attempt to give a summary of these various meanings or even to make an inventory of them would be an enterprise in itself, which I shall avoid. Instead I shall try to elaborate one possible meaning of the term which seems to me to correspond fairly well with the concerns of at least a large number of those who speak or write about ideologies.

An ideology is that set of ideas and beliefs which seeks to articulate the basic values of a group of people—what they cherish for themselves and for others—to the distribution of power in society. An ideology is not a systematic theory although it has systematic properties and it often strives to be a theory. An ideology may or may not succeed in articulating basic values to the distribution of power, but such articulation is part of its purpose and design. Also—pace Mannheim—an ideology may seek to strengthen the existing distribution of power (the status quo) in order to achieve a better and fuller realization of the values it espouses, or it may seek to subvert it with a similar end in view.

Ideologies have a range of concerns from the abstract to the concrete. In concrete terms their most important concerns are with the institutions of society. For it is these institutions that embody the values cherished by people and are at the same time objects of contention among them in their struggle for power. It is thus that the institutions of work and leisure, of family, caste and community come to occupy a central place in ideological debate and discussion.

An ideology, as I understand it, looks both ways: it looks to values on the one side and to power on the other. A scheme or plan, no matter how ingenious
or coherent, which seeks merely to acquire or retain the instruments of power, can hardly be called an ideology if it has little or no concern for the values cherished by people. On the other hand, a set of ideas which seeks merely to give expression to the basic values of people with complete unconcern for power and politics can hardly be called an ideology in the proper sense of the term.

I believe that it is essential to distinguish ideology from what may be called Realpolitik. It is also important to distinguish it from religion as such. It is not easy to do this consistently in either case. And because ideology tries to be a bridge between two aspects of reality that are in themselves disparate and heterogeneous, it does not lend itself to a neat and elegant definition.

In the modern world politics has greatly extended its scope: the struggle for power among princes can no longer be confined to the court, insulated from the day-to-day concerns and demands of the people. In other words, politics has to strive continuously to relate itself to the fluid and amorphous values of a changing society; it is, as it were, constantly on trial in the arena of public life. The sheer struggle for power cannot be its own justification today; at the very least it has to be camouflaged by the promise of a better social order for the people. Nor is this promise merely a camouflage, for in the age of democracy, politics can hardly hope to succeed unless it takes seriously into account the concerns and demands of the people.

This is by no means to say that the sheer struggle for power could be its own justification in any age or any society. But “participation” in politics has acquired a new significance today, if not in practice at least in principle. This gives a special urgency to the task of linking the political process to the values of the people, especially in the countries of the Third World where these values are often out of step with those of the leaders of opinion as well as political leaders. If democracy means bringing politics to the doorsteps of the people, then democratic politics can hardly work except through conscious and continuous interaction with their values.

There was an understandable link between religion and the struggle for power in earlier ages, but this link was in general more subtle, less direct, less evident, less conscious and certainly less explicit than is the link between modern ideologies and modern political systems. Sometimes the link between religion and the struggle for power is thrown into sharp relief, as, for instance, in the early phase of the development of Islam, or, more generally, during the rise and fall of sectarian movements. Nevertheless, the proposition holds that religion in the ordinary sense has many concerns—major ones at that—which have little to do with the struggle for power although, of course, no religion can be wholly indifferent to this struggle.

Religions as generally understood have mystical and contemplative elements, and in some religions these elements are very strong. All of them deal, in one
way or another, with the problem of personal salvation, and some of them explicitly recommend the renunciation of this world as an aid to salvation. Renunciation of the world is antithetical to the spirit of ideology which is concerned with either a defence of the world here and now, or its transformation through the struggle for power.

