CHAPTER THREE

On Ideology as an Analytical Concept in the Study of Political Economy

> Faiths blow on the winds
> and become shibboleths
> and deep growths
> with men ready to die
> for a living word on the tongue,
> for a light alive in the bones,
> for dreams fluttering in the wrists.
>
> CARL SANDBURG

Beliefs matter. In the study of human action, nothing is more fundamental than an appreciation of what the actors believe. For many scholars this methodological observation is a truism. Economists and political scientists, however, often pay little heed to it. In economics the assumption of perfectly informed, completely rational, and narrowly self-interested consumers and producers long served, and often still serves, as a basis for theorizing about markets. In political analysis it is often assumed that the voters know all the pertinent facts about politicians and policies and that the politicians know—and seek to get—exactly what their constituents want. In reality, however, knowledge is always and everywhere a scarce resource, costly to acquire and hence rarely possessed in abundance. Unavoidably, people conduct their affairs in a more or less dense fog of ignorance and uncertainty. Recognition of this reality promotes a more valid comprehension of social behavior and institutions.[1]

To cope with an uncertain social environment, people embrace various forms of belief. Some are as concrete as the everyday facts of place and time (the grocery store on Elm Street opens at 10:00 A.M.) or scientifically tested relations (water can be decomposed into hydrogen and oxygen gases) while

others are as vague as philosophical outlooks (we ought to seek virtue) or religious convictions (the meek shall inherit the earth). Between the extremes lie realms of belief where facts, values, and wishful thinking combine in varying proportion. The "softer" forms of knowledge—*knowledge* being understood here as simply what some people believe, whether others agree or not—guide people's behavior as much as, perhaps even more than, the "harder" forms do. Among the most important of the intermediate kinds of belief is ideology.

Convinced that ideology ranks with the prime determinants of human actions, especially the actions of the masses in politics, some scholars have worked hard to comprehend it. For more than a century philosophers, historians, sociologists, and political scientists have tried to understand the nature and significance of ideology and to identify its causes and consequences. Lately even neoclassical economists, who long disdained any resort to such an ambiguous and nonquantitative concept, increasingly have recognized its importance.[2] Notwithstanding all the efforts of scholars, the relation of ideology to the political economy remains an ill-developed and controversial subject.

An understanding of ideology is essential to an understanding of the growth of government. The bare axiom that individuals are, and always have been, self-interested and willing to use government as a means of gaining their personal ends does not suffice for making sense of the political past. It leaves open the critical questions: *What* do people regard as "in their self-interest," and *How* are they willing to use government as a means? Their ideologies give people anwers to these questions. Ideologies therefore determine, at least in part, the form and frequency of the political actions that shape the growth of government.

WHAT IS IDEOLOGY?

Scholars have reached no consensus on precisely how ideology should be conceptualized. Giovanni Sartori has written that "[t]he word ideology points to a black box. . . . [T]he growing popularity of the term has been matched, if anything, by its growing obscurity."[3] Consider some examples of how writers recently have defined ideology:

> [A] distinct and broadly coherent structure of values, beliefs, and attitudes with implications for social policy.[4]

> [A] collection of ideas that makes explicit the nature of the good community. . . . [T]he framework by which a community defines and applies values.[5]

> [A]n economizing device by which individuals come to terms with their environment and are provided with a "world view" so that the decision-

> making process is simplified. [It is] . . . inextricably interwoven with moral and ethical judgments about the fairness of the world the individual perceives.[6]
>
> [A] set of ideas and beliefs through which we perceive the outside world and act upon our information. . . . [A] medium through which we try to learn and comprehend the world; but it also generates emotions which hold people together.[7]
>
> [U]nacknowledged dogma that serves social functions. . . . [A] special type of *Weltanschauung*, a constituent part of social psychology.[8]
>
> [T]he complex set of rationales and rationalizations through which a group, class, or nation interprets the world and justifies its actions within it.[9]

Martin Seliger, a careful and incisive student of ideology, has presented a "detailed definition" that fills more than a page of his treatise.[10]

