internal configurations; and other ideological clusters, such as the New Right, may exhibit fleeting or hybrid structures, or be less comprehensively systemic, as in nationalism. Political ideologies possess loose family resemblances and vary by dint of the different internal conceptual morphology each family exhibits. Continuities of time, space, political reasoning, and psychological dispositions hold together what could otherwise be, from a postmodernist viewpoint, a fragmentary and elusive form. In parallel, discourse analysis has located political ideology in ordinary language and communication—text and conversation—illuminating forms of human interaction. Such approaches have partly replaced the classification of political ideologies on a left–right continuum, which is too simplistically based on dichotomies such as individualism versus collectivism. They regard ideology not as coterminous with political thought, but as one of its dimensions.

See also: Ideology: History of the Concept; Ideology, Sociology of; Marx, Karl (1818–89); Marxism and Law; Marxism in Contemporary Sociology; Marxism/ Leninism

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Ideology, Sociology of

The concept of ideology constitutes a significant chapter of social sciences in general and sociology in particular. The exact localization of this chapter remains, however, uncertain. Linked from the point of view of its emergence and its development to the Marxist tradition, the analysis of ideological phenomena overflows very quickly and very largely this tradition. Producing, under certain conditions, positive knowledge about the social order, the analysis of ideologies intends sometimes to fulfill a ‘performative’ function, i.e., contribute to the transformation of this social order. Finally, constitutive of various considerations concerning the social determinants of beliefs, the sociology of the ideologies is quickly led to define its own condition and, through this reflexive movement, to appear on a level quite as empirical as epistemological.

This pluri dimensionality of the sociological analysis generates the feeling of confusion characteristic of many debates relating to ideology, its causes and consequences. This feeling is reinforced since more than 15 possible definitions of the very concept of ideology correspond to the diversity of the manifestations of the ideological phenomena through contemporary sociological writings (Eagleton 1991). After having briefly made sensitive the nature of this diversity, we will approach the way in which sociologists have tried to characterize and to explain the ideological phenomena. Three interdependent aspects will be successively considered: the referent, the structure, and the value of truth of ideologies. We will be interested finally in revival of the sociological analysis on the relationship between science and ideology.

1. The Diversity of Ideological Phenomenon

The origin of the sociological use of the concept of ideology can be found in Marx’s writings. Admittedly, as reminded by many commentators, the concept of ideology existed before Marx. One thus finds a particular form of this concept at the end of the eighteenth century with the French tradition of the idéologues who, led by Destutt de Tracy, saw in the Ideologie a new discipline: the science of the ideas. Further still the theory of the idol developed by the English philosopher Francis Bacon in his Novum Organum anticipates certain aspects of both science of the ideas of the French idéologues and the modern theory of the ideologies. But it is with Marx that a certain use of this concept appears. Its well-known analysis of the coup d’etat of Louis Bonaparte is from this point of view very instructive (Marx 1852). The important part of its argument consists of showing how, once the riots of June 1848 were over, dissensions within the aparti de l’ordre—the right wing of the French parliament—helped make this coup d’etat unavoidable. This party was composed of many fractions which all, Marx affirms, have a ‘superstructure of impressions, illusions, ways of thinking, and some philosophical conceptions.’ To understand the origin of these ‘ways of thinking’ it is essential to identify the ‘competition of interest,’ the will of each fraction ‘to restore its own supremacy.’ The land aristocracy and the industrial bourgeoisie
develop different political representations thus: the former theorizes the benefits of the absolute monarchy, the latter those of parliamentary monarchy. In both cases, Marx suggests, they tend to give a general value to ‘ways of thinking’ which actually constitute only the formulation of objective conditions which ensure the domination of a social group over another. The analysis of Marx does not end with this comparison between particular ‘interests’ and ‘ways of thinking,’ it also underlines the way in which certain individuals embody ideologies. Describing the ‘ideologists’ consists mainly for Marx of studying the ‘bourgeoisie’ writers, the press, and more largely ‘representatives’ of the bourgeoisie. In the present case, the inability of these ideologists to express the real opinion of those they should represent: little before the coup d’état, Marx points out, ‘the representatives and represented had become strangers to each other.’