Thus it is important to keep in mind the overlap as well as the differences between religions as conventionally understood and ideologies as conceived here. Because of the differences, the analogy between religion and ideology, often made with the object of debunking the latter, is misleading; the analogy is misleading whether or not it is made with the object of debunking a particular ideology. At the same time, had there been no real or substantial overlap, the analogy could hardly be so effective in debunking. It is interesting that the proponents of some ideologies, such as nationalism, find the analogy far less offensive (or embarrassing) than do the proponents of other ideologies, such as communism.

An ideology as a set of connected beliefs and ideas has to be distinguished from the basic values it seeks to articulate. There is no reason to assume that the former accurately mirrors the latter. To do so might indeed be contrary to the design of some ideologies if not of ideologies as such. This is obviously true of what may be called radical ideologies, particularly in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America (the so-called traditional societies), but it is also true, though less obviously, of liberal ideologies and perhaps of conservative ideologies as well.

The Use of Concepts and Symbols

In describing an ideology as a set of ideas and beliefs I have so far used the phrase “ideas and beliefs” in a loose way, without trying to be very specific as to what ideas are and what beliefs are. While it may be necessary to distinguish between an ideology on the one hand and an outlook or a creed on the other (Shils 1972), one must recognize that ideologies differ a great deal among themselves both in their mode of conceptualization and in their form of expression.

Without attempting to resolve them, Plamenatz (1971: 16) has pointed to the ambiguities commonly encountered in the use of words such as “ideas” and “beliefs”: “Sometimes we say ‘idea’ when we might just as well say ‘belief’ . . . But by ‘idea’ we sometimes mean ‘concept’; we mean not a belief but something used to express beliefs.” Now, in the study of ideologies, let us note that beliefs may be expressed not only by means of concepts but also through the use of symbols: one important way in which ideologies differ from theories is in the use they make of symbols.

3. See particularly the essay entitled “Ideology”.
In modern times Georges Sorel was among the first to clearly grasp the significance of symbols, as opposed to concepts, in the struggle for power. He sought to present his own ideology, that of syndicalism, not as a theory but as a *myth*. But there was something paradoxical about the very nature of Sorel’s enterprise. He was a theoretician despite his professed lack of faith in theories; he analysed the nature and significance of symbols despite his plea for the subordination of analysis to intuition; and in the end his “myth” was put to uses that were very different from the ones for which he had tried to create them. The real importance of Sorel’s work (esp. 1915) would seem to lie in the way in which it reveals the tension between symbols and concepts, between a vision and a theory.

Sorel saw very well that the world could be changed through a struggle for power only if this struggle engaged men’s emotions and not simply their reason. (Men are not always easily moved by an appeal to their reason and large ideas are often but weakly expressed by concepts.) Hence his attempt to construct a myth which would be charged with images, metaphors, and symbols. Obviously, there can be an articulation of the basic values of people to the distribution of power in society through a system of symbols and not merely through a system of concepts. And as Sorel’s work shows, one might attempt to bring about this articulation in a conscious, open and systematic way.

Among contemporary social scientists Clifford Geertz (1964) has argued forcefully for the due recognition of the symbolic elements contained in each and every ideology. Ideologies use symbols to express themselves, and in the absence of an established science of “symbolic action” one may easily misconstrue their significance. A symbolic statement has to be understood in the context of a particular idiom, and to translate it literally into a different idiom is to reduce it to absurdity. Those who dismiss ideological statements as distortions are themselves often guilty of distorting the true significance of such statements by their failure to relate them to their proper symbolic context.

The study of symbolism has now emerged as an important branch of anthropology. It has contributed richly to the understanding of religious beliefs and ideas, particularly in primitive societies. What was earlier considered to be either irrational or incoherent is now made significant, by being related to its particular context of symbols. So great has been the success of this kind of enterprise that some anthropologists, including perhaps Geertz himself, tend to view cultural anthropology as a whole as being essentially a study of symbols and their meanings.