Karl Marx, whose writings have given much of the impetus to the study of ideology, in effect branded as ideology the social thought of all those who did not fully share his views. Such a pejorative ("restrictive") conception of ideology, which need not assume the Marxist form, remains standard for some scholars. It is also the most common usage in ordinary speech. This conception equates ideological thought with "distorted" thought. It suggests fanaticism or ulterior motives.[11] It raises implicitly if not explicitly the possibility that nonideological thought, even the "negation of ideology," can exist for those with "no ideological ax to grind."[12] Despite its widespread use the restrictive conception of ideology is not the most analytically fruitful one. As Seliger has shown, it contains internal contradictions and makes indefensible claims—for instance, that someone does or can know True Reality with certainty.[13] Rejecting the restrictive conception, I shall embrace instead a more general, nonpejorative ("inclusive") view.

By *ideology* I shall mean a somewhat coherent, rather comprehensive belief system about social relations. To say that it is somewhat coherent implies that its components hang together, though not necessarily in a way that would satisfy a logician. To say that it is rather comprehensive implies that it subsumes a wide variety of social categories and their interrelations. Notwithstanding its extensive scope it tends to revolve about only a few central values—for instance, individual freedom, social equality, or national glory.

Ideology has four distinct aspects: cognitive, affective, programmatic, and solidary. It structures a person's perceptions and predetermines his understandings of the social world, expressing these cognitions in characteristic symbols; it tells him whether what he "sees" is good or bad or morally neutral; and it propels him to act in accordance with his cognitions and evaluations as a committed member of a political group in pursuit of definite social objectives. Ideologies perform an important psychological service because without them people cannot know, assess, and respond to much of the vast world of social relations. Ideology simplifies a reality too huge and

complicated to be comprehended, evaluated, and dealt with in any purely factual, scientific, or other disinterested way.

Every sane adult, unless he is completely apathetic politically, has an ideology. The notion that ideology is only the distorted, fanatical thought of one's intellectual or political opponents cannot be sustained. Of course, every ideology must deal in part with factual, scientific, and other "hard" knowledge. To the extent that it makes assumptions or claims inconsistent with such well-confirmed, socially tested knowledge one may properly accuse it of "distortion." Some ideologies commit this sin more than others; indeed some thrive on flagrant lies. But all contain unverified and—far more significant—unverifiable elements, including their fundamental commitments to certain values. In relation to these elements, which are neither true nor false, the allegation of distortion has little or no meaning. Ideologies have sources in the guts as well as the mind, and neither logic nor empirical observation can resolve visceral disagreements.

The meaning of ideology differs from that of several terms sometimes used as synonyms. Worldview, a closely related concept, differs in its greater vagueness and its lack of programmatic and solidary aspects. Social or political philosophy is both broader and differently motivated; like worldview, it contains no necessary impulse toward political action nor any implied community membership. Social science or social theory differs in its explicit striving for moral neutrality; relative to ideology, it inclines more toward pragmatism, empirical testing, and avoidance of politics—social theories that espouse the unity of theory and praxis are actually ideologies. Culture denotes a much wider system of symbols, beliefs, and behaviors to which ideologies belong as subsystems.

Most hypotheses about the sources of ideological commitment are either interest theories or strain theories. In interest theories people are assumed to pursue wealth or power, and ideas serve as weapons in the struggle by lending legitimacy to the pursuits. In strain theories people are assumed to flee from anxieties, and ideas bring them comfort and fellowship.[14] Interest theories include the classical Marxian formulation, which maintains that one's (necessarily non-Marxist) ideology is simultaneously a reflection of his class situation and a "false consciousness" of true class destinies. (As Seliger puts it, "the [Marxian] assertion of bourgeois misapprehension boils down to the failure—or unwillingness—of the bourgeoisie to fall in with the forecast of its doom.")[15] Aileen Kraditor's recently advanced arguments about ideology exemplify a strain theory. The turn-of-the-century radicals she studied sought, in Seliger's words, "to bridge the gap between the proletariat's imperfect consciousness of its historic destiny (and hence of its unwillingness to achieve it) and the postulated inevitability of its victory."[16] But they undertook the task in pursuit of a solidarity that their would-be comrades had

already found elsewhere. Fleeing from anxieties that the masses for the most part did not share, the American socialists could recruit only a minuscule following.[17]