The argument is simple and easily acceptable: when an institution—here a political mode—appears in conformity with the particular interest of a social actor, individual, or collective, this actor generates, directly or indirectly, a whole set of ideas, representations, and theories intended to make the value of this institution acceptable by the greatest number. Also, even if the value objectively makes real sense only for the social actor considered. When K. Mannheim looks back to this argument in Ideology and Utopia (1929/1991), he presents it as a fundamental stage towards the formation of the sociology of knowledge: the first attempt to stress ‘the role of the position of class and the interests of class in the thought.’ This attempt rests, however, on a confusion between two conceptions of the ideology which is necessary to identify. In the first—particular conception—the ‘ways of thinking’ are ‘mystification more or less conscious of the real nature of a situation whose exact recognition would not be in agreement with the interests of the ideologist’; they are reducible to a psychology of the interests, concern primarily the individuals, and are connected with lies on the moral level or errors on the epistemological level. In the second—total conception—the same ‘ways of thinking’ are not ‘illusions’ deliberately maintained by the individuals according to their more or less immediate interests, but elements of a total ‘system of significances’ adapted to a disappeared social framework from now on.

This total character of the ideology described by Mannheim acquires a new meaning with the compared analysis by Raymond Aron (1964) devoted to the contemporary political modes. In its nouvelles leçons sur les sociétés industrielles, Aron identifies in an ideal typical way each political mode by an ‘official ideology,’ i.e. a ‘complex doctrinal system,’ made up on the one hand of general principles resulting from theoretical analysis of what really occurs’ and on the other hand of proposals qualified as ‘misleading,’ ‘distorted,’ or even ‘absurd.’ More than the simple critical census of these proposals, Aron underlines the specificity of all ‘official ideology’: the will of its promoters to withdraw it from any critical discussion. Why, Aron asks, do the partisans of the socialist ideology generally refuse to talk on a reasonable basis about the advantages and disadvantages of their conception of the individual and society? The answer is to be found in the ‘universal’ vocation of the studied ideology: it is given for its partisans as for its detractors as a global system of interpretation of the historico-political world.

2. Sociological Characterization of Ideologies

As suggested by these examples, the sociologists use the concept of ideology to describe a phenomenon of ‘belief’: belief in the value of the absolute monarchy for the land aristocracy (Marx), belief in the morally reprehensible character of the loan with interest for the Church (Mannheim), belief in the universal vocation of the collectivist mode for the Socialists (Aron). To speak about belief is to describe an ethical or cognitive reality—principle, idea, theory, doctrines, etc.—which not only makes ‘sense’ for an individual or collective actor, but a reality about which this actor may develop a deep feeling of conviction. It also describes a factor likely to influence the behavior of this actor. Innumerable sociological and anthropological work made it possible to identify the diversity of the beliefs and their consequences according to the social systems considered. The difficulty which arises consequently is that of the specificity of the ideological phenomenon as belief compared to the various possible registers of the general phenomenon of the belief. Sociologists generally approach this specificity in terms of degree and not of nature under three interdependent aspects: (a) referent of the belief, (b) forms of the belief, and (c) value of truth of the belief.

2.1 Referent

The ideology as belief is singular by the centrality which it accords to the nature and becoming of
The reality of the ideological phenomenon is, however, more complex. From a theoretical point of view, some sociologists propose to define it inde-
representations which maintain its domination. The subordination, the dominant class generates social representations which contribute to reproduce its if the dominated class accepts blindly social beliefs on his conscience. The general thesis is that the fact for an individual of belonging to a class is dominates the conscience. According to this tradition, Marxist tradition closely associates the production of production and diffusion of ideological belief as the rationality. The functional approach shows thus how a belief makes it possible to maintain the collective identity of a given group. The functional approach makes it possible to solve an individual and collective problem. Interpreted however in too extensive a manner, this approach generates a certain number of skids, among which are the identification of the society to an ‘organism’ and of ideology to a ‘disease.’ Another contemporary skid of the functional approach consists of seeing behind any ideology a social function, but moreover to define this function as

3. Sociological Explanation of Ideologies as Collective Beliefs

Ideology being only one particular case of the general phenomenon of belief, its sociological explanation relies on the same principals as the explanation of other beliefs. When a sociologist explains an enigmatic phenomenon, he tries not only to infer the existence of relations between a whole set of variables (dependent an independent) but also to test, according to multiple modalities, the validity of his inference. There is not, however, a single way to conceive the factors to consider nor even the type of relations likely to be tested. Sociologists considered the production and the diffusion of the ideological phenomenon in three different ways: first as the consequence of a ‘causal’ process; second as a response to a ‘functional’ requirement, and finally as the product of a ‘subjective rationality.’