Though fruitful and rewarding up to a point, the study of symbolism, at least in its present anthropological incarnation, is riddled with ambiguities. Obviously, if we are to understand statements made in a cultural idiom other than our own, we must have some grasp of the system of symbols and their meanings which together constitute that cultural idiom. The word “yellow” or
“brother-in-law” may refer to various things or persons in various contexts, so that a literal, single-phrase translation is not only inadequate but often misleading. If we are to understand the significance of a particular political statement made by an Indonesian nationalist, we must have some familiarity with the images, metaphors, and symbols commonly in use among Indonesian nationalists.

While all of this is true and very illuminating in the study of, say, religion among the Nuer, it begins to appear a little trite when applied to the analysis of political debate in one’s own society. This is not at all to say that we know everything that needs to be known in our own society of symbolism in general or even of political symbolism in particular. Rather, the method of apt illustration, which appears so convincing when applied to the study of symbolism in cultures other than our own, tends to be less than satisfying when applied to the study of it in our own. Also, the method of structuralism, which has with such apparent success cracked the code of primitive cosmologies, has not really told us very much that was not already known about symbolism in modern political ideologies.

It might be argued that we lose as much by treating every political statement as a symbolic statement as we do by treating every such statement as a statement of scientific theory. Every modern ideology makes use of both concepts and symbols, and very little is gained by obscuring the distinction between the two. We have to recognize this even while admitting that it is difficult to keep the distinction between them clear and while also admitting that the western ethnocentric bias has worked havoc with our understanding of non-western cultures by a literal and simple-minded translation of symbols in one system into concepts in another.

How do we differentiate between a symbol and a concept? The fact is that we do perceive the distinction well enough even though we are not always able to formulate it in a precise or systematic way. We recognize that the same phrase or term such as “class” or “nation” or “race” may be used as either a symbol or a concept and that their signification is not the same in the two cases. We say, for instance, that the phrase “proletariat” has become a symbol; but is that to say that there cannot be a concept of the proletariat? Indeed, the same author might in the same text use the same phrase, for instance, “proletariat” or “bourgeoisie”, employing it now as a symbol for its dramatic force and again as a concept for its analytical edge.

A concept seeks to disclose its meaning whereas the full meaning of a symbol remains hidden; or, to put it differently, the meaning of a concept is stated, i.e. made explicit, whereas the meaning of a symbol is unstated, i.e. left implicit. The conceptual elements in thought seek to control, to define and to limit the meanings of words; whereas, in Whitehead’s expressive language (1959: 61), “the symbolic elements in life have a tendency to run wild, like the vegetation in a tropical forest”.

Ideologies deal in large ideas such as equality, liberty, humanity, solidarity and progress, and it is in any case not easy to tie such ideas down within the defined limits of a concept. It is doubtful whether we will ever be able to define terms such as these with the same precision with which we define terms such as household, stratum or population. We do no doubt have concepts of equality, liberty or progress; but these concepts need to be supplemented by symbols to suggest the full range of their meanings.

Concepts are not always able to do what one might like them to do, and, as Sorel sensed it so well, symbols have a force and a weight of their own. The very ambiguity of their meaning enables the ideologue to deploy them with skill and effect, and so to move people in a way in which perhaps no concept can move them. A symbol conveys not only an immediate meaning but also the promise of a richer meaning than that seen on the surface. To turn a symbol into a concept is to rob it of its magic; to turn a concept into a symbol is to open men's minds to unlimited possibilities. Those who engage in ideological debate have sometimes a deeper and a finer awareness of this than do cultural anthropologists trained in the methods of structural analysis.

If we are to understand what ideologies are and what they do, we must recognize not only the distinction between concepts and symbols but also the difference between being swayed by symbols and using them to sway others. Those who seek to articulate the basic values of people to the distribution of power in society harness both concepts and symbols to their task, and do so with varying degrees of self-awareness. This is far from saying that ideologues are people who manipulate symbols to achieve power for themselves. Rather, the true ideologue is swayed by his own symbols as much as he sways others by them; he is convinced by his own concepts as much as he convinces others by them.