IDEOLOGY AND POLITICAL ACTION

To the extent that the various explanations of the growth of government postulate that individuals or groups take political action—and each of them, implicitly if not explicitly, does so postulate—all rest on a problematical foundation. Each argument posits a benefit that people could enjoy were the government to take an appropriate action: suppression of negative externalities, provision of nonexcludable public goods, income support for the aged and destitute, redistribution of wealth to favored groups, and so forth. To elicit the desired response from government, people take costly actions. They sacrifice valuable time, effort, money, and other resources in order to send letters and telegrams to politicians, campaign and vote for candidates and legislative proposals, make financial contributions to candidates and pressure groups, and act in other ways as members of large political groups. Although such political actions are utterly familiar, the first theorist to inquire seriously whether they are rational concluded that, except under special conditions, they are not.

In his pioneering book *The Logic of Collective Action*, Mancur Olson argued that all group theories of politics commit a fallacy of decomposition. Group theorists "have assumed that, if a group had some reason or incentive to organize to further its interest, the rational individuals in that group would also have a reason or an incentive to support an organization working in their mutual interest." But the assumption, Olson concluded, "is logically fallacious, at least for large, latent groups with economic interests."[18]

To expose the fallacy one need only ask: What are the expected costs and benefits of such political action to the individual political actor? The costs are sufficiently clear and present. Each participant in a political action group must immediately sacrifice his own valuable time, energy, money, or other resources. And the expected benefits? Here is the crux of the problem—a problem inherent in public ("collective") goods available to groups comprising large numbers of people.

The essential fact is that in the large-group case the expected benefits of a collective good do not depend to a significant degree on anything a particular person may or may not do to create them. Whether one does or does not write to one's congressman, that politician will act just the same; a single letter more or less makes no difference. If one does not vote, the same electoral outcome will obtain; one has but a single vote among thousands or

even millions, and the likelihood that one's vote will determine the result of the election is very close to nil. If one does not contribute money to a candidate or political pressure group, nothing will differ appreciably; one's few dollars are but a drip in the bathtub. As a single member of a large group, nothing one does or refrains from doing makes any noticeable difference.

And yet, if any collective goods should be created, one will benefit just as much as those who worked at great personal sacrifice to attain them. Even if one were to take no political action at all, one would still benefit from reduced air pollution in one's city, more effective deterrence of foreign enemies, social insurance against destitution, or redistribution of wealth toward groups to which one belongs. It is irrational to bear any cost in an attempt to bring about what will happen no matter what one does. In the large-group context the only rational political action is no action at all. Rational people will always try to be "free riders," enjoying the benefits of collective goods without sharing the costs of their provision.

Of course, when everyone tries to be a free rider there are no rides for anyone: mass collective action, including the collective action that produces or sustains Big Government, just doesn't happen. Olson argues that this Iron Law of Collective Inaction has only two exceptions. The first occurs when selective (excludable) incentives are attached to the collective good, giving it in part the character of a private good. For example, in return for paying dues to the American Medical Association a doctor receives the association's journals; but the AMA uses a portion of the dues to support its lobbying activities aimed at the creation or preservation of collective goods for the medical profession. The second exception occurs when people are coerced to participate in providing the collective good. For example, the government forces citizens to pay the taxes used to finance national defense. But in the absence of selective incentives or coercion the rule holds: a rational person does not take part in large-scale collective action.[19]

The glaring defect of this demonstration is its patent inconsistency with reality. We are crushed, it seems, between irrefutable logic and undeniable facts. As usual in such cases the problem arises from vague concepts and false implicit premises. When the public choice theorist declares that individual political action in a large-group context is "irrational," what exactly does he mean? Is he making debatable implicit assumptions about a person's actual or possible ends and means?

To answer these questions, we must consider what economists call the *utility function*. This is a causal relation between a utility index, U, which measures the person's sense of well-being, and all the variables, $C_1, C_2, \ldots, C_n$, that affect the index; formally,

$$U = f(C_1, C_2, \ldots, C_n).$$

And what are the *C*'s? Economists usually take them to be goods and services purchased in the market and consumed by the person whose utility function we are considering.[20] As noneconomists never tire of remarking, the assumption is an extraordinarily narrow view of the determinants of a typical person's sense of well-being; the idea of *homo oeconomicus*—"something more than Scrooge but a good deal less than the typical human being"—elicits only derision from those acquainted with art, literature, and history, not to mention psychology.[21] Economists respond that for the analysis of many important questions the assumed utility function is quite adequate; changing it would be pointless, merely cluttering the pristine elegance of an admirably parsimonious analytical device. They have a point. Yet one may still ask: Is the standard utility function sufficient for the analysis of political action?

The answer is no, as economists are beginning to recognize. In Amartya K. Sen's words, "The *purely* economic man is indeed close to being a social moron." Sen has urged utility theorists to develop "a more elaborate structure." In the same vein Douglass North has recently written: "Individual utility functions are simply more complicated than the simple assumptions so far incorporated in neoclassical theory. The task of the social scientist is to broaden the theory to be able to predict when people will act like free riders and when they won't. Without a broadened theory we cannot account for a great deal of secular change initiated and carried through by large group actions."[22] Quite so. But how should the orthodox analysis be altered?

North asserts that an understanding of ideology can help us escape from the analytical impasse. "Its fundamental aim," he declares, "is to energize groups to behave contrary to a simple, hedonistic, individual calculus of costs and benefits. This is the central thrust of major ideologies, since neither maintenance of the existing order nor its overthrow is possible without such behavior."[23] Although this observation suggests a way to reconcile economic theory and political fact it leaves the cloud of irrationality hanging over mass political action, the behavior that either directly or by subsequent ratification has brought about the modern growth of government.

Must we conclude that this sequence of great events is the outcome of irrational behavior, that ideologically impelled action and irrational action are only different names for the same reality? I think not. Instead, we can modify the utility function and link it to ideology in a way that simultaneously enhances its psychological plausibility and eliminates the lingering suspicion that mass participation in political action is irrational.[24]

Recall that ideology has four aspects: cognitive, affective, programmatic, and solidary. If it had only the first three, we would have no grounds for identifying ideology as a basis of rational participation in large-group politics. In that event ideology would allow one to perceive and interpret the social world, to impose moral valuations on it, and to conclude that certain

political positions or movements deserve support. But one would still lack a personal incentive to take any political action, as explained above. To join rationally in political action in a large-group context, one must expect a benefit that is contingent on one's own participation. Solidarity, the fourth aspect of ideology, is such a contingent benefit.

If a person's utility function were as conventionally postulated by neoclassical economists, solidarity would be worthless—the "economic man" cares only about his own consumption of economic goods and services. But of course most real people also value other things. Certainly one of the most important determinants of a person's sense of well-being is his self-image, which I shall call his (self-perceived) "identity." Russell Hardin gives the example of a young adult American male in 1943, who "might have joined the armed forces because going to war was likely to be the most important experience of his generation of males. We need not assess the costs and benefits of his choice—it is too fundamental to be a matter of costs and benefits . . . ; it is instead a matter of being a male of that generation." With such actions in mind, Richard Auster and Morris Silver have urged economists and other social scientists to recognize that "individuals' levels of satisfaction depend on the extent to which they measure up in their own perceptions to certain ideal types (or images)."[25] Identity need not, as in Hardin's example, have such absolute priority that all trade-offs against economic goods and services are precluded. It is enough for purposes of the present argument that identity be recognized as one of the determinants of a person's utility.[26]

People acquire and sustain their identities within groups by their interaction with other members: first in families, then in various primary and secondary reference groups.[27] Tibor Scitovsky has declared that "the wish to belong, the asserting and cementing of one's membership in the group is a deep-seated and very natural drive whose origin and universality go beyond man and are explained by that most basic of drives, the desire to survive."[28] Although some may dispute Scitovsky's sociobiological reductionism, the urge to belong is itself beyond doubt. The kind of groups to which a person chooses to belong is closely connected with the kind of person he takes himself to be—a matter of prime concern to the typical person. People crave the comfort of association with those they recognize as their "own kind." In the absence of such community membership and involvement in the group's common purposes, people feel alienated and depressed.[29]

To embrace an ideology is to join a community of like-minded people. "Opinions," a political scientist has written, "are the invisible membