This paper constitutes one of the early chapters of a study which deals with the fundamental structural features of the various forms of ideology—from religious and moral discourse to politics and to art—taken individually as well as in their manifold interconnections; with the material and social conditions and mechanisms that determine the emergence and subtle transformations of particular ideologies; with the complex instruments and institutions required to secure the more or less enduring impact of ideological systems; and, last but not least, with the intricate relationship between ideology and social science considered both as specific modes of discourse and as determinate social complexes which fulfill a multiplicity of important functions in the global framework of social practice.

Since several aspects of the problems we are concerned with cannot be adequately discussed at this stage of the enquiry, the present paper undertakes no more than a brief survey and critique of some characteristic approaches to our subject matter, attempting at the same time the formulation of a few—very tentative—criteria for the assessment of ideology and social science. However, these criteria, it must be stressed, are intended simply as guide-lines to further analysis and research—and not as a set of firm conclusions.

With this in mind, let us now turn to an area of debate whose complexities no one is likely to deny—at least not today.

The astonishing thing is that so many people did so in the by no means distant past. Thus, generations of students—particularly in the post-war period—were led to believe by a considerable number of Fund-sponsored social scientists that ideology had been done away with altogether and that it had been replaced, for good, by the sound and sober systems of strictly factual social science.

That such boasts themselves were disguised manifestations of a peculiar kind of ideological “false consciousness”—one which arbitrarily labels its adversary as an “ideologist” so as to be able to claim
to itself, by definition, full immunity from all ideology: i.e. one which “proved” both vice and virtue by begging the question—escaped the attention not only of the theoretically and politically naive but often even of those who should have known better. This is how as serious and critical a scholar as Robert L. Heilbroner hailed in The Reporter Daniel Bell’s notorious book, The End of Ideology, at the time of its publication:

“A book of unusual interest... we find here more than a commentary on ‘the exhaustion of political ideas in the fifties’; we also have revealed to us the appearance of social reality once the ideological glasses of the past have been removed.”

A sad submission to sheer mystification!

Economy of space requires that we confine ourselves to quoting one single example in order to test the claims of this ideology-free, solidly factual and unprejudiced “social science”. As we shall see, however, even this single example is abundantly revealing about the approach which was supposed to have “revealed to us the appearance of social reality” in its purity, thanks to the removal of the “ideological glasses of the past”. The example I have in mind comes from page 385 of The End of Ideology:

“The NEP was an extraordinary step for Lenin. For he had to admit that there was nothing in the ‘old books’ to prepare the party for such a radical step as the partial restoration of capitalism. In an essay written just before his death—an essay which demonstrates the doctrinal cast which had ruled Lenin’s mind—he declared ruefully: ‘It did not even occur to Marx to write about the subject; and he died without leaving a single precise quotation or irrefutable instruction on it. That is why we must get out of the difficulty entirely by our own efforts.’”

Now the unpalatable truth is that Daniel Bell’s great non-ideological “revelations” are nothing but grave violations of the most elementary conditions of scientific research and analysis—but of course violations committed in the name of “genuine social science” as radically opposed to “outmoded ideology”.

If we take the time-consuming trouble of checking the alleged facts—as, unfortunately, not enough people do, thus often allowing the diffusion of even the most tendentious distortions as incontrovertible evidence—we find not only that there is absolutely nothing to support Bell’s contentious judgements but also that the Lenin quote in question (that is, Lenin’s own text and not Bell’s distorted version of it) demonstrates the exact opposite of what we are given to believe in a “truly scientific” fashion. For this is how Lenin’s actual text goes:
"On the question of state capitalism, I think generally our press and our Party make the mistake of dropping into intellectualism, into liberalism; we philosophise about how state capitalism is to be interpreted, and look into old books. But in those old books you will not find what we are discussing; they deal with the state capitalism that exists under capitalism. Not a single book has been written about state capitalism under communism. It did not occur even to Marx to write a word on this subject; and he died without leaving a single precise statement or definite instruction on it. That is why we must overcome the difficulty entirely by ourselves. And if we make a general mental survey of our press and see what has been written about state capitalism, as I tried to do when I was preparing this report, we shall be convinced that it is missing the target, that it is looking in an entirely wrong direction."

As we can see then, Bell’s version not only lifts Lenin’s words out of their context—if he did not do so no one could take seriously for a moment his claims and accusations—but also it assumes the form of a translation which turns “a single precise statement or definite instruction” into the doctrinal “single precise quotation or irrefutable instruction” (whatever on earth an “irrefutable instruction” might mean).

There is no trace whatsoever, in the original quotation, of a “rueful” behaviour on Lenin’s part. Nor indeed of “admitting” under the constraint of quite unique circumstances that this time the “old books” cannot help. In point of fact he often took—from his early youth onwards—“extraordinary steps” of adapting his theoretical position to the changing socio-historical conditions. (As is well known, he has been accused more than once of being merely a “clever realist” by critics who thought that he ought to be censured for lack of doctrinal purity.) On the contrary, he most emphatically insists that “intellectualism” and “philosophizing” about the problems at stake with references to old books is totally mistaken: the press that follows such procedure “is missing the target, is looking in an entirely wrong direction”. Also, in his closing speech to the debate he reproaches Preobrazhensky for arguing in terms of “pure scholasticism” in that he bases his analysis on old books and past events while “this is the first time in human history that we see anything like it” and therefore “we must not look to the past”.

And all this is supposed to be proof of “the doctrinal cast which had ruled Lenin’s mind”—proof, that is, in the eyes of the supremely objective “social scientist” who has succeeded in definitively freeing himself from the “ideological glasses of the past” to such an extent that he can not only announce “The End of Ideology” but also see things in Lenin’s text which are simply not there for us ideologically bespectacled lesser mortals.

But irony apart, Daniel Bell’s allegedly scientific text is scandalously
misleading even in its minor details. It states that the quote comes from an “essay” written by Lenin “just before his death”. As a matter of fact, it comes from a speech delivered at the eleventh party congress and published on the basis of a stenographic record. More important in case one wants to trace the debated quotation: it was not written by Lenin “just before his death” but almost two years prior to his death: the opening speech was delivered on the 27th March of 1922, and his reply to Preobrazhensky one day later, to be precise. As to the source, we are told that the quotation can be found on page 338 of Lenin’s “Selected Works, vol. XIV, cited in Theodore Draper, The Roots of American Communism”. But even this secondhand reference is ludicrously misleading. For Draper gives volume IX—not XIV—as his reference.9 (The interested reader can find Lenin’s text in volume XXXIII of his Collected Works.)

Such is then the actual performance of this non-ideological, objective, factual and rigorously scholarly social science. And since this “science” can conjure up its ideological adversary in the shape and form it pleases, it can also dispose of problems of extreme complexity with the greatest ease. Ideology? That is the other side. And even on the other side it represents only the past, since we now all live in a delightful “post-capitalist” and purely “industrial” society. Consequently, the problems of ideology simply do not exist any longer. Conflict and complexity are readily replaced by simple and sound “social engineering”, and we all continue to live happily ever after.

Most annoyingly, however, social reality refuses to take any notice of the revolutionary solutions of this “social science” and insists on the actuality of conflicts and crises which escape the streamlined simplicity of wishfully prefabricated models and schemas. Thus our former champions of the “post-capitalist industrial society” are forced to make a spectacular turn-about. Daniel Bell, for instance, is now engaged in theorizing about the so-called “post-industrial society”. Indeed, he now goes as far as talking about the “dismal record” of recent social science (not of his own, of course), adding that:

“In the areas of education, welfare, social planning, there has been little knowledge that one can draw upon for policy purposes. Social scientists have reluctantly begun to admit that the problems are more ‘complex’ than they thought.”6

Yet, the reluctant admittance of dismal failure is far from amounting to an identification of the ideological roots of such failure. On the contrary: since the original assumptions of the “ideology-free” posture remain unquestioned, the fundamental construction stays as it used to be. Only the façade gets a topical veneer which is meant to emphasize the building’s adequacy to the more turbulent present-day circum-
stances. That an elementary condition of improving that "dismal
record" would be a radical re-examination of the ideological pre-
conceptions of "value-free" social science, this must, of course, system-
tically escape the attention of those who have a major vested interest
in maintaining their not so long ago almost completely uncontested
ideological stranglehold over social science.

2.

It goes without saying, the roots of these problems reach much
deeper than it might be suggested by the ideological debates of the
recent past. We have to go a great deal further back into the past if
we want to get to grips with some major difficulties of the relationship
between ideology and social science.

Let us turn first of all to a classic with whom many of the more
recent theories have originated: Max Weber. Let us examine in the
first place Weber's claims on the nature and validity of his "ideal
types". He writes in a famous text:

"the elementary duty of scientific self-control and the only way to avoid
serious and foolish blunders requires a sharp, precise distinction between the
logically comparative analysis of reality by ideal types in the logical sense
and the value judgement of reality on the basis of ideals. An 'ideal type' in
our sense ... has no connection at all with value-judgments, and it has
nothing to do with any type of perfection other than a purely logical
one."^7

Since we are going to encounter much greater difficulties in a moment,
we may disregard the question whether or not Weber's talk about "the
elementary duty of scientific self-control" constitutes an intrusion of
value-judgement into his general scheme. Also, for the reason just stated,
we should now simply bypass the issue of whether it is legitimate
to confine social science to the sphere of "purely logical perfection".
Our primary concern, at this stage, is whether or not it is possible for
Weber himself to live up to the standards he has laid down for the
evaluation of social science in general.

To cut a long answer short, clearly it is not possible, even though
Weber and his followers refuse to give up their illusions in this matter.

To examine Weber's claims more closely, take his definition of
capitalism which is supposed to be such a "neutral" ideal type. He
defines capitalism as a "culture":

"in which the governing principle is the investment of private capital."^8
The choice of such defining characteristics is, however, far from being "value-free", although on the surface it seems to express a self-evident truth: namely that capitalism and the investment of private capital are linked together. But this is, of course, merely a tautological truth, and by no means a very accurate one at that. What goes in Weber's definition beyond sheer tautology is either blatantly ideological and "value-bound", or false— or indeed both ideologically biased and false.

Weber's definition is formulated from a definite standpoint: not that of "pure logic" but one which very conveniently blocks out the possibility of rival definitions without establishing itself on other than purely assumptional grounds. The adoption of this ideal type as the principle of selection of all available data necessarily carries with it that "scientifically self-controlled" research is confined to data which easily fit into the ideological framework of Weber's definitional assumptions.

Let us see, briefly, how does the Weberian definition of capitalism fulfil its ideological functions under the appearance of a "non-ideological" and "descriptive" formulation:

The first thing we have to notice is the choice of the term "culture" (in place of available alternatives, such as "social formation", or "mode of production", etc.): a term which anticipates a determinate type of interpretation as to the development of the capitalistic social formation. (See in this respect his approach to The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.)

Secondly, Weber's capitalism is characterized by the assumption of a "governing principle", without any attempt at explaining the grounds—if any—of this strange metaphysical entity. The methodological consequences of this assumption are extremely serious, for its adoption nullifies the possibility of a comprehensive historical enquiry into the actual grounds of the development of capitalism. In its place, we find an ahistorical projection of the developed form backwards into the past, since the "governing principle" must be exhibited at all stages. (This is why in the last analysis it must be identified with the somewhat mysterious "spirit of capitalism".) And Weber's qualifications concerning the relationship between the "ideal type" and empirical reality are, in this respect, nothing more than an ideological escape clause to provide blanket coverage against possible objections to his general model.

Thirdly, the definitional assumption of the "investment of private capital" as the governing principle of capitalism conveniently blocks out the absolutely crucial question of structural interrelationship between capital and labour. The term which is conspicuously absent from the Weberian type of discourse is, of course, "labour". And since no "spirit"—not even "the spirit of capitalism"—can explain the actual
constitution of capital (the "mechanism" of its constitution, so to speak), such questions must be either disregarded or relegated to the intellectually secondary realm of describing a determinate stage of empiria. It is, thus, ideologically highly significant that "labour" does not appear in the general model. Why bother with the thorny issues of "the extraction of surplus-value" if you have the "investment of private capital" conveniently at your disposal in a ready-made form as the "governing principle" of capitalism?