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Ideologies differ greatly not only in what they say but also in the ways in which they say what they do. At one end there are statements which present themselves in the form of scientific theories; at the other, literary works such as novels, plays or poems which convey messages in a very different form. The same ideology is, characteristically, stated in all these various ways and, not infrequently, the same statement contains various and heterogeneous elements. Its tone of acrimony apart, Engels's description (1954: 32) of the writings of earlier socialists as a "mish-mash of less strikingly critical statements, economic theories, pictures of future society" makes a point that holds for many ideologies and not just the "pre-scientific" ones of the early 19th century.

Engels's own pamphlet, Socialism: Utopian and Scientific (1970, III: 95-151), is, to my mind, one of the best examples of an ideological statement presented in
the form of a scientific theory. It enjoyed enormous success on publication and, as the author pointed out in his Introduction to the English Edition of 1892, it was more widely translated, if not more widely read, in its time than even *The Communist Manifesto*. The two pamphlets are separated by about thirty years in time and, although they discuss the realization of the same kind of values and of the same struggle for power, there are notable differences of expression. The *Manifesto* is heavy with imagery, metaphor and symbolism; *Socialism*, by contrast, relies much on concepts elaborated and refined by Marx during the years that stand between the two publications.

*Socialism* presents itself as a reasoned argument, showing that the attainment of equality and justice through the conflict of classes will follow from the nature of the historical process. Both the values to be realized and the struggle for their realization are shown to be dependent on laws which can be discovered by the methods of science. The appeal is to the reader’s reason, not to his passion or faith, and facts and arguments are presented in an ordered and systematic way. Engels writes in the belief that he is presenting his case in the manner of a scientist—hence the title of the pamphlet—although he does refer, perhaps inadvertently, to “the revelation of the secret of capitalist production” by Marx (Engels 1970, III: 133).

The case for *Socialism* is sought to be established through a more or less systematic use of concepts. Terms such as “commodity”, “exchange”, “mode of production”, “productive forces”, “surplus value”, and “wage labour” are clearly used in the way in which one might use concepts for the purpose of scientific analysis. Moreover, for a fuller understanding of their meanings these concepts are referred back to Marx’s *Capital* (one of the most important scientific treatises of the time).

Even the symbolism of the *Manifesto* is embedded in a conceptual scheme whose basic contours are made clear and explicit. It is not merely a call for action but also an appeal to reason. That this appeal has successfully cut across the barriers of many cultures is evident from the popularity of translations of the *Manifesto* in a variety of languages.

As indicated earlier, ideological statements are presented in “literary” as well as “scientific” works, and the former of course make use of imagery, metaphor and symbolism in a much more obvious manner. A literary work may not be intended by its author to serve as an ideological statement, or mainly as one, but may in effect come to play that part. Much depends on the success with which it is able to relate the underlying values of a people to the existing structure of power, and the conviction with which it is able to show that these values can be more fully realized only with the replacement of the existing structure of power by a new one. In doing this it presents not so much a new theory as a new vision; new concepts perhaps, but, even more than these, new symbols.
Literary writers—novelists, playwrights, and poets—have played a prominent part in giving shape to nationalist ideologies in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. This is easy to understand. Nationalism, no matter what its economic and political doctrine, must after all be anchored in a specific culture. Even when it claims to articulate universal values, it has to invoke a particular historical tradition and a particular historical destiny. It cannot rely merely on general concepts but has to create or rejuvenate specific symbols. It is perhaps no accident that Mao Tse Tung, unlike Karl Marx, was also a poet.

Among those who have contributed to the development of nationalist ideologies in this way, many have been ambidextrous as writers. They have produced creative literature—novels, plays, and poems—as well as essays, pamphlets and tracts. When similar concerns are expressed in different forms by the same writer, one can gain a better understanding of the interplay between concepts and symbols within a given framework of ideas and beliefs. A novelist or a playwright or a poet does not give up the use of symbols when he composes a tract; only he has then to state his argument and make his reasoning explicit.

Bankimchandra Chatterji (1838-1894), the first great novelist of modern India, was almost an exact contemporary of Engels. His writings in the Bengali language helped to awaken a particular kind of political consciousness among the leaders of the nationalist movement in Bengal and, to a lesser extent, in the rest of India. Bankimchandra was an extraordinarily versatile writer whose production is divided almost equally between novels on the one hand, and essays, pamphlets and tracts on the other. Although he is much more widely known for his novels—which have been translated into several Indian languages as well as English—, his other writings display a remarkable intellect seeking to grapple with ideas flowing both from the Hindu literary tradition and western writers ranging from Rousseau to John Stuart Mill.

In 1882, at the height of his literary career, Bankimchandra published a novel called *Anandamath* which became at once a symbol and a weapon in the hands of Hindu nationalists. As a 20th-century editor of his works has written, “At one time the patriotic activist held the Gita in one hand and Anandamath in the other.” (B. R. [1975], I: 41, Introd.) Bankimchandra’s nationalism was of a particular kind: it was Hindu rather than Indian nationalism and, as such, it carried a discordant note into the next phase of the nationalist movement when Hindu-Muslim unity became a major concern under the leadership of men like Nehru. On the other hand, Bankim’s Hindu nationalism did not demand a

4. Bankimchandra Chatterji also wrote in English, but his English writings did not get a wide readership. (See B. R.)

5. This novel is singled out for special mention in the article on Bankimchandra Chatterji in successive editions of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 
rejection of the West: rather, it called for an incorporation of the positive qualities of the contemporary western civilization.

The story of *Anandamath* is based on the Sannyasi rebellion of 1772. Its principal characters are a group of ascetics dedicated to the cause of their land. The land is personified as the mother and the ascetics refer to each other as her *santan* or children. They have renounced all personal material concerns until such time as their land is liberated and restored to peace and plenitude. They live together in an abandoned monastery, united into a brotherhood by the worship of the mother and the practice of arms. Moral and physical courage are the two qualities they value most and their primary objective is to free their motherland from the yoke of foreign rule.

The climax of the story is a battle in which the *sannyasis* deal a crushing blow to the united British and Muslim forces. But their victory does not lead to the establishment of a new Hindu polity in place of the prevailing oppressive regime. The fruits of victory have to be renounced because Hindu society must first prepare itself for self-governance. The Hindus must rouse themselves from their age-long torpor: they must "once more become great in knowledge, virtue and power". Till then they must submit to British rule and learn from the British the ways of acquiring external knowledge which they once had but later lost.

Literary critics in Bengal have found fault with *Anandamath* for being too didactic and conveying its political message too openly and explicitly. In other words, they have found its symbolism to be lacking in subtlety. Judged by the standards of literary criticism today, the use of symbolism is indeed harsh, for it leaves all too little to the imagination of even the ordinary reader, not to speak of the trained anthropologist.

And yet *Anandamath* is redolent of symbolism: the withdrawal into the forest, the practice of *brahmacharya* (celibacy), the saffron robes, and a hundred other images and metaphors reiterate the message of the author. The land, with its many splendours, is presented as the mother goddess, and the people as her devotees. The hymn *Bande Mataram* (*Hail Mother!*), which later became a national song, is presented for the first time in *Anandamath*. The book is permeated by the symbolism of the mother cult. At the very end *pratistha* (or institution) and *bisarjan* (or renunciation) are shown hand in hand; *bisarjan* leads *pratistha* away, for the people are not yet ready to inherit the land.

The message that was so powerfully conveyed by *Anandamath* was in fact part of a larger system of ideas and beliefs which Bankimchandra explored in his other writings as well. Bankim not only had his own theory about the relationship between Hindu culture and Indian polity, he was also a formidable polemicist. In his polemic with his contemporaries he used to great advantage

6. There is a vast literature on Bankimchandra in Bengali. For a recent commentary on his work, see M. K. HALDAR 1977.
his intimate knowledge of Sanskrit literature as well as his extensive reading in western philosophy and science. Bankim must have been well aware of the difference between the symbolic presentation of ideas in a novel and their conceptual analysis in an essay.

Bankim's essays covered a very wide range—from religion and science at one end to race and nationality at the other. He had been greatly influenced by both Auguste Comte and John Stuart Mill. In his tract on religion (Dharmatattva) (B. R. [1975], I: 584-679), he argued that Hinduism ought to be capacious enough to accommodate what was good and true in modern civilization. Though a conservative—in the current phrase a "revivalist"—he could see very well the evil in his own society: he compared the domination of one race by another in colonialism with the domination of one caste by another in Hinduism and found the latter to be sometimes more brutal than the former. He recognized that in the 19th century western civilization was in the ascendant and Hindu civilization in decline, and argued that the encounter between the two ought to be used by the latter to its advantage.

Bankimchandra believed—and also argued—that politics cannot be independent of religion and culture. Before they could establish a healthy polity Hindus would have to first revitalize their religion and culture. If British rule provided the opportunity for doing this then it should be welcomed as providential. Bankim certainly was inspired by the vision of a "national revolution", but he did not think that in the second half of the 19th century the time for it was ripe.

It has been said that the basic question raised by Bankimchandra in Anandamath was whether the Hindus were justified in attempting to overthrow British rule by violent means. Because he answered the question in the negative, he has been described as an apologist for British rule, and, of course, people did not forget that for the best part of his working life he was a middle-level civil servant under the British. For all this, Bankim's answer to the question he raised was not a simple one; it was complex in argument and rich in meaning.

Among other things, Bankim had to deal with the problem of physical courage. After centuries of defeat and subjugation the Hindus had come to regard themselves as a race of weaklings. So he had to show them that their weakness was a matter of circumstance, not nature. (They could win battles not only against the Muslims but also against the British.) At the same time, winning victories in battle was only a small part of life. The British had come to stay not simply because they had won battles but because they had brought civilization and good government. By the same token, if British rule turned into disorder it could and should be overthrown; at the same time, the Hindus must prepare

themselves not only physically but also morally in order to earn the right of self-governance.

Bankimchandra’s writings on nationalism—and Anandamath in particular—are ideological in the true sense of the term for they deal with “knowledge, virtue and power”, the grand themes of ideological writings, and they deal with them in a critical and self-conscious manner. Knowledge, virtue and power are large ideas, and it would be a wonder if Bankim with his great literary gifts did not make extensive use of images, metaphors, and symbols to express them. But the symbolism gives us only one side of the picture; on the other side is Bankim's argument—always clear, always forceful, even in his novels. His writings on nationalism are ideological not because of their symbolism but because of their argument. An ideology may conceivably do without symbolism; without an argument it could hardly be an ideology.

THE ACTIVE PART OF IDEOLOGIES: COMMITMENT OR PARTISANSHIP?

Clearly, an ideology may be used in the calculated pursuit of the interests of individuals and collectivities; but this is far from saying that such is their main purpose or function. While we all speak of individual interests and collective interests, it really is very difficult to give the term “interest” a clear and unambiguous definition, particularly in so far as it relates to collectivities rather than individuals. In any study of ideologies it is important to recognize the various types of collectivities involved and to keep in mind the distinctions among them. Individual interests, we know, are fluid and changing, and perhaps we misjudge the nature of collective life in assigning fixed and unchanging interests to collectivities.

When we argue about the interest of a class, a nation, or a race we often argue by analogy with the interests we know various individuals have. In the context of ideologies the problem of defining interests is closely related to that of defining the collectivities to which these interests are ascribed. An ideology might promote the interests of a caucus, a party, a class, a nation, or a race. When it claims to promote the interests of humanity, should we suspect its bona fides any more than when it claims to promote the interests of a class or a nation?

While it is obvious that ideologies play a part in the promotion of interests, it should be no less obvious that they also contribute to the realization of values. It is here that the ambiguity inherent in the concept of interest comes to the surface. For it can be argued that the protagonists of any ideology have at least an interest in promoting the values espoused by that ideology, even when those happen to be universal human values. In any case, it is not very illuminating to say that a proletarian ideology seeks to promote the interests of a
class, or that a nationalist ideology seeks to promote the interests of a nation. However, when people speak about an ideology as an instrument for the pursuit of interests, they have in mind interests not made explicit by the ideology.

Ideologies do not make explicit everything for which they strive, but surely there must be something perverse in beginning the analysis of an ideology by setting aside what it does make explicit. The view that ideology is false consciousness is no less simple-minded than the view that accepts an ideology at its face value. Indeed, the two views often co-exist in the mind of the same person, like the two sides of a coin: the ideology of the other person is false consciousness, hence it has to be explained in terms of interests; one's own ideology strives to realize what it says ought to be realized, hence it must be understood in terms of values.

It would be absurd to suggest that in writing Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, Engels was concerned mainly with the promotion of his private interests. Undoubtedly, it was meant to further the interests of the working class movement and some of its organizations; that was its stated purpose. But the movement itself set out to realize certain values, not simply for the working class in the strict sense but for humanity as a whole. Movements and organizations create their own interests with which the private interests of individuals get entangled, and these need to be studied, but their study can only be a supplement to the study of ideologies and not a substitute for it.

The historical significance of statements like Socialism—and, even more so, of the Manifesto—lies in the extent to which they have helped people to recognize, redefine and transform their basic values across countries, across civilizations. Equality and inequality, solidarity and conflict, freedom and servitude, communion and alienation—all these are given a new and enriched significance in the context of the dialectic between the real and the possible. An ideology addresses itself to the possibilities contained in the human condition and not merely to the existing conflict of interests.

In the case of Bankimchandra, personal involvement in any movement or organization associated with the ideology he helped to create was even more remote. It might of course be said that his argument that British rule in India was providential fitted well his own position as a civil servant under the British. But to say only this would be to ignore completely the range and richness of his argument and its effect on later generations of militant nationalists who were in fact inspired by it to attempt the overthrow of British rule by violent means.

An ideology has a life of its own, but the nourishment on which it grows comes from diverse sources. There are, first of all, rival ideologies: in discussing ideologies one thinks almost automatically of protagonists and adversaries. An ideology is, in some sense, an argument, and one argues not only with people

8. Mannheim, for instance, refers time and again to “adversaries” and “opponents” in his Ideology and Utopia (1960).
but also against them—sometimes against hidden or even imaginary adversaries. Perhaps it is characteristic of the modern age that rival ideologies, rival theories regarding the relationship between human values and the instruments of power not only co-exist, but are allowed to do so in the full light of day.

To the extent that an ideology is an argument or a debate, it is concerned with truth and error. An ideology must try to demonstrate the truth of its position not only to those who are for it but at least also to those who are uncommitted, if not even to those who are against it. When Engels set out to demonstrate the truth of socialism, he was constrained by the logic of his own argument, and not simply by the calculus of material interests. Similarly, Bankimchandra’s argument about Hindu society had its own logic which appealed to people even at a time when there was hardly any movement or organization to carry the argument into the political arena.

As an ideology develops, old arguments are restated, some are dropped, some change their course and new ones emerge—which is true for any system of ideas, including scientific theories. Ideologies by their very nature make use of concepts and symbols which are ambiguous and rich in implicit meaning. The process by which these implicit meanings are made explicit is both complex and uncertain in its course: it is a process in which both the proponents of an ideology and their adversaries participate.

Over and above the constraints imposed by the rules of intellectual discourse, other constraints do shape the development of ideologies: those arising out of the struggle for power in which ideologies are intimately involved. They play a more direct and a more manifest part in the shaping of ideologies than in the shaping of other systems of ideas and beliefs, say in science or religion. This is to be expected since ideologies are by their very nature concerned with politics, with the struggle for power, unlike science, and unlike religion.

An ideology is more than merely a theory about the relations between the values of a society and its distribution of power. It seeks not only to describe or to analyse, but also to intervene. It takes for granted neither the prevailing values nor the existing distribution of power. Marx spoke for all ideologues when he said: “Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the problem is to change it”—or, for those with a different inclination, to prevent its being changed.

Ideologies seek to change the world not merely through the pursuit of ideas but also through the pursuit of power. The pursuit of power has its own demands which sooner or later transform the concern for truth as such into a concern for rectitude, for party reasons or for reasons of State. An ideology is not an outcome of a disinterested pursuit of ideas, a pursuit of ideas for their own sake; ideologues view such pursuits with hostility which is often a disguise for fear.
If ideologies repudiate the disinterested pursuit of ideas for their own sake as a desirable or even a possible goal, then what kind of involvement does an ideology entail? In principle this can be and is often believed to be a commitment to a cause, but in practice it is also partisanship for a movement, an organization and a leader. An ideology might set a political movement on its course and give it direction, but it also becomes dependent for its authoritative interpretation on those actually conducting the struggle for power. For such persons, the correct interpretation of their ideology becomes too serious a matter to be left entirely to intellectuals to decide.

It may well be that there is no such thing as a wholly uncommitted intellectual, one who regards competing schemes of value with perfect neutrality. For one thing, it would be difficult to see the motive force behind such a person's intellectual activity. Even more than that, a student of society must feel impelled to pit his own values against those of the social universe he seeks to explore and understand. But does this necessarily require him to bind himself to a particular political project, the programme of a particular movement, a particular organization, a particular leader? Perhaps we will have to make a distinction between commitment, which is the lot of all intellectuals as of all human beings, and partisanship, which is an adventure of a special kind.

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Abstract

André Béteille, Ideologies: Commitment and Partisanship.—An ideology is that set of ideas and beliefs which seeks to articulate the basic values of a group of people—what they cherish for themselves and for others—to the distribution of power in society. The ideas and beliefs which constitute an ideology are expressed through concepts as well as symbols. An ideology may present itself as a scientific theory as, for instance, in Socialism: Utopian and Scientific by Engels or in a literary form as, for instance, in Anandamath, a Bengali novel by Bankimchandra Chatterji which greatly influenced the growth of nationalism in India. Ideologies are related to interests, but in a complex and uncertain manner. Ideologies demand partisanship, i.e. involvement in the struggle for power, and not mere commitment to the pursuit of ideas as an end in itself.

Résumé

André Béteille, Les Idéologies: engagement intellectuel et engagement partisan. — Une idéologie est l’ensemble d’idées et de croyances qui vise à articuler les valeurs fondamentales d’un groupe (révérées par l’ensemble du groupe et par chacun de ses membres) sur la répartition du pouvoir dans la société. Les idées et les croyances qui constituent une idéologie s’expriment aussi bien à travers des concepts qu’à travers des symboles. Une idéologie peut se présenter sous la forme d’une théorie scientifique, comme par exemple dans Socialisme utopique et socialisme scientifique d’Engels, ou sous une forme littéraire, comme par exemple dans Anandamath, roman bengali de Bankimchandra Chatterji qui a eu une grande influence sur le développement du nationalisme en Inde. Les idéologies sont liées aux intérêts, mais d’une façon complexe et incertaine. Elles exigent un engagement partisan dans la lutte pour le pouvoir et pas seulement un engagement intellectuel à développer des idées comme une fin en soi.

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