The first general type of explanation considers the production and diffusion of ideological belief as the consequence of ‘forces’ on which the social actor has no control. These forces can be of various types. The Marxist tradition closely associates the production of ideology with the existence of class ‘interests’ which dominates the conscience. According to this tradition, the fact for an individual of belonging to a class is enough to mechanically impose a set of collective beliefs on his conscience. The general thesis is that if the dominated class accepts blindly social representations which contribute to reproduce its subordination, the dominant class generates social representations which maintain its domination. The example of the study of the 18 brumaire shows, however, that Marx develops, in certain empirical writings, a less simplistic vision of the production process of ideologies. Those ideologies are described as more than strategical theories imposed on social actors: representations of limited validity inspired by reality such as can be observed from a given social position. From a different point of view, the forces which drive the actors to produce or adhere to ideologies are also sometimes conceived as ‘passions.’ In its classical *Traité de sociologie générale*, Pareto considers thus that the ideologies—he speaks of ‘derivations’—are primarily the effect of feelings remaining inaccessible to the conscience. More precisely, Pareto affirms that the social actor wants to be convinced of the value of his passion, and produces derivations for this purpose only. The ideologies would thus be the epiphenomenal expression of dominant passions. Such a representation, however, remains not easily generalizable insofar as on the one hand the ideologies are seldom lived by those which produce them or diffuse them like simple feelings, and on the other hand the rationalization process that characterizes ideologies is hardly reducible to a simple ‘logical varnish.’

The second general type of sociological explanation considers the production of ideologies as a response to a double demand: demand for ‘security at an individual level, demand for ‘equilibrium at a more general level. The insecurity is regularly described by sociologists as a permanent aspect of the social systems. The individuals continuously feel the need to be able to think that ‘everything will be all right.’ Precisely, observes Parsons (1964), ‘the strains involved in such expectations may be lessened by displacing the fulfillment outside the immediate field of action, either into the future as in the case of the leader of a movement for reform, or into a transcendental sphere (...).’ At a collective level, the absence of integration is considered a permanent risk for the reproduction of the social system: principles, standards, goals differ according to the social sector considered (political, family, economical, etc.). Ideological belief is considered, from a functional point of view, as an ambivalent phenomenon: it produces disintegration because any ideological expression is generally directed against a pre-existent belief system, but it can also produce ‘solidarity’ insofar as the ideological orientation makes it possible to maintain the collective identity of a given group. The functional approach shows thus how a belief makes it possible to solve an individual and collective problem. Interpreted however in too extensive a manner, this approach generates a certain number of skids, among which are the identification of the society to an ‘organism’ and of ideology to a ‘disease.’
exclusively directed towards the maintenance of the domination of a social group on another.

The third general type of sociological explanation consists mainly of adopting a similar attitude as M. Weber towards the ideological beliefs of the magic beliefs or, to a certain extent, Durkheim for the religious beliefs: reconstruct the 'meaning' of the ideological belief for the social actor by seeking the system of reasons or preferences which this actor produces to justify to himself his adhesion. The rationality considered by the sociologist is not reducible to an instrumental one but is also quite different from the 'derivations' described by Pareto. The sociological analysis opens on a set of 'subjective reasons' that represents the necessary conditions of the ordinary thought. These reasons are of general but nonuniversal validity and manifest themselves on different levels: utilitarian, axiological, traditional, or epistemic. Inspired by studies of A. Downs (1957) and H. Simon (1982), the restricted theory of the ideology elaborated by R. Boudon (1989) thus stresses the necessary 'comprehensive' dimension of the sociological analysis. When some people adopt statements or ideas that appear to the sociologist as false or doubtful, the sociologist has to consider that this may derive from the fact that, given the situation, these beliefs are to them the conclusions of reason they perceive as 'strong.' This explicative strategy is directly linked to an active theory of ordinary knowledge: the social actor produces knowledge, not simply by contemplating reality, but by interpreting it from its social position, and more generally from questions which are only seldom directly provided by reality itself. This last approach has a certain number of objective advantages. In particular, it makes it possible to give an account of an important subjective data; the feeling of conviction and not of interiorization which generally characterizes the relation of any individual to his own ideological beliefs.

4. Science and Ideology: Extrascientific 'Interest' and Relativism

The analysis of the relationship between science and ideology is traditionally focused on the ideological dimension of social sciences and sociology in particular. The ideologist shares in fact with the sociologist the will to produce a discourse on society. It is not rare that certain sociologists consider their analysis as the methodical prolongation of a pre-existent ideological point of view. The historical examples are numerous and well known: openly conservative, Frédéric Le Play theorizes the traditional form of family—famille souche—as 'the social unit per excellence'; convinced liberal, Herbert Spencer proposes an evolutionary model closely associated with the diffusion of 'social Darwinism,' etc. Inversely a sociological theory or paradigm conceived indepen-dently of any ideological commitment can, when it is exploited out of its immediate context of validity, generate an ideological skid. The mechanism is once again well known: it consists mainly of projecting on the theory or sociological paradigm the totalizing character of ideologies and by doing so asking those theories and paradigms to answer any possible interrogation.

The significant development since the beginning of the 1970s of the social studies of natural science made it possible to highlight the importance of economic, cultural, and political factors on the course of scientific research. These studies show on the one hand how the scientific institutions satisfy a social demand, and on the other hand how the scientists integrate in the course of their practices different cultural elements, in particular extrascientific 'interests' (Barnes 1974). The reality of these facts should not however be mis-interpreted. It leads certain radical sociologists to affirm the ideological character of all sciences and to consequently develop a relativistic conception for which the superiority of the scientific approach of reality compared to other 'representations of the world' is nothing but an accidental myth.

This extreme relativism rests on confusion between the intrinsic quality of a knowledge (objectivity or absence of objectivity) and its referential dimension (the focus of science). Nobody rejects the fact that the scientific practice cannot develop without a certain number of resources. The unequal allocation of these resources exerts a considerable influence on the choice of the research topics, on the level of development of the disciplines, sometimes even indirectly on the degree of requirement of the experimental control. This social conditioning of science does not however invalidate the fact that a scientific knowledge has an intrinsic validity, independent of its immediate context of production. The sociocultural determination and the rational determination of scientific knowledge are by no means necessarily mutually exclusive.

See also: Alienation, Sociology of; Belief, Anthropology of; Collective Beliefs: Sociological Explanation; Collective Memory, Anthropology of; Culture, Sociology of; Ideology: History of the Concept; Ideology: Political Aspects; Knowledge, Sociology of; Pareto, Vilfredo (1848–1923); Science, Sociology of; Social Movements, Sociology of

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Illiteracy, Sociology of

Between complete illiteracy and good literacy, different levels of abilities may be distinguished, including quasi-illiteracy. Research from the last decades shows that the majority of adults in highly developed countries, as well as many men and women in the Third World, rank somewhere among these in-between levels. This situation seems to depend mainly on the fact that the way of life and work for large numbers of the population, in both less developed and, paradoxically, developed countries, does not require more than rudimentary or mediocre literacy skills.

1. A Look at Illiteracy Statistics

In most Western and Eastern European countries including Russia, as well as in Australia, Canada, Israel, New Zealand, the USA or, for instance, Argentina, Cuba, Mongolia, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, South Korea and Tajikistan, official statistics show that adult complete illiteracy is practically non-existent or very rare. Almost every other country lags somewhat or further behind these.

During the twentieth century, the absolute number of completely illiterate adults increased in the Third World due to population growth. In terms of percentages, however, adult illiteracy declined everywhere. Table 1 illustrates this point as regards six countries typical of different degrees of economic development.

The official statistics of illiteracy among adults in many countries are notoriously imprecise. They have another great deficiency, which is that they give no information about the real literacy capacities of the adults who are not counted as completely illiterate.

2. Functional Illiteracy

Third World countries are well aware of the extent of functional illiteracy, that is, of the gravely insufficient literacy level of many adults who are not completely illiterate. On the other hand, in developed countries, significantly high rates of functional illiteracy were almost unimaginable up until recent times, following decades of universal compulsory free education and, in particular, since the development of postcompulsory schools following World War II. This conviction has been steadily waning after converging results of various research showing that functional illiteracy was frequent in modern societies. The first international survey was conducted in 1994–5 under the auspices of the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 1995). The reports published by the OECD in 1995 and 1997 covered 12 countries, seven in Western Europe, plus Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Poland and the USA. The same, extensive battery of reading, writing, and arithmetic exercises typical of current tasks of daily life and work was used in evaluating the literacy level of adults aged 16 to 65. This international survey gave an interesting picture of the distribution of the adult population of typical developed countries by literacy levels at the end of the twentieth century.

### Table 1

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M. Dubois