Fourth, while "labour" is conspicuously absent from Weber's social equation, the definition of the governing principle of capitalism as the "investment of private capital" conveniently supplies the necessary justification for and legitimation of the continued existence of the capitalist mode of production against the counter-claims of appropriated labour. That private capital is invested only when it anticipates profit—i.e., that the underlying "governing principle" is profit and not investment as such—this vital fact is quietly and significantly hidden from sight by Weber's definitional assumption.

Fifth, it is by no means true that capitalism is characterized by the "investment of private capital". As is well known, capitalism is, equally, characterized by the failure to invest overproduced capital and, thus, by periodic crises and social upheavals. By taking the "investment of private capital" for granted as the "governing principle" of capitalism, Weber successfully blocks out a fundamental area of enquiry: namely a critical questioning of the extremely problematic character of the capitalistic type of investment insofar as it is necessarily associated with crises and upheavals.

Sixth, it is quite inaccurate to describe capitalism in general as characterized by the "investment of private capital". Such a characterization is valid—with the qualifications made above—only of a determinate historical phase of capitalistic development, and by no means as an "ideal type" in its Weberian sense. By stressing the investment of private capital Weber uncritically champions the subjective standpoint of the individual capitalist, disregarding at the same time one of the most important objective trends of development of the capitalist mode of production: namely the ever-increasing involvement of state-capital in the continued reproduction of the capitalist system. In principle the outer limit of this development is nothing less than the transformation of the prevailing form of capitalism into an all-comprehensive system of state-capitalism, which theoretically implies the complete abolition of the specific phase of capitalism idealized by Weber. But precisely because of such implications, this crucial trend of development must be excluded from the ideological framework of Weber's "ideal type".

And last but not least, the definition taken as a whole constitutes a
completely static model. Unfortunately there is no space here to go into the details of this issue. Let me merely indicate that the elimination of the fundamental structural interrelationship between capital and labour and its replacement by the frozen metaphysical entity, "governing principle", excludes all dynamism from the picture. Thus, not only can there be no room for a dynamic account of the actual genesis and development of the capitalist social formation, as we have already seen; equally—and this is the point at which the ideological function of the static model becomes obvious—there can be no question of a possible dissolution and ultimate replacement of capitalism by a new type of social formation. There are no traces of dynamic contradictions in the model; consequently it can only comprehend the stable features of continuity—completely disregarding the dialectic of discontinuity—of a prevailing status quo. Such continuity is simply assumed, in the form of an already prevailing "principle", and once it exists it cannot be altered in terms of the Weberian static model. (We shall see in a moment the same static approach to the strategically important question of the administrative system of capitalist society.)

These are then, roughly, the ideological features we can detect in one single line of Weber's voluminous writings, provided that we do not simply accept his claims at their face value. As we have seen, notwithstanding his theoretical awareness of the "elementary duty of scientific self-control", Weber ended up defining capitalism as "a culture in which the governing principle is the investment of private capital". To this definition we may oppose the following: "capitalism is a mode of production characterized by the extraction of surplus-value for the sake of the production and reproduction of capital on an ever-enlarging scale." It may be left to the reader to decide which of the two definitions is more "ideological". What must be clear, however, is that they are not complementary but diametrically opposed to one another: which just could not be the case if Weber's claim to the "purely logical" and "value-free" character of his "ideal types" were valid.

3.

But let me quote another passage which exemplifies perhaps even more sharply, the ideological character of Weber's "ideal types". The passage in question comes from his treatment of "bureaucracy" in Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. It goes as follows:
"The ruled, for their part, cannot dispense with or replace the bureaucratic apparatus of authority once it exists. For this bureaucracy rests upon expert training, a functional specialization of work, and an attitude set for habitual and virtuoso-like mastery of single yet methodically integrated functions. If the official stops working, or if his work is forcefully interrupted, chaos results, and it is difficult to improvise replacements from among the governed who are fit to master such chaos. This holds for public administration as well as for private economic management. More and more the material fate of the masses depends upon the steady and correct functioning of the increasingly bureaucratic organizations of private capitalism. The idea of eliminating these organizations becomes more and more utopian." 6

It is astonishing to see Max Weber—who can be so rigorous, subtle and precise in ideologically less sensitive contexts—producing such a sequence of assertions dense with inconsistencies, mythical exaggerations and arbitrary declarations. A closer inspection of this passage will reveal that Weber's "evidence"—and I can only use the term "evidence" in inverted commas—is sandwiched between two categorical and thoroughly arbitrary assertions, namely that:

1) "the ruled cannot dispense with or replace the bureaucratic apparatus once it exists"; and that

2) "the idea of eliminating these organizations becomes more and more utopian".

Now if we try to discover what substantiates Weber's peremptory conclusion, we find one single point that might possibly qualify: i.e., the statement according to which the organizations of private capitalism are becoming "increasingly bureaucratic". But even this statement is wrapped up in a fateful postulate which stipulates as a categorical imperative the "steady and correct functioning" of such organizations (strictly in the interest of the "masses", of course). The rest is mythology coupled with inconsistency.

Take, for instance, the categorical assertion that the ruled cannot replace the bureaucratic apparatus of authority once it exists. Nothing warrants such an assertion apart from the mythological postulate of inevitable chaos in the event that "the official's work is forcefully interrupted", followed by the pronouncement according to which, "it is difficult to improvise replacements from among the governed who are fit to master such chaos". But clearly, what might be "difficult" is by no means "impossible", which is suggested by "cannot". Thus, Weber's categorical assertion does not stand up even to his own attempt at a justification. Furthermore, if it is difficult to dispense with or replace the bureaucratic apparatus of authority by "improvisation", perhaps it might be somewhat easier to accomplish this end by sustained effort at devising and preparing an alternative system of control within the contradictory framework of the established system of society. (We may here refer to the idea of "dual power" and to the—however embryonic
—societal facts corresponding to it.) But, of course, if there is no room for objective contradictions within the general model, there can be no room for the manifestation of such contradictions either.

Here, again, we can see the thoroughly static character of Weber's ideal types. His idea which asserts the necessary permanence of the bureaucratic apparatus of authority is conceived on the basis of the implicit assumption that the prevailing separation (or alienation) of “expertise” from the “masses” is destined to remain a permanent feature of social life. Consequently even the tendencies within the capitalist framework of development which point in the opposite direction—tendencies noticed by Marx some sixty years before Weber's reflections (i.e., no one can accuse us of reproaching Weber with ignoring something visible only from the vantage point of our own days)—must be left completely outside the compass of the Weberian model.

The only point at which we might be under the impression of facing a genuinely historical element is where Weber refers to “the increasingly bureaucratic organization of private capitalism”. However, a closer look reveals that the function of this reference is entirely anti-historical and ideological in that it serves merely the uncritical legitimation of the bureaucratic apparatus of authority. For even if for the sake of argument we grant that the increasing bureaucratization is the necessary consequence of increasing complexity and specialization, it is by no means self-evident that bureaucracy will be able to meet indefinitely the challenge of such complexity. Yet for Weber this must be so; complexity advances only so far as is required to provide the necessary legitimation for the absolute permanence of the bureaucratic structure; at which point the historical challenge of increasing complexity is conveniently ruled out of court through the arbitrary assumption according to which bureaucracy is a priori capable of meeting this challenge. In a passage that just precedes the one quoted above we read:

"The more complicated and specialized modern culture becomes the more its external supporting apparatus demands the personally detached and strictly 'objective' expert . . . Bureaucracy offers the attitudes demanded by the external apparatus of modern culture in the most favourable combination."²⁹

As we can see, the objective demand inherent in the alleged functional complexity is turned, in a most mystifying way, into a demand for a subjective attitude which is supposed to be supplied by bureaucracy. (The latter is characterized—by definition—as fully supplying the demand demanded of it.) The question whether or not the objective demand is successfully met—i.e., whether bureaucracy is actually capable of supplying what is objectively, and not merely in terms of a
definitional tautology, demanded of it— is systematically evaded by means of the bewildering subjectivization of the issue of demand. In other words, the problem is “solved” by means of a mystifying ambiguity.

Moreover, in our original quotation—which comes from the section significantly dedicated to arguing “the permanent character of the bureaucratic machine”—Weber is compelled to go even further in mythologizing: he postulates the bureaucrat as the “virtuoso-like master of chaos”. He has to inflate the prosaic bureaucrat into a demigod in order a priori to exclude the possibility of an alternative system of social control. At the same time, the fundamental question concerning the objective demand inherent in the given complexity remains evaded as before. For—as contemporary virtuosos can testify—the “complexity” of some modern music can assume such proportions that even the most accomplished virtuosos find themselves at a loss.

And the final point to make, very briefly, is that the claimed “functional specialization” is in fact basically a structural “specialization”: that is, the structural separation of the function of control from those who are controlled by it. Consequently, if we treat this question merely as that of a “functional specialization”, we are trapped by premises which anticipate the claimed a priori irreplaceability of the system within which the given “functional specialization” necessarily occurs. If we merely challenge a particular set of functional specializations without putting into question at the same time the underlying system which gives rise to such “specializations”, we are condemned to futility. As Weber writes elsewhere:

“Today, it is primarily the capitalist market economy which demands that the official business of the administration be discharged precisely, unambiguously continuously and with as much speed as possible. Normally, the very large, modern capitalist enterprises are themselves unequalled models of strict bureaucratic organization.”

Indeed. All this, however, does not warrant in the least Weber’s own conclusions which postulate nothing less than the permanence of the bureaucratic exercise of authority. What it warrants, however, is simply the conclusion that the critique of “functional specialization” is inseparable from a radical questioning of the system of “capitalist market economy” as a whole. Since, however, Weber could not entertain the latter idea, he had to dismiss all efforts directed at replacing the bureaucratic exercise of authority not even as just “utopian” but—betraying an all too obvious eagerness to champion the “neutral” position of the status quo—as “more and more utopian”. 
Naturally I do not wish to deny Weber's achievements. The preceding few pages were not meant to be what is called a "balanced view" of his work as a whole, but a brief critical examination of the claims to validity of one of Weber's most influential and fundamental methodological principles in the context of our topic.

As we have seen, Weber sets out to construct a neutral instrument of analysis and ends up producing an ideological weapon which—far from being "neutral"—enables him to dispose of the ideological adversary without even giving him a hearing, and on a terrain of Weber's own choice. The question remains though: is this the result of personal failure, or is it inherent in the method itself? In other words: is the programme itself valid, irrespective of its ideologically biased realization by Weber himself?

The answer seems to me to be in the negative for the fundamental reason that the instruments and methods of social analysis can never be radically neutral with regard to their object.

The level of "meta-theory" cannot be separated in principle from the theory itself; it is only as a moment of analysis that it can by this be separated, but it must then be reintegrated again in the overall synthesis. That is to say: meta-theory is an integral dimension of all theory, and not a privileged department governed by radically different principles. There can be no coherent social theory without its own, specific meta-theoretical dimension and vice-versa, there can be no meta-theory—not even that of the claimed "ideal types"—which is not deeply rooted in a set of theoretical propositions inseparably linked to determinate social values.

The models and principles of meta-theory are constituted on the basis of a given set of already structured—i.e. specifically evaluated—data, and in turn they act as general principles of all further selection and articulation of the available data. The refusal to consider the ideological implications of "societal" model-making brings with it the unintended transformation of a tool of analysis into a self-supporting ideology. (It is by no means accidental that the century which produced some of the most self-complacent forms of ideology in the guise of the final supersession of all ideology should pride itself as being "The Age of Analysis".)

Does this mean then that we are advocating a relativistic position in this matter?

Quite the contrary. For it is precisely the radical separation of "meta-theory" from theory, of the "ideal type" from the categories of empirical reality which necessarily leads to relativism, in that neither
of the two qualitatively opposed theoretical "realms" can provide criteria of evaluation for the adequacy of the other. If, however, we conceive their relationship in terms of a dialectical reciprocity, and both levels as inherently linked to the various manifestations of social practice itself, in that case the question of "objectivity" need not be put in an uneasy Weberian fashion in inverted commas and confined to the realm of the "purely logical" ideal type. In other words, there will be no need to attempt the impossible: namely the solution of basically ontological problems within the confines of purely epistemological criteria.

Thus we are envisaging a system of constant readjustments—one of reciprocal "feedback"—between the meta-theoretical level of "ideal types" and the specific propositions of societal evaluation related to it. The comprehensive model or "ideal type" is modified whenever the confrontation of the various sets of societal evaluation with the complex phenomena of social reality indicates the need for an overall readjustment; for the specific theoretical propositions can only go as far as the general framework of theory allows them to go. This is why the general framework cannot set itself up as a privileged final arbiter over everything else, but is itself in need of a constant critical reassessment on the basis of its results as compared with the immensely complex and dynamic manifestations of the social totality.

This means that the concepts and principles which constitute the general framework of social theory are subject to the same criteria of objectivity and relevance as all the other elements. In other words, given the dialectical interrelatedness of the various levels of enquiry, the question concerning the ontological status of the meta-theoretical level cannot be evaded without serious consequences for the enterprise as a whole. For, granted that the concepts and principles described as "ideal types" express a higher level of generality than those which indicate, for instance, the pattern of decision-making in a particular gypsy community, it does not follow in the least that the former ought to be assigned to a radically different sphere to which only considerations of "pure logical perfection" would apply. If the latter were the case, there could be no guarantee whatsoever of the applicability and relevance of the "ideal type" to the multiplicity of "empirical data". (And indeed, the precise relationship between the two spheres remains largely a matter of mystery in the Weberian framework of analysis.)

We have to claim, then, the same objectivity for concepts like "classes and class-relations"—described by many as "ideal types"—as the one that can be ascribed to concepts denoting some particular social fact or relation. There is, however, a significant difference in that the former comprehend the fundamental structural features of the object of enquiry—be it "capitalism" or "bureaucracy"—and thus circum-
scribe the general framework of investigation, whereas the latter articulate themselves (on the basis of the often implicit comprehensive structural concepts) in the form of more or less direct references to the immediately given specific social phenomena. All the same, the point is that the general structural aspects of social phenomena are by no means less objective than the direct phenomenal manifestations of social interchange but, if anything, only more so: in the sense that they comprehend the areas and modalities of dynamic change and transition on a much larger scale than the immediate conceptualizations of phenomenal data and therefore they can capture the most fundamental and far-reaching trends of development already in the making.

This is why, in the end, the question of objectivity cannot be separated from that of the dynamic or static character of societal models and "ideal types". Social phenomena are inherently dynamic in that they are constitutive parts of an overall social structure which necessitates an enlarged form of reproduction for its continued existence. (We may think of the dialectic of expanding human needs and of the conditions of gratification of the ever-expanding range of needs.) Thus, the construction of static models and "ideal types"—in place of inherently dynamic frameworks of social explanation—can only result in more or less sophisticated ideological pictures of objectively conservative intent.

Now let us turn our attention for a moment to a rather different type of approach. It is well exemplified by Professor George Homans' little book on The Nature of Social Science. The author is a strict determinist of the behaviourist type, and he sees the difficulties facing social science primarily in terms of the sheer complexity of averaging out the resultants of manifold individual actions. This is how he describes the issues in his conclusions:

"In many situations, and not only in economics, we can make much progress in explaining the behavior of men by taking as simply given, for the time being, the institutional structures within which they operate, even if their behavior within the structures will eventually change the structures. In explaining institutions and the relations between them, our task is often made easier by the presence of powerful convergent processes. And in the most difficult problem of synthesis, the problem of explaining the possibly divergent resultants of complex interactions between individuals and groups over time, the high speed computer has just arrived to help us. It will not do everything for us; it won't ask the right questions—that remains our job—but the answers, so far as they depend on the mechanics of calculation, the computer will get for us with a speed no man can match."
Which all boils down to the singularly illuminating proposition that the high speed computer can compute at a high speed.

But what exactly the computer is asked to provide, remains, unfortunately, a mystery all the way through. The central problem of the social sciences is defined as the demonstration of "how the behaviour of individuals creates the characteristics of groups"—a very doubtful proposition indeed—and then it is further specified as the task of producing "psychological propositions" on the basis of directly observable "small-group research". The key terms are "conformity" and "convergence":

"In the small group we can really observe and explain how conformity occurs, how power is exercised, and how status systems arise. These are surely among the most convergent of social phenomena, and once we must begin by understanding intimately if we are ever to grasp the nature of larger societies."  

It is, significantly, postulated that the large-scale structures will exhibit essentially the same characteristics as conformity-producing small groups, and all in perfect agreement, of course, with a "human nature" identified by behavioural psychology:

"the general propositions of all the social sciences are propositions of behavioural psychology."  

In the meantime—and this is an equally significant ideological feature—we are expected to take the institutional structures within which the individuals operate "as simply given, for the time being": though, of course, "for the time being" becomes good in virtue of the systematic avoidance of the question of when and how we are going to examine the institutional structures as not "simply given". The reference to economics—allegedly "the most advanced of the social sciences" because it was "lucky in being able to take institutions pretty much for granted"—proves nothing more than the ideological prejudices of the author. For insofar as economics takes the institutions of capitalist economy for granted it is not the "model" of social science but merely unashamed apologetics. And the moment of truth arrives when the prescriptions of manipulative pseudo-science miserably fail to work: at times when the overall institutional structure of capitalist society cannot be taken for granted any longer as "simply given" but calls for major transformations. At such times, watching the performance of established economic wisdom vis-à-vis the problems of rising inflation coupled with rising unemployment (while in its "scientific" books the two factors were supposed to be of necessity in an inverse ratio to one another), and vis-à-vis other, similarly bewildering, mani-
gestations of "economic disturbances", we get some measure of the "scientific" value of Professor Homan's model of social science.

But there is another passage worth quoting from the same book at some length. It goes as follows:

"In the social sciences our only general propositions are propositions about individual behavior. Many of our aggregate propositions are only statistically true and hold good only within particular historical circumstances.... If these conditions were not true for us as social scientists, remember that they are a great advantage to humanity, by leading men the illusion of choice. I speak of the illusion because I myself believe that what each of us does is absolutely determined....

The illusion of free will is going to be saved by cost considerations, but it is a vital illusion. If there were—as there are not—a few macroscopic laws about society, rather than laws about individuals, that held good across the board, mankind would lose the conviction, which some part of it, thank God, preserves, that it can by taking thought change its condition in ways it considers better—even if by its own standards not all the changes would turn out to be so. The most amusing case is that of the Marxists, who theoretically believe in macroscopic laws inevitably converging on a certain result, but who will not let the laws alone to produce the result, and insist on helping them along.”

Never mind that the Marxian position is given a rather caricatural presentation. The important point is that the idea of genuine human choice is declared to be a mere illusion—one to be maintained out of "cost-considerations". Thus, the whole enterprise displays its pseudo-scientific character by wanting to integrate the openly advertised ideology of "cost-effective illusion" with the claims of rigorous scientistic character. This approach—which rejected the idea of comprehensive social laws in favour of the position of so-called "methodological individualism"—ends up by advocating the double standard of ideological self-deceit for "humanity" and "mankind" and the sobriety of absolute determinism for the "social scientist".

And notice the propositional non-sequiturs in which this idea is carefully wrapped up:

"If there were—as there are not—a few macroscopic laws about society, rather than laws about individuals, that held good across the board, mankind would lose the conviction, which some part of it, thank God, preserves, that it can by taking thought change its condition in ways it considers better—even if by its own standards not all the changes would turn out to be so."

Now why should "mankind"—suddenly we are dealing with "mankind" and not with individuals, though we are supposed to be rigorous "methodological individualists"—why should this "mankind" keep its illusory "conviction" of freely changing its "condition" if there are laws which manifest themselves indirectly, through complex social intermediaries, rather than directly, in the form of an "absolute determinism" that dominates every single individual? And why should the
existence of social laws by itself inevitably lead to the loss of such illusions? After all, illusions can be maintained whether such laws exist or not.

Furthermore, if the above-named "conviction" amounts to nothing more than mere illusion, why should its loss be so fatal? If, on the other hand, this "conviction-illusion" is an effective instrument of change, it cannot be just an "illusion".

Moreover, if the claimed "absolute determinations" are really at work, it would require a great deal more than simply "taking thought" to achieve the postulated change of mankind's "condition". And in the final line the idea of "changes for the better" is taken back again in a half-hearted way, coupled with two watering-down clauses: namely that "not all the changes would turn out to be better" and that not "by its own standards".

Which all put together must presumably mean that, thank God, we live in the best of all possible worlds, though of course best "not by our own standards".

Need I say more about the ideological character of this "scientific" approach?

Theoretically its main defect is the total neglect of all those complex mediations which link the individual to his society as a whole. It goes without saying, the dynamic system of such mediations cannot be reduced to "a few macroscopic laws" which operate with a timeless "absolute determinism across the board". It cannot be grasped through mechanical models and averages, but only through understanding the dialectical interrelationship between between subjective and objective, partial and totalizing, end-posting and instrumental, individual and institutional factors.

The paradoxical thing about our social environment is that we are both its "authors" and—as a result of alienation and reification—its unceremoniously dominated subjects. Thus, the question of human choice is inseparable from a critical examination of the conditions under which men turn themselves into mere instruments to the realization of reified social ends. Consequently, so long as the fundamental premise of "social science" remains the assumption of the prevailing system of social institutions "as simply given", so long the issue of human choice itself—and not just its ideologically biased formulation—must appear nothing but a "permanent illusion".

An adequate discussion of the problems we are confronted with is quite impossible without a precise identification of the ideological
determinants of various social theories. Failure in this respect inevitably confines analysis to the level of vague and evasive generality; so much so, in fact, that the claimed "supersession" of the criticized trend becomes so marginal as to be almost completely insignificant. An instructive case in point is Lewis Coser's book on The Functions of Social Conflict.

While Coser undoubtedly intends his book as a critique of and an alternative to the "conservatism" of Parsonian-type social analysis, his own solution of the problems turns out to be thoroughly compatible with the criticized approach. And this is by no means accidental. For from the very beginning—given his total failure to identify the social determinants of Parsonian ideology—he waters down his terms of criticism to such an extent that his conclusions cannot be other than complementary to Parsons' "conservatism". For a start, he quotes with reverent approval Charles H. Cooley's following words:

"Conflict, of some sort, is the life of society, and progress emerges from a struggle in which individual, class or institution seeks to realize its own idea of good."18

Now, if someone wants to have a brief illustration of "conflict analysis" in terms completely devoid of scientific content, this is it. Yet, Coser closes his eyes to the obvious unscientific qualities of Cooley's quote because this enables him to idealize what he calls "the earlier generation" as against "the contemporary generation". (Two exceedingly scientific categories indeed.)19

Similarly, Coser reproaches Parsons with ignoring Weber's teaching that "Peace is nothing more than a change in the form of conflict, or in the antagonists or in the objects of the conflict, or finally in the chances of selection."20 He stresses a little further on that the indexes of Parsons' Essays in Sociological Theory contain sixteen entries under 'strain' and twenty entries under 'tension'; however, there are only nine entries under 'social conflict', although there are additional entries under value conflict and emotional conflict'.21 (Since Coser makes so much depend on this point, we should complete his strangely selective picture by adding the entries he omitted: namely, "class conflict", "ideological conflict", "conflict of interests" and "legal conflict". Of course, this whole business of the entries matters very little in itself either way. What matters, however, is that since the investigation of the fundamental social determinants of the criticized ideology is systematically avoided, the author is confined to thoroughly secondary or marginal issues which he then desperately tries to inflate into substantial ones with the help of revealing distortions.)

Having thus attained the level of mathematical certainty, Coser is now in a position to conclude that:
"While, by and large, the men of the earlier generation were concerned with \textit{progressive change in the social order}, Parsons is primarily interested in the \textit{conservation of existing structures}.”

This is, of course, nothing but \textit{word-fetish}. For even if we could find ninety-nine entries on “social conflict” in the index of Parsons’ \textit{Essays}, instead of nine, this would not change in the least the substantive issues. It is the whole network of closely interlinked \textit{concepts} which indicates the general orientation of a specific sociological approach, and not merely the choice of allegedly “progressive” \textit{words} (or terms). And one single treatment of “social conflict” can be just as characteristically class-biased as any number of it. (Besides: index entries are meant to indicate the problems discussed, and not the solutions given to them—and even that, more often than not, as compiled by someone other than the author.)

It is just not true that “the men of the earlier generation” were concerned with “progressive change in the social order”. For even if, for the sake of argument, we ignore the fact that generalities of this kind are next to meaningless, Coser’s own examples of “the men of the earlier generation”—Cooley and Weber—are far from substantiating the big claim that they were concerned with “progressive change in the social order”. Change yes, but not in the \textit{social order}. On the contrary, they were concerned with “\textit{adaptive change}” which would not affect the fundamental structural characteristics of the established social order. As to Weber’s definition of “peace”—put by Weber himself in inverted commas—as “nothing more than a change in the \textit{form of conflict}” (which is a pendant of Clausewitz’s paradoxical definition of \textit{war} as “a mere continuation of politics by \textit{other means}”), it could not be further removed from a genuine concern with “progressive change in the social order”. Already Hobbes knew that the capitalist social order is characterized by the “war of all against all” and the Clausewitz-Weber-like variation on the same theme merely asserts the naturalness of this social order. As we have seen above, Weber not only did not advocate any “progressive change in the social order” but, on the contrary, he contemptuously dismissed the advocacy of such change with the label “more and more \textit{utopian}”.

If Talcott Parsons appears to be more conservative than “the men of the earlier generation”, this is certainly not because of the inherent “progressiveness” of that generation. It is true to say, however, that significant changes have taken place in the “existing structures” since the days of Cooley and Weber; changes that have been given due recognition in Parsons’ writings. To put it in a nutshell, while Parsons’ acknowledged master, Max Weber, theorized on the whole from the standpoint of the \textit{individual capitalist}, in accordance with the given stage of development of capitalistic structures, Parsons to a large extent
consciously adopted the standpoint of the big corporations and—at a far more advanced stage of the "modern industrial society" than Weber could even dream about—he continued to idealize the structures of corporate capitalism. (His bible was, from the very beginning, A. A. Berle's and G. Means' book published in 1932: The Modern Corporation and Private Property. We shall return to Parsons' theories in a moment.) Thus, although in different ways and under substantially different conditions, both Weber and Parsons were concerned with the "conservation of existing structures"—and definitely not with "progressive change in the social order". That—given the ever-increasing dominance of the monopolistic structures of big corporations in capitalist society as a whole—there had to be a characteristic shift of emphasis as regards the status of "conflict" in the theoretical scheme of Parsons vis-à-vis that of Weber, is obvious. The fact of such shift, however, should not be turned into a retrospective idealization of the "men of the earlier generation" as champions of a "progressive change in the social order".

The main function of this idealization is the legitimation—with the help of respectable authorities of the past—of Coser's rather timid plea for "institutionalized conflict" at the dying stages of the cold war. Since, however, the anachronistic appeal to the authority of "the men of the earlier generation" ignores precisely those objective changes in the social body which constitute the foundations of Parsonian ideology, such an appeal can amount to no more than a rather Quixotic idealization of a mythical "open society". And since the latter, in its turn, is unashamedly identified with the existing structures of US capitalism, Coser's book becomes the romanticized counterpart of the more realistic Parsonian picture of society which our author naively believes to have criticized. The accent is now on a "responsible integration" of conflict in an "open society". Needless to say, nothing could be more complementary to Parsons' theories than such a conception of "The Functions of Social Conflict". And the "men of the earlier generation" in question are well suited to this exercise precisely because they never questioned the fundamentals of the established social order.

A further peculiarity of Coser's conception is that insofar as he takes notice of the changes that have occurred in American capitalist society since the days of Cooley and Weber, he does this in terms of Berle-Means-Parsons type mystifications like this:

"one reason for the apparently decreased combativeness of American management in labour struggles today, as compared with fifty years ago, can perhaps be found in a decreased belief in the absolute righteousness of maximizing profits both in the society at large and in the business community itself."
Similarly, he accepts the Berle-Means-Parsons type of characterization of the big corporations ("the large business enterprises") in which, allegedly, "profit-making becomes the sole obligation of a role on behalf of the collectivity". And these are by no means isolated examples. Thus, given the rather confused adoption of Parsons' general conceptual framework, it would be quite surprising if Goser's half-hearted critical intentions could bring to the fore some fundamental divergences in their respective approaches.

The key concepts of Goser's analysis all remain vaguely undefined. We are never told what would qualify as "progressive change in the social order", nor indeed are we given any criteria for its alleged opposite, namely the "conservation of existing structures". (The adjective "progressive" is meant to do the job in the first case, and "conservation" in the second. At the same time, we learn nothing about the real nature of "social order" and "existing structures" about which Goser's claims are made.) Instead of sociological categories identified on the basis of a coherent account of the prevailing (capitalist) social structures, we are presented with mythical "generations". Ideological trends, equally, remain merely hinted at in terms of vague generalities, instead of being characterized with reference to their tangible socio-economic functions and setting—except of course, when criticism is directed against Marxian theory. (See for instance the chapter on "Ideology and Conflict" in which the specific examples given by the author all revolve around an anti-Marxist axis, and the whole analysis culminates in the assertion according to which "The modern Marxian labour movement exemplifies the radicalizing effects of objectification of conflict. Strict ideological alignments are more likely to occur in rigid than in flexible adjustive structures.".)

The term "capitalism" is conspicuous by its significant absence, and in place of an adequate socio-economical identification of specific social formations we get apologetic vagaries like this:

"The rigidity of Europe's class structure called forth the intensity of the class struggle and the lack of such rigidity in America favoured the pragmatism of the American labor movement."

No wonder, therefore, that the whole analysis reaches its climax in the quasi-tautologies of the book's concluding lines which are worth quoting in their entirety:

"Our discussion of the distinction between types of conflict, and between types of social structures, leads us to conclude that conflict tends to be dysfunctional for a social structure in which there is no or insufficient toleration and institutionalization of conflict. The intensity of a conflict which threatens to 'tear apart', which attacks the consensual basis of a social
system, is related to the rigidity of the structure. What threatens the equilibrium of such structure is not conflict as such, but the rigidity itself which permits hostilities to accumulate and be channelled along one major line of cleavage once they break out in conflict.  

Thus, conflict is "dysfunctional" if it cannot be "institutionalized" (an exceedingly profound truth). And the conflict that cannot be institutionalized is not "conflict as such" (if it were it would undermine the power of Coser's quasi-tautology) but "cleavage": i.e. the degeneration of institutionalizable conflict, due to the "rigidity" of non-flexible "adjustive structures". In other words, "conflict", "institutionalization" and "consensus" all belong together as of necessity (i.e. as of tautological—not empirical—necessity), and they constitute the happily functional and tolerantly flexible world of American open society while, on the other side, non-institutionalizable cleavage and lack of consensus are characteristic of the sadly "dysfunctional" predicament of the rigid European (and now presumably also Asian, African, Latin American and possibly even Canadian) societies. (Not to mention the fact that in recent years "major cleavages" also appeared in the paradigm-land of "flexible adjustive structures"—namely in the United States of America itself.)

Thanks to this kind of approach, then, everything can be solved by definition; and if the first definition is not enough, some additional definition or redefinition can always help out (like "not conflict as such" but "one major line of cleavage"—which is nothing but a characteristically ideological way of describing "class conflict" and "class antagonism"). Coser's failure to identify in concrete terms the socio-economic determinants of Parsonian ideology—a failure inseparable from his adoption of the basic values inherent in that ideology with regard to the capitalist social order—carries with it categories entirely devoid of critical power. Thus, whatever his original intentions, Coser remains a captive in Parsons' universe of discourse. Ironically, he praises the "positive functions" of social conflict and describes them as a "stabilizing and integrative function in open societies and loosely structured groups", as a "check against the breakdown of consensus", as a "readjustment of norms and power relations within groups", as a "help to revitalize existent norms", as a "mechanism for the maintenance or continual readjustment of the balance of power", as a mechanism for producing a "new equilibrium" and for "redressing conditions of disequilibrium", as "preventing alliances along one major line of cleavage", etc., etc. And all this in the name of an allegedly "radical critique" of Parsons' conservatism.
This takes us to a methodologically vital question: the relationship between a proper identification of the ideological determinants of a particular conception, and an adequate theoretical solution of a complex of problems in whose formulation and articulation a specific ideology is directly or indirectly involved. This relationship is basically that of reciprocity: that is to say, on the one hand, the prevailing ideological determinants set marked limits to the required theoretical solutions which simply cannot be obtained without pushing back at the same time, to some extent at least, the original ideological boundaries; and on the other hand, genuine theoretical achievements significantly contribute to further overcoming the negative ideological limits of the whole complex. (It must be stressed, though, that we are not talking about a straightforward, linear development, since a number of additional factors must also be taken into account. We shall return to this problem a little later on.)

Let us now illustrate this point with a passage from Marx’s *Capital*. In the chapter on “Commodities”, Marx praises Aristotle as “the first to analyse so many forms, whether of thought, society, or nature, and amongst them also the form of value”. This is how he stresses Aristotle’s great achievements and socio-historical limitations:

“In the first place, he clearly enunciates that the money-form of commodities is only the further development of the simple form of value—i.e., of the expression of the value of one commodity in some other commodity taken at random; for he says—

5 beds = 1 house
is not to be distinguished from
5 beds = so much money.

He further sees that the value-relation which gives rise to this expression makes it necessary that the house would quantitively be made the equal of the bed, and that, without such equalisation, these two clearly different things could not be compared with each other as commensurable quantities. ‘Exchange’, he says, ‘cannot take place without equality, and equality not without commensurability.’ Here, however, he comes to a stop, and gives up the further analysis of the form of value. ‘It is, however, in reality impossible, that such unlike things can be commensurable’—i.e., qualitatively equal. Such an equalisation can only be something foreign to their real nature, consequently only ‘a makeshift for practical purposes’.

Aristotle therefore, himself, tells us what barred the way to his further analysis; it was the absence of any concept of value. What is that equal something, that common substance, which admits of the value of the beds being expressed by a house? Such a thing, in truth, cannot exist, says Aristotle. And why not? Compared with the beds, the house does represent something equal to them, in so far as it represents what is really equal, both in the beds and the house. And that is—human labour.
There was, however, an important fact which prevented Aristotle from seeing that, to attribute value to commodities, is merely a mode of expressing all labour as equal human labour, and consequently as labour of equal quality. Greek society was founded upon slavery, and had, therefore, for its natural basis, the inequality of men and of their labour-power. The secret of the expression of value, namely, that all kinds of labour are equal and equivalent, because, and so far as they are human labour in general, cannot be deciphered, until the notion of human equality has already acquired the fixity of a popular prejudice. This, however, is possible only in a society in which the great mass of the produce of labour takes the form of commodities, in which, consequently, the dominant relation between man and man, is that of owners of commodities. The brilliancy of Aristotle's genius is shown by this alone, that he discovered, in the expression of the value of commodities, a relation of equality. The peculiar conditions of the society in which he lived, alone prevented him from discovering what, 'in truth', was at the bottom of this equality."

Thus, the practical embeddedness of Aristotle's theory—its relationship to a socio-economic formation founded on slavery—"prevents Aristotle from seeing" the objective conditions of exchange and the crucial role of labour in this whole complex. This failure, however, is not merely an absence. Rather, the absence of an adequate concept of value leaves an enormous gap in the whole theoretical framework which must be filled somehow. And indeed, it is filled by a mere postulate: the concept of a "makeshift for practical purposes" which claims to be a solution while in fact it is nothing but an evasion of the problem itself. For the question that remains unanswered—namely: "how is it possible for a mere makeshift to function with dependable regularity?" or, in other words, what are the objective foundations of the practical transactions of exchange?—is not just avoided but, worse, it is hidden from sight through the pseudo-answer: "makeshift", which declares the problem to be non-existent. As a result of the introduction of this pseudo-solution, the whole theoretical enquiry is "derailed" and turned into a self-supporting ideology whose principal function is not the solution but the concealment (or "dissolution") of those problems which cannot be reconciled with the practical functions of the Aristotelian conception as a whole.

Of course, this is not an isolated element in Aristotle's general outlook but an integral part of a closely interwoven network of concepts. There is no space here to attempt a detailed demonstration. The only point we can touch upon concerns the revealing role Aristotle assigns to the concept of "nature" (and "natural") in his social theory. With respect to commodity-exchange he declares that the equalization involved in such transactions is "foreign to the real nature" of the goods exchanged; and also, that the use of a commodity (e.g. a sandal) in
exchange is a use which cannot be described as a use "in its natural way": that is, a way corresponding to the "real nature" of the thing in question. Aristotle's fundamental criterion for the adequacy of social intercourse at all levels—and both in terms of institutions and modes of rule or government—is "naturalness". Thus, the family is "the association established by nature"; the village community is "the most natural form" of organization; the state is "a creation of nature", etc. Similarly, "man is by nature a political animal", and "a social instinct is implanted in all men by nature". As to existing social hierarchies, they are described in terms of two inherently interconnected concepts: "slavery by nature" and "freedom by nature". And, of course, radically different forms of rule are stipulated for the two classes: "the rule over freemen" in contradistinction to "the rule over slaves", in order to bring the modes of government in conformity with nature's prescription, as indicated by the concepts of "slavery by nature" and "freedom by nature".

It is highly significant that in Aristotle's view the established mode of social intercourse, with all its institutions, is sanctioned "by nature". Furthermore, the claimed fact of being sanctioned by nature confers at the same time the seal of unqualified approval on the thing in question: "for what each thing is when fully developed, we call its nature... Besides, the final cause and end of a thing is the best". Thus, the ideological need prevails all along the line, declaring that what happens to exist—the family, the village community, the state, slavery, etc.—is "fully developed" and is "the best", in accordance with the socio-historically specific practical embeddedness of Aristotle's system of concepts.

And yet, when it comes to the phenomenon of commodity exchange, Aristotle stops at the point of declaring it to be "non-natural" and refuses to condemn it. This is all the more significant since he does not hesitate for a moment to voice his condemnation, in no uncertain fashion, of what he considers to be "against nature" in other spheres. He perceives the dual character of commodity (its "use-value" and its "exchange value"—or in Aristotle's own terminology: its "natural use" and its "non-natural use"). Moreover, he perceives that this "unnatural" commodity exchange as an institution is some sort of a challenge to the prevailing social order. (Indeed, its "real nature"—or "fully developed form"—is quite incompatible with that order.) Since, however, the socio-economic phenomenon of commodity exchange does not represent a fundamental contradiction to the existing social hierarchy—not only in view of its marginal weight in the overall system of production but also because its impact is fully compatible with the class structure of society, and affects only the specific form of the latter, unlike the challenge of those who question the given social
order as such—he both criticizes and accepts it. And he resolves the underlying contradiction by postulating the "makeshift" character of the whole process. Consequently, Aristotle is able to maintain his conception as a whole—centred around his concept of "nature"—and at the same time also integrating into it, without major inconsistency, a contradiction that has practically appeared on the social horizon.

Aristotle's example clearly demonstrates that the ideological factor cannot be simply "weeded out" from social theory by pinpointing the guilty "ideological concepts". For all social theory worth its name is constituted on the basis of, and in response to, a specific historical situation that requires the solution of a given set of practical tasks. A coherent response, naturally, is conceivable only in terms of a closely interlinked system of—directly or indirectly practice-orientated—concepts. This means that the ideological determinants are, of necessity, at work at all levels, throughout the system in question, and any advance on a determinate ideological position would require the modification of the entire conceptual framework of that social theory.

It must be stressed that we are concerned here with a fundamental dimension of all social theory, and not with isolated (or isolable) elements. Aristotle's "derailing" concepts are functional necessities in his system as a whole, despite the apparent inconsistency of the support he lends to "non-natural" commodity exchange, as we have seen above. For it is precisely through the "derailing" concept of a "makeshift for practical purposes" that Aristotle succeeds again in reconstituting the internal coherence of his system. Thus, he cannot possibly have an adequate concept of "value" not only because of powerful socio-historical reasons (cf. the points stressed by Marx) but also in view of inherently conceptual determinations: in that his whole system would be thoroughly undermined and ultimately blown to pieces by the introduction of an adequate concept of value.

It is in this latter sense that we may sharply contrast the correct identification of the socio-historical determinants—the ideological dimension—of social theory with the theoretical solution of some specific problems at stake. In Marx's case, it was not enough to put into relief the social roots of the Aristotelian approach. At the same time, Marx also had to provide a coherent theoretical solution to the problems that defeated Aristotle, given the socio-historical as well as conceptual limitations of his system as a whole. (Indeed, one might even argue that the Marxian solution of the problem of value was a necessary condition of his concrete identification of the ideological determinants of the Aristotelian system. Here we can see the world of difference between the illuminating specificity of a social analysis based on a proper theoretical solution of the complex issues involved,
and the aprioristic application of abstract sociological categories which hides its theoretical failure under blanket labelling devices.)

The critique of ideology, no matter how correct in its general orientation, is no substitute for solving the problems themselves. Identifying the causes of a shipwreck is not the same thing as eliminating such causes from the path of future shipping. Any given complex of problems has its inner logic, which means that—given a certain number of conditions anticipated in the original formulation—the problems are amenable, in principle, to a correct solution. The ideological dimension embraces both the formulation of the problems themselves and the elaboration of particular solutions to them. For what is possible in principle can only be realized if certain obstacles are first removed. And this is the point at which we can clearly see the interpenetration of ideological and theoretical factors. Marx states in Capital that:

“All commodities are none-use-values for their owners, and use-values for their non-owners. Consequently, they must all change hands. But this change of hands is what constitutes their exchange, and the latter puts them in relation with each other as values, and realizes them as values. Hence commodities must be realized as values before they can be realized as use-values.”

This statement contains in a nutshell one of the central problematics of Capital which can be “deduced” from it, provided that all the relevant operative concepts are “activated” in their proper Marxian sense. But, of course, the problem of value cannot be formulated in these terms—let alone fully developed in the course of subsequent elaborations—without adopting the Marxian socio-historical vantage-point. Marx’s line of attack, in accordance with that specific vantage-point, carries with it its own principles of selection of the relevant data. Without such principles the “inner logic” of the above quotation cannot be made manifest, and the whole picture—which is merely adumbrated in our quote—cannot be properly worked out in its details.

Marx’s specific socio-historical vantage-point enables him to produce solutions to the intricate problems of value which have eluded all his predecessors, from Aristotle to the classics of bourgeois political economy. This, however, does not meant that the Marxian system stands “above ideology”. For all social theory is necessarily conditioned by the socio-historical situation of the particular thinkers. And it is precisely the specific set of socio-historical determinations which constitutes the ideological dimension of all social theory, irrespective of the historical vantage-point of the particular thinkers.

Unlike in natural science, the key concepts of social theory—be they “man” and “nature”, “individual” and “society”, “culture” and “community”, “scarcity” and “surplus”, “supply” and “demand”,
"want" and "utility", "capital" and "labour", "property" and "profit", "status" and "class interest", "conflict" and "equilibrium", "polarization" and "mobility", "change" and "progress", "alienation" and "revolution", etc., etc.—all remain **systematically argued and contested** concepts. Moreover, given the dynamic interrelationship of all social phenomena, no matter which particular points are in focus at any given time in any particular field of social enquiry, what is actually at stake is always the complex interrelationship between the specific point under scrutiny and the constantly changing totality of social intercourse. (In other words, the concepts of social theory are always "totalizing" concepts, even when they appear in a grossly distorted form through the prisms of, say, "logical atomism", "methodological individualism", and the like. This "totalizing" character, by the way, helps to explain why the fundamental concepts of social theory remain systematically contested concepts.) Furthermore, both the principles which guide the delineation of a specific field of enquiry from the complex totality of social phenomena, and those which determine the selection of a limited set of relevant data out of a virtually countless number of data available for the chosen range of problems, require their justification in terms of the entire system of a particular thinker as set against alternative systems of the past and the present. (The dangers of circularity in this connection are self-evident. Evasion of the task of justifying the fundamental principles and assumptions of a given system makes many a social scientist succumb to this danger.)

And again, the objects themselves of social theory—though widely differing as to their **relative time scale**—are all socio-historically specific and limited: in a sense they are all "necessarily disappearing" objects. (The historical necessity manifest in them is, in Marx's words, "eine verschwindende Notwendigkeit": a "disappearing necessity".) These are some of the principal reasons why all social theory is socio-historically conditioned both in its objects and in the specific mode of attack adopted by the particular thinkers in their attempts to get to grips with the problems of their age.

Stressing these points does not mean in the least that we are advocating a **relativistic** interpretation of ideology. The fact that any given set of practical problems is necessarily tied to a specific socio-historical situation does not prejudice at all the question as to which of a number of alternative solutions can claim for itself a higher degree of objectivity.

To defeat relativism it is vitally important to bear in mind all the principal constituents of this complex relationship, and not just one of them, as it happens in "vulgar Marxism" and "vulgar sociologism" alike—including much of so-called "sociology of knowledge"—which one-sidedly concentrates on the question of social standpoint. This is
why we insisted on the close interrelationship of three main factors:

(1) that a particular complex of problems appears objectively-practically on the social horizon, irrespective of the thinker's ability or failure to solve the given set of problems within the confines of his system (cf. Aristotle);

(2) the inner logic of the problematic in question which cannot be divorced from the objective logic of its practical foundations. (Cf. Marx's definition of the categories of thought as "Daseinsformen"—"forms of being"—which are subject to the dynamic laws of socio-historical development. Again, Aristotle's theoretically-conceptually, not just socially, limited grasp of the problem of value is a graphic example.)

(3) the reciprocal interpenetration of the theoretical and ideological factors in a particular system, and thus the importance of a higher socio-historical vantage-point in overcoming the limitations of previous systems. (This means that the problems and contradictions of particular systems must be identified and solved theoretically, in terms of their inner logic, in addition to correctly assessing the ideological determinants of the systems in question.) By contrast, a one-sided insistence on the determining role of the social standpoint carries with it not only crude mechanistic hypotheses but also a total inability to tackle such important issues as the "change of standpoint". (That is, the question: how is it possible for a thinker—like Marx, for instance—to escape the narrow limits of his original class belonging.) For if our explanatory hypothesis for the specific characteristics of a particular social theory is the thinker's socio-economic standpoint in and by itself, there can be no reason for entertaining even the possibility of a change in class allegiance, except as a completely gratuitous and irrational act of "horrid conversion"—which is of course no explanation whatsoever. Nor can there be any rational justification for preferring one theory—the articulation of one specific standpoint—to another.

Karl Mannheim is a highly revealing case in this respect. He tries to overcome the mechanistic determinism and relativism of his approach by introducing the notion of the "free-floating intelligentsia" (freischwebende Intelligenz) which is supposed to be the bearer of the adequate (non-relativistic) standpoint in virtue of the claimed "empirical fact" that "it subsumes in itself all those interests with which social life is permeated". Of course, this "empirical fact" is nothing but a fictitious postulate, "established" by further postulates as, for instance, the one according to which the intellectual is "the predestined advocate of the intellectual interests of the whole". (Suddenly "all the interests of social life" have become "the intellectual interests of the whole" for which the intellectual must be eminently suited, of course, by definition.) And if we wonder, why do "free-
floating intellectuals" associate themselves with the proletariat, for instance, we are offered a splendidly tautological "explanation": "This ability to attach themselves to classes to which they originally did not belong, was possible for intellectuals because they could adapt themselves to any viewpoint." 88 Now we know.

The trouble with this approach is that it is made of empty postulates and assumptions within the structural framework of tautological cross-references. Since the key category—the "free-floating intelligentsia"—is completely devoid of empirical foundations, the argument must be bolstered up at all its stages with assumptions leading to further assumptions and to mere postulates tautologically misrepresented as "sociological facts" (or "empirical facts"). Furthermore, even if, for the sake of argument, we assume that the "free-floating intelligentsia subsumes in itself all those interests with which social life is permeated", this in itself means nothing whatsoever as regards the ways in which conflicting social interests are fought out and resolved in reality. And in fact a few paragraphs further on we are treated to yet another postulate as a "solution": "Their (the intellectuals') function is to penetrate into the ranks of the conflicting parties in order to compel them to accept their demands." 89 The "function" in question is real enough. But not as an empirical fact "amply shown" in history, as claimed (no example is given though, despite the "ampleness"). It is very real and necessary, however, in Mannheim's framework of discourse, in that it fills an enormous gap in his argument and lends a semblance of reality to his key category.

The ideological function of Mannheim's "freischwebende Intelligenz" which is supposed to be able to "transform the conflict of interests into the conflict of ideas", 40 is obvious enough. What remains to be indicated are the fundamental theoretical and methodological characteristics of Mannheim's structure of argument as related to our problems. We have already seen how postulates follow assumptions in the general framework of tautological cross-references and definitional assumptions as well as postulates misrepresented as sociological facts. As to his key category: the "free-floating intelligentsia" with its allegedly "total orientation", 1 it is not too difficult to recognize its derivation from Lukács' concept of the "standpoint of totality" 42 The basic difference is, however, that while in Lukács "the standpoint of totality" is stressed as a crucial methodological principle, Mannheim turns it into a fictitious sociological entity. And while the concept of "the standpoint of totality" is and remains a vital methodological principle of social science, irrespective of the particular use to which Lukács puts it in History and Class Consciousness, its apologistically-orientated conversion into the "total orientation" of the "free-floating intelligentsia" as the absolute embodiment and reconciliation of all
actual social relativism and conflict, is a totally incoherent concept. (But of course in claiming empirical validity for categories which have only methodological status, Mannheim is neither the first nor the last in the field of social theory. Thus the importance of the problem goes well beyond the critique of his particular approach.)

In conclusion to this section we have to stress again that the identification of the ideological determinants of a specific social theory, however correct, is no explanation and solution on its own. Theoretical problems arise on the basis of objective social determinations which are to a greater or lesser extent “visible” from a multiplicity of social standpoints. And since the various theoretical problematics have their inner logic, and since the totalizing character of social theory requires comprehensive solutions to the problems at stake, it is impossible to conceive the theoretical end-result simply in terms of strict sociological determination without grossly violating the actual sets of interrelationships. For while the thinker’s specific socio-historical standpoint tends to determine this whole complex in accordance with the interests of the group to which he sociologically belongs, the inner logic of the various problematics as related to their practical foundations, and the methodological and theoretical conditions of the framework of social theory within which he attacks his task, tend to reveal the problematic features—indeed even the contradictions—of solutions too narrowly tied to that social group. Whatever his socio-historical limitations, the particular thinker—if he is a man of significance and not a mere apologist—will be induced to go beyond the immediate sociological determinations, to the point of exposing the problematic features of certain social relationships (cf. Aristotle’s recognition of the “non-natural” character of commodity exchange), or, at a more advanced historical stage, to pinpoint the contradictions involved in them, even if he is incapable of supplying an adequate solution by himself (cf. Ricardo’s account of the contradictions in the theory of value as inherited from his predecessors and further developed by him). Indeed, the perception of some major contradictions may very well induce some thinkers—like Marx and Engels, for example—to look for solutions in a direction that necessarily requires a change in social standpoint and class allegiance. This does not mean, of course, that the determinations of such a change arise from within theory itself. They originate on the basis of an immensely complex social practice of which the inner logic of theoretical problematics deeply rooted in their ontological foundations—i.e. coherent sets of socio-historically specific “Daseinsformen” as related to the given configuration of social “Dasein”—is a vital aspect. Our plea here, in opposition to some distorting approaches, was not in favour of a different type of theoretical one-sidedness but, on the contrary, for stressing the im-
portance of recognizing and investigating in depth the entire complexity of factors which constitute these dialectical interrelationships.

Marx makes the point in his *Grundrisse* that "only when the self-criticism of bourgeois society had begun, was bourgeois economy able to understand the feudal, ancient and oriental economies." The methodological importance of this observation for social science is quite fundamental. For if the comprehension of feudal, ancient and oriental economies requires a self-critical attitude towards bourgeois society, it is easy to see the vital necessity of a radically critical stance in adequately grasping and demonstrating the contradictions and inner laws of development of the social formation to which the social scientist himself belongs.

The consequences of failure in this respect are far-reaching. In bourgeois society "capital is the economic power that dominates everything," and an uncritical attitude toward such all-embracing power inevitably results in theoretical systems dominated by the mystifications of bourgeois *Dasein*, whatever the subjective intentions of particular thinkers with regard to some partial manifestations of that power. A graphic example is J. M. Keynes. He makes no bones about fully identifying himself with the standpoint of capital:

"How can I adopt a creed which, preferring the mud to the fish, exalts the boorish proletariat above the bourgeois and the intelligentsia who, with whatever faults, are the quality in life and surely carry the seeds of all human advancement? Even if we need a religion, how can we find it in the turbid rubbish of the Red bookshops? It is hard for an educated, decent, intelligent son of Western Europe to find his ideals here, unless he has first suffered some strange and horrid process of conversion which has changed all his values."

"When it comes to the class struggle as such, my local and personal patriotism, like those of everyone else, except certain unpleasant zealous ones, are attached to my own surroundings. I can be influenced by what seems to me to be justice and good sense; but the class war will find me on the side of the educated bourgeoisie."

After such an identification with the bourgeoisie, it is not surprising to find that Keynes has to resort to mawkish sermonizing when he writes about what displeases him in capitalism: "For at least another hundred years we must pretend to ourselves and to everyone else that fair is foul and foul is fair; for foul is useful and fair is not." The presumed fatality of the rule of "usefulness" is opposed by an empty "ought"; a moral indignation rendered completely impotent by
associating "foul" with "useful"—by "useful" meaning "marketable" or "profitable": a typical mystification which hides the fact that in commodity-society exchange-value usurps the place of human use-value in that the production of goods is replaced by the production of marketable commodities—and by postulating the unavoidability of this association.

Similarly, in another work Keynes declares: "One begins to wonder whether the material advantages of keeping business and religion in different compartments are sufficient to balance the moral disadvantages." As if the matter could be resolved through some kind of morally enlightened legislation—an idea categorically contradicted by Keynes' own account of socio-economic development which can only acknowledge—in the spirit of crude, mechanical determinism—the role of "science and compound interest". Thus, the moralizing question remains an idle wondering whether "Moral Conscience" and "Human Nature" can safely carry on their existence in separate universes: the former in the "noumenal" world of metaphysical transcendentalism, and the latter in "this phenomenal world of ours".

The unmediated dualism of this reasoning is a necessary one. Socio-economic development must be explained as a fatality of Nature ("usefulness", "the law of compound interest", "productive techniques", etc), while the prevailing values are considered separately, as "intrinsic values". The practical intermediary link between "facts" (or "techniques") and "values"—namely, the established social relations of production—must remain unmentioned (and thus the conceptual structure must be a rigidly dualistic one) because pointing at them would reveal the socio-historical specificity (i.e. the "disappearing necessity") of the bourgeois relations of production. Understandably, therefore, any departure from the bourgeois order must be explained in terms of the mysteries of religion. We have quoted above Keynes' remarks about the "strange and horrid conversion of the zealous ones" who detach themselves from the rationality, naturalness, etc. of the perspectives of those who are "the quality in life and carry the seeds of all human advancement". The same structure of argument is in evidence in his approach to social trends he opposes:

"I feel confident of one conclusion—that if Communism achieves a certain success, it will achieve it, not as an improved economic technique, but as a religion... I do not think that it contains, or is likely to contain, any piece of useful economic technique which we could not apply, if we choose, with equal or greater success in a society which retained all the marks, I will not say of nineteenth century individualistic capitalism, but of British bourgeois ideas."
Thus, the issue can be "confidently" prejudged—as early as 1925, when these lines first appeared—by begging the question. For if an alternative "economic technique" cannot be used by bourgeois economics then it is not a "useful economic technique" but an element of religion. At the same time, the historical—i.e. changeable—character of the capitalist social relations of production can be conveniently misrepresented as the system of "useful economic techniques" which is, of course, its own justification. What disappears in this juxtaposition of "fact and value", "business and religion", "technique and ideal", "technique and religion", etc., is precisely the vital intermediary of the social relations of production. (We can note here the ideological function of conflating socio-historically specific "structure" into timeless "function").

"Technique as such" is, of course, compatible with different social systems of production. However, in so far as economic or productive techniques are embedded in a specific structure of social relationships—and to a greater or lesser extent they always are—they are not compatible with a rival system of production. This is why Keynes, significantly, has to add to his claim about the alleged neutrality of "technique" two blatant escape clauses: "useful economic techniques" and "if we choose to apply them."

This kind of reasoning enables all those who argue from the standpoint of capital to represent the crucial value-commitment, one's self-identification with the established social relations of production, as a purely rational and "neutral" approval of "useful economic techniques" (or of theories based on "scientific facts," "descriptive models", "pragmatic rules", "sociological facts", "empirical observations", etc., etc.) and to dismiss all rival approaches—especially those which dare to focus attention on the conspicuously unmentioned factor of the social relations of production—as "zeal", "religion", "strange and horrid conversion", "turbid rubbish of the Red bookshops", "ideology", and the like.

The case of Talcott Parsons is equally significant, although in a rather different way, in that, unlike Keynes, he refrains from adopting an openly moralizing posture. His self-identification with the standpoint of capital (as we have seen earlier: with that of corporate capitalism) is as complete as his pretensions are to provide a "universal theory of action". Since, however, (strictly in the interest of "universal-ity", of course) the massive predominance of capitalist partiality must be hidden beneath thick layers of elaborately mystifying verbiage, the
theoretical outcome of Parsons' efforts is, accordingly, a "structural-functional analysis" of the "universal structures" of bourgeois reification and of the apologetically defined self-perpetuating "functions" of life confined "within the action frame of reference" of alienated commodity society.

It would take up a great deal of space to attempt a detailed critique of Parsons' system, since cutting through the thick crust of bewildering verbiage to the core of his generic assertions would require the multiplication of the sort of "translations" C. Wright Mills so admirably provided in *The Sociological Imagination* on a smaller scale. But limitations of space compel us to concentrate, instead, on a few central points.

As C. Wright Mills rightly stresses, "Grand theory is drunk on syntax, blind to semantics... The grand theorists are so preoccupied by syntactic meanings and so unimaginative about semantic references, they are so rigidly confined to such high levels of abstraction that the 'typologies' they make up—and the work they do to make them up—seem more often an arid game of Concepts than an effort to define systematically—which is to say, in a clear and orderly way—the problems at hand, and to guide our efforts to solve them." To say, however, that "In *The Social System* Parsons has not been able to get down to the work of social science because he is possessed by the idea that the one model of social order he has constructed is some kind of universal model; because, in fact, he has fetishised his Concepts" is no explanation. Whether one single model, or one of a plurality of models, is rather beside the point. For if the model in question is constructed in the state of "syntactic drunkenness" coupled with "blindness to semantics", that sort of a model is useless both on its own and in the company of many. Furthermore, the coordination and unification of partial models in a comprehensive framework—though, of course, an "open" one, both historically and structurally—is a vital methodological requirement of all systems of social theory. Parsons fetishises his concepts not because "he is possessed by the idea" of having constructed a universal model—an idealistic suggestion—but because he *takes for granted* the fetishisms and reifications (the given stage of bourgeois *Dasein*) which constitute the practical foundations of his theoretical models. Thus, what Parsons is to be faulted on is not the—however illusory—ideas he might have about his own achievements, but the *apologetic nature* of the achievements themselves.

We may illustrate this with some of Parsons' key concepts as they appear in *Economy and Society*: a work in which Parsons' customary lack of intelligibility is perhaps least in evidence. Unfortunately, it is necessary to start with a long quotation. But we can say in its favour
that it shows, rather graphically, the method through which the socio-historically specific features of capitalist partiality are inflated into the sublime apologetic platitudes of the Parsonian "general theory of social systems within the 'action' frame of reference". This is how the quotation goes:

"Let us summarize the model for institutional change as a series of logical steps in a cycle of change: (1) The process starts with a combination of 'dissatisfaction' with the productive achievements of the economy or its relevant sectors and a sense of 'opportunity' in terms of the potential availability of adequate resources to reach a higher level of productivity. (2) There appear symptoms of disturbance in the form of 'unjustified' negative emotional reactions and 'unrealistic' aspirations on the part of various elements in the population. (3) A covert process of handling these tensions and mobilizing motivational resources for new attempts to realize the implications of the existing value pattern takes place. (4) Supportive tolerance of the resulting proliferation of 'new ideas', without imposing specific responsibility for their implementation and for 'taking the consequences', is found in important quarters. (5) Positive attempts are made to reach specification of the new ideas which will become the objects of commitments by entrepreneurs. (6) 'Responsible' implementation of innovations is carried out by persons or collectivities assuming the role of entrepreneurs, either rewarded by entrepreneurial profit or punished by financial failure, depending on consumers' acceptance or rejection of the innovations. (7) The gains resulting from the innovation and consolidated by their acceptance as part of the standard of living and their incorporation into the routine functions of production. In this final phase the new 'way of doing things' becomes institutionalized as part of the structure of the economy.

We suggest the following 'translation' into the terms of the separation of ownership and management in the corporate structure of the American economy: (1) There was diffuse dissatisfaction of responsible elements in the business world with the way the 'owner controlled' corporate system was working from the point of view of maximization of productivity, and an indirect feeling that the supply of capital was not wholly dependent on maintaining the status quo. (2) Symptoms of disturbance appeared; e.g., the 'technological' view of the destructive consequences of business (owner-dominated) machinations as interfering with 'efficiency'; utopian exaggerations of the results to be obtained from abandoning 'business' altogether and becoming purely 'technological'. (3) Permissive-supportive attitudes toward the objections to the 'captain of industry' system, and toward the opposite utopianism were found. (4) The 'new enterprise' of organizers of the corporate world, e.g., US Steel after Carnegie-Morgan; General Motors after Durant and Standard Oil after Rockefeller, gains in relative prominence. (5) New financial practices appear, tending to 'shake free' from the older family capitalist control; e.g., free sale of securities to the general public; minority control practices, the holding company, etc. At the same time, there is rapid technological and organizational development of the firm into a kind of 'empire' in itself. (6) A new wave of profits follows, showing that the system can operate under the new conditions. For example, earnings of the post-Rockefeller Standard Oil Companies have been much greater than the Rockefeller fortune. (7) The new position is consolidated by its routinization, especially by the great output of new products to a high-wage consuming
public; the 'new economy' has become independent both of the previous 'exploitation of labour' and the previous 'capitalistic control'.

There is thus in broad terms an encouragingly close fit between the outline of our theoretical model and the empirical facts of one recent change in the structure of the American economy. Of course, this is a mere starting-point for more intensive exploration of this and other cases."

There is no space here to take this passage to as many pieces as we should. Let us only have a brief look at some of its most characteristic features.

It is interesting to note that exactly seven little boxes make up the Parsonian "series of logical steps" and that the claimed "empirical facts" readily fit into exactly seven little boxes. Moreover, as we are told in a footnote on page 271: "The number and order of steps involved in this process corresponds with that postulated by Parsons and Bales in their paradigm of a cycle of internalization of a value pattern in the process of socialization (cf. Family, Socialization, and Interaction Process, Ch. VII). We feel that this correspondence is not fortuitous, but derives from certain general conditions and characteristics of the process of structural change in systems of action." What an "elegance"! What an "economy". The only remaining difficulty is that the seven little boxes are filled up to such a logico-empirical perfection that there can be no room in them for such factors as "war", "imperialism", "colonial exploitation", "class antagonism", "economic crisis", etc., etc., which might otherwise perhaps have helped to explain the changes that have taken place "in the corporate structure of American economy".

The Parsonian account of the "cycle of change" is based on the replacement of objective structural factors by mystifying subjective categories like "negative emotional reactions", "entrepreneurial attitudes", "indirect feelings" (whatever they might be), "utopianism and opposite utopianism", and the like. Also, from time to time Parsons congratulates himself on how closely his paradigms and "series of logical steps" fit the world of corporate capitalism—although he does not put it in quite this way (he calls it the "close fit between our theoretical model and the empirical facts" etc.), and does not offer an explanation other than the implied perfection of his theoretical models. The plain truth, however, is a little more prosaic than that. The "facts" fit his models because the latter are abstract "translations" of the "empirical facts" of corporate capitalism as seen from the standpoint of monopoly capital. This is why the representation of the available facts must be so revealingly selective. This is why he can "retranslate" with such an ease the "logical steps" of his "paradigm" into the empirical sequences of—highly selective—events and "structural changes". (Though, of course, as a noble idealist he is convinced..."
that his "paradigms" come first and the "empirical facts" oblige there­
after.) And this is why the promised "more intensive exploration of
this and other cases" never goes beyond the mere repetition of the
inflated platiitudes of Parsonian apologetics.

By way of demonstration, let us deal briefly with three closely
interrelated points. (1) The total absence of causal explanations at key
points of the analysis. The particular members of the sequence just
"appear", "are found", etc.—as if they came out of a large top-hat.
Indeed, the basic apologetic function of the Parsonian "series of logical
steps" is to create the semblance of "inner necessity" (better: "logical
necessity") for a state of affairs—a "mere contingency" if there ever
was one—which is simply taken for granted, ("as simply given"), is
assigned the status of absolute necessity, and is projected into the
"paradigm" which in turn readily lends itself to being retranslated
into the pseudo-empirical sequence of pseudo-causality. Why and how
should "dissatisfaction", "disturbances", "new ideas", "innovations",
"new financial practices", etc. just "appear"; why should the whole
process be happily consummated in a "new wave of profits", or for
that matter why should the phenomenon of profit be associated with a
wave character; and why should the pattern underlying the whole
process be a cyclic one, postulating thus the necessary reproduction
of the established relations of production in any "new equilibrium",
all these questions can find no place in the land of Parsons' paradigm.
After all, the whole point of this "paradigm" is to rule such questions
—-together with all their possible practical implications—a priori out
of court.

(2) In a world founded on the "structures" of Parsonian pseudo-
causality anything goes, of course. And in fact, one of the sub-
postulates of the general model is "consumer sovereignty". (It figures
prominently in exactly these terms on page 160 and elsewhere in the
book.) Accordingly, we are told that the whole process depends on
"consumers' acceptance or rejection of the innovations". Yet, the next
—and last—"logical step" of the paradigmatic tale speaks only of
"acceptance" : the possibility of "consumers' rejection" has magically
disappeared from the picture. But this is as it should be—except for
the claim that institutionalized acceptance is the "final" stage of a
formerly fully open system of genuine alternatives. As a matter of fact,
the latter cannot be the case even on Parsons' own showing. For if
acceptance as such is the necessary condition of the "final phase"—
in that lack of acceptance would completely undermine and destroy
the whole cyclic paradigm of our author, with who knows what
cataclysmic consequences for his "empirical facts"—then the possi-
bility of a rejection at the preceding stage must be a completely empty
notion : in other words a paradigmatic fiction. What makes the idea
of "consumer sovereignty"—"acceptance or rejection"—a mere resounding fiction is the very nature of the self-reproducing cyclic system itself which is quite unthinkable—as Parsons himself admits in the end—without the institutionalization of acceptance and, by implication, without the effective nullification of its alternative. And since institutionalized acceptance—the prosaic truth of high-sounding "consumer sovereignty"—is a structural necessity of the system itself (again, we have Parsons' own admission for this), the question of a genuine alternative (i.e. "rejection" as a meaningful term) concerns the system as such, and not the possibility of isolated partial choices well within the system's boundaries. If, however, the question of genuine alternatives concerns the structure of the system within which the individual consumer—Parsons' "sovereign"—is hopelessly trapped, effective rejection is conceivable only from outside: a possibility a priori ruled out by the self-perpetuatingly "equilibrating" functionality of the Parsonian system. And furthermore, if the individual subject is necessarily trapped by the structure of institutionalized acceptance within which he is situated, a genuine alternative to the system necessarily requires both a collective subject and a subject whose "sovereignty" is not confined to the sphere of mere consumption. But precisely for these reasons Parsons has to operate with the categories of subjective mystification, postulating the (fictitious) sovereignty of the individual consumer as an "empirical fact", and claiming to derive from it the "final phase of institutional acceptance" which he had in fact taken all the time for granted: indeed he has assumed it from the very beginning as the necessary climax—the identical omega and alpha—of his "cycle of structural change". The "logical steps" of Parsons' deductions and derivations are thus gross violations of logic. As we can see, however, the objectionable points are not simply logical "errors" and "confusions"—although the substitution of subjective and objective factors as well as of individual and collective spheres of action is confusing enough—but necessary requirements of a theoretical system structured as a reified apologetics of the established relations of production.

(3) Thanks to the assumed framework of pseudo-causality, and thanks to the systematic confusion of subjective and objective factors as well as of individual and collective spheres of action, as a final consummation of Parsons' "empirical translation" we are presented with these lines: "the new economy has become independent both of the previous 'exploitation of labour' and the previous 'capitalistic control'." The post-capitalist Millennium ("equilibrium") has thus arrived and it is here to stay. Our irresistible impulse to rejoicing is restrained only by the disturbing inverted commas. First, we become slightly anxious when we think that the "new economy" is perhaps
not a new economy after all, for it is put into inverted commas. And second, we are rather surprised to learn that the "new economy" has become independent both of the previous "exploitation of labour" and of the previous "capitalistic control": we were never told before that it was dependent on them, let alone about how the miraculous change was so suddenly accomplished. The potentially explosive problems strangely "appear" only at the point of their magic disappearance from the equilibrated picture. Besides, "capitalism"—not to mention "exploitation of labour"—figure in the book in inverted commas: they do not seem to have a proper ontological status. (Obviously, they are inventions of a certain Karl Marx who is "refuted" in several sections of this learned book on the lines adopted by the passage we are talking about.) Which all adds up, unfortunately, to a not-so-reassuring proposition about the nature of Parsons' post-capitalist Millennium. Namely that the not-so-new-economy is "independent" only of the unreal entities in inverted commas; it has the real stuff—exploitation of labour and capitalistic control—in greater abundance than ever before. Which in plain English simply means that at the end of our long and arduous logico-empirical journey we are back to square one in Parsons' truly circular "cycle of structural change."

Still, the journey itself was by no means a wholly wasted one. For we are now able to understand clearly that the "striking fact" which Parsons could only report with self-admiring awe is not so striking, after all. "The striking fact, in sum, is the correspondence—category for category—between the established economic classifications of the factors of production and the shares of income and a classification of the input-output categories of social systems which was arrived at in work on the level of general theory independently, without the economic categories in mind at all." But, of course, there was no need whatsoever to keep "the economic categories in mind" in the course of elaborating the models of Systems Analysis: as Parsons himself says elsewhere, the models of "modern" economists and General Theorists "do not compete in the same methodological race," and therefore they may be considered to be independent in this respect from one another. What the originator of the General Theory had to keep in mind though—and he did it in fact, as we have abundantly seen—was not "the established economic classifications" but the established relations of production from which social theorists of all kinds are far from being independent. It is the latter correlation—the shared adoption of the standpoint of capital—which explains the profound structural affinity between the categories and models of apologetic economists and General Theorists. For in the non-methodological race involving the capitalist and the socialist perspectives of
On the basis of what we have seen so far it seems to me that the ideologically most sensitive area of social science is the network of fundamental principles and assumptions within which the various sets of particular theoretical propositions—in a sense “operational deductions”—are worked out. The former are necessarily linked—even if often unconsciously—to the basic structural characteristics of the given socio-economic formation which ultimately determine the categories, models, principles, methodological guidelines and inherent problematics—in short: the structure—of the specific fields of enquiry at any particular time in history. (This is why there can be such a thing as “A Critique of Political Economy”, and not just a critique of this or that particular tenet of a particular economist. But, of course, “Political Economy” here stands for a socio-historically determinate type of theory, as contrasted with a generic “discipline” whose subject matter would be the “economic life of the society”. For it is only at a determinate time in history that the study of the metabolism between man and nature becomes the subject matter of Political Economy.)

The specific ideological character of a particular social theory is determined by the way in which the fundamental structural characteristics of the given social formation are articulated in it, from a
particular social standpoint, in the form of some basic theoretical principles and assumptions (or premises) which constitute the points of departure, as well as the general framework of orientation of the particular lines of enquiry, (E.g. taking for granted “Private Property”, “The Market”, “Exchange”, “The Division of Labour”, etc.—from Adam Smith’s “propensity to exchange and barter” to present-day theorists who assume the structure and institutions of capitalist society “as simply given”. Similarly with “The State”, “The Family”, “Capital”, “Management”, “Banking”, “Money”, “Consumer Sovereignty”, “The Contract”, “Parliament”, “The Government”, etc., etc. Equally, the necessary consequences for the whole structure of a theory of adopting as its key concepts “social equilibrium”, “institutionalization” and “socialization”.) Consequently, a basic criterion for assessing the scientific claims of a particular social theory must be its ability or failure to submit to a constant critical evaluation and revaluation its own fundamental principles and assumptions. In this respect a close examination of what is excluded by a certain line of enquiry—whether on the grounds that “it is an insoluble problem for the human reason”, or that the dichotomy between “facts” and “values” a priori assigns the debated phenomenon to the realm of “religion” and “metaphysics”, or that its discussion is incompatible with “the proper methodological procedures”, or again that it “cannot be quantified” and “reduced” into the categories adopted by a particular approach, etc., etc.—is of a paramount importance. Similarly, the never fulfilled promises, which are often unfulfillable in principle within the confines of the adopted approach (e.g. the ever-extended “temporary” postponement of determinate tasks whose examination has a vital bearing on the assumptions and claims of the whole case; as, for instance, the “temporary” neglect of the problems of large and comprehensive structures by the champions of “small-group research”; or, again, the unfulfilled promises of General Theory discussed above) are highly revealing about the necessary structural limitations of certain types of social theory. In social theory, it goes without saying, the “ubergreifendes Moment” (the factor of overriding importance) for making the necessary revaluations and readjustments is the prevailing socio-historical situation itself and the well-defined position of a particular thinker within it. Problems which must remain a complete mystery from a certain angle often turn out to be very simple indeed when approached from a social standpoint which is immune to the negative practical implications of the required theoretical solution. In this sense the adoption of the historically more advanced social standpoint is of a vital importance for social theory. It must be stressed, however, that a historically more advanced social standpoint is no guarantee in itself for the solution of the problems at stake. Nor is it justifiable to suggest,
as many vulgarizers do, that a historically retrograde social standpoint is ipso facto the end of all scientific advance. The practically-critical attitude required for significant scientific achievements in the field of social theory, may be not only compatible with the interests of capital at some juncture but even necessary for its continued survival. Given the complex dialectics of social confrontation, the stakes are never summarily "everything or nothing" in this sphere. This is why it becomes possible for a Keynes in the challenging circumstances of the General Crisis and its aftermath, to produce some partial scientific results within the boundaries of his overall approach, notwithstanding his total identification with the standpoint of capital as we have seen above. As a general theory and "refutation" of the Marxian approach, his system is devoid of other than purely apologetic foundation. It represents, nevertheless, a genuine theoretical advance in the understanding and possible control of some limited factors within the overall framework of capitalist development at a determinate historical stage. (It becomes a total ideological mystification insofar as the partial results are turned into a general theory claiming universal validity to itself, eliminating at the same time also the historical dimension from the picture.) That in socio-economic practice this theory is put to manipulative uses, does not alter the fact that an important condition of, however partial, manipulative success was the theoretically successfully identification of certain correlations and mechanisms of control which remained hidden from bourgeois economics at a previous stage. (Parsonian "General Theory" is, of course, a very different proposition indeed: and precisely because it is nothing but apologetic General Theory, even when its immediate object is "small-group research" or the analysis of "the individual as a system"). Although the scope of genuine achievements is strictly circumscribed by the requirements of approaching the problem "from within" the system itself, partial scientific advances are possible to the extent to which a new historical phase of the overall social confrontation necessitates some critical readjustments in the capitalist structures themselves. (Again, we can see a major difference: while Keynes successfully identifies some mechanisms of adjustment and control which temporarily enhance the power of the capitalist system, Parsons inflates the socio-historically limited conditions of manipulative structural readjustments into the "universal model" of structural change as such, remaining always within the "paradigms" of the established structures. This is what he modestly calls the "Columbian" discovery of his General Theory in which "the cycle of structural change" happily corresponds with "the paradigm of a cycle of internalization of a value pattern in the process of socialization", thus producing, single handed, the "new society" from which "exploitation of labour" and
"capitalistic control" have disappeared in the course of the not-so-Columbian mystification.)

Another major aspect of this problematic is that the adoption of the historically more advanced social standpoint is not the same thing as a (thoroughly fictitious) final supersession of all ideology. We can only mention two principal factors in this context. (1) That in social theory even the greatest scientific advance—like Marx's solution of the problems of commodity production and exchange value—is tied to the conditions of its socio-historical relevance. What we have said above about the specific objects of social science as "necessarily disappearing objects", applies to the Marxian problematic of value as well. If, however, no notice is being taken of the changing circumstances and of their implications for the sets of relationships as they appear in Marx's analyses, the repetition of the same terms which once registered the greatest scientific advance in the development of social theory becomes paralyzing ideology. This is why one of the fundamental principles of the Marxian approach stipulates that Marxist criticism "must be constantly applied to itself." (To hint very briefly at a problem of major importance whose elaboration is not possible here: Marx's demonstration of the actual terms and factors of "contractual" relationship between capital and labour which opposes his concept of "labour power" to the mystifying and concealing explanations of Political Economy. It is easy to see that effective changes in the terms of these relationships—in accordance with the changing global relation of forces—have far-reaching implications for the whole theory as formulated by Marx at a particular juncture in history. Equally, it is easy to see that failure to follow up such implications in the form of adequate theoretical demonstrations, in accordance with the dynamically changing requirements of a historical period of transition from one social formation to another, is bound to have serious repercussions for both theory and associated social practice, even if the people involved have adopted, broadly speaking, the "standpoint of labour".) And (2), it must be remembered that Marxism is not only a critique of the capitalist social formation—its negation—but also a strategy for instrumental-institutional readjustments in a changed—actually and not fictitiously post-capitalist—socio-economic setting. In the latter respect, there are obviously a multiplicity of constraints and determinations at work, which are bound to interfere with the original—however correctly conceived—strategies. (E.g., a particular country's position and relative power in the global framework; the limitations of the available instruments and productive powers vis-à-vis the given, and constantly changing, socio-economic tasks; the negative "feedback" on the whole complex from the historically constituted and limited institutions under the pressure of social dynamism, etc., etc.)
To pretend that such conditioning forces do not exist is nothing but the worst kind of ideological mystification. The answer is not the ex-cogitation of timeless, a prioristically "scientific" solutions but the recognition of the necessity of such a "feedback", and the elaboration of strategies as well as of their vehicles of realization which—while necessarily adjusting themselves to the conditions of institutional feedback—remain in overall control even under the conditions of severe setbacks.

Thus, social theory is not external to the ideological determinants of socio-historical conditioning and institutional feedback but integral to it. It is this complex dialectic of simultaneously "external" and "internal", "critical" and "self-critical", "detached" and "fully involved", "negative" and "self-assertive", etc. character of historically significant and relevant social theory—as opposed to the thoroughly ideological claims of "value-free social science"—which enables it to be both ideologically effective and scientifically valid, in accordance with the changing socio-historical conditions of its sphere of operation.

NOTES

1. An extended version of a paper presented to an Interdisciplinary Seminar of the Division of Social Science at York University, Toronto, in January 1972.

2. As I have shown elsewhere, this is by no means an isolated incident in Daniel Bell's work. He is equally at odds with facts when he "analysed" Marx's writings. Cf. Chapter VIII ("The Controversy about Marx") of my book on Marx's Theory of Alienation, Merlin Press, London 1970.

3. Lukács has dealt with this line of argument as far back as 1924. After quoting Lenin's proposals about "state capitalism", made at the beginning of 1918, he commented: "These passages have been quoted in particular detail to refute widespread bourgeois and social democratic myths according to which, after the failure of 'doctrinaire Marxist' attempts to introduce communism 'at one sweep', Lenin compromised and, 'clever realist that he was', deviated from his original political line. The historical truth is the opposite. So-called 'War Communism'—about which Lenin said: 'It was a makeshift' and: 'It was the war and the ruin that forced us into War Communism. It was not, and could not be, a policy that corresponded to the economic tasks of the proletariat'—was itself a deviation from the path along which the development of socialism was to have run, according to his theoretical predictions." Lukács, Lenin: A Study on the Unity of His Thought, N. L. B. London, 1970, pp. 76-7.

4. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. XXXIII, p. 810. (The quotation from Lenin's opening speech is from pp. 277-8 of the same volume.)


8. Ibid., p. 91.
10. Ibid., p. 216.
11. Ibid., p. 215.
13. Ibid., p. 108.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., p. 29.
16. Ibid., pp. 49-50.
17. Ibid., pp. 103-4.
19. We shall attempt in another chapter of this study an analysis of some characteristically evasive sociological categories.
21. Ibid., p. 22.
22. Ibid., p. 23.
23. Eager to find proofs to the soundness of the wishful thinking which postulated the definitive end of the antagonism between capital and labour in the age of "the modern industrial society"—a wishful thinking shared by numerous "men of the contemporary generation"—Parsons saw in the material supplied by this book (claiming the "separation of ownership and control" in the big corporations) the final refutation of Marx's theories. Yet, nothing could be more amusing than this suggestion. For it was precisely Marx who predicted, well before anyone else, the necessity of such developments: as inherent in the trends of concentration and centralization of capital; trends resulting "with the inexorability of a natural law" (Marx) in the corporate structures of advanced capitalism. But now the results of the trends he identified well before their maturation, are supposed to bury forever his theories about capitalism and—especially—about the necessity (not to be confused with some mechanical inevitability) of establishing a socialist social order.
26. Ibid., p. 176. Theoretically speaking this is, of course, a non-sequitur. For a positive factor—a specific American socio-historical phenomenon—is "explained" in terms of a mere negativity: a lack or absence of an allegedly strictly "European" characteristic. The ideological function, however, is thoroughly "sound" and rather obvious. For those who might worry are assured that they need not fear "class struggle" in an America which is claimed to possess "flexible adjustive structures".
29. Ibid., pp. 151-5.
30. Ibid., pp. 59-60.
32. It is against the latter that he enunciates his principles about “slavery by nature” and “freedom by nature”.
34. We have seen some examples in the sections on Homans and Coser.
35. Cf. the quotation from Keynes referred to in note 45.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., p. 141.
39. Ibid., p. 142.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., p. 143
44. Ibid., p. 27.
45. J. M. Keynes, A Short View of Russia (1925).
47. Keynes, Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren (1930).
48. A Short View of Russia.
49. Ibid.
52. Ibid., p. 58.
53. This is where we can see the importance of Lukács’ methodological principle: “the standpoint of totality” mentioned above.
54. Talcott Parsons and Neil J. Smelser, Economy and Society: A Study in the Integration of Economics and Social Theory, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1956. Since it is frequently stressed in the book that Parsons is “the Senior Author”, and since all the important concepts are taken from his general system, for the sake of brevity we refer to this book from now on under Parsons’ name only.
56. It is hard to believe, but this is the “proof” of what is called “opposite utopianism”, as supplied in a footnote on page 272: “Anna Lee Hopson in a study of best-selling novels of the early 20th century found that the hero is unwilling to ‘knuckle under’ to the ‘interest’ and he is very generally rewarded by the idealistic Jove of the heroine who is regularly the daughter of one of these wicked men. Cf. Anna Lee Hopson, Best Sellers, Media of Mass Expression, unpublished PhD. dissertation, Radcliffe College, 1952.”
57. Since structure is defined as “the essential internal conditions of a relatively stable equilibrium”, (p. 248) the Parsonian concept of “structural change” is a very peculiar notion indeed.
58. Economy and Society, p. 28.
59. Ibid., p. 278.
60. Keynes, Am I a Liberal?
62. Ibid., pp. 283-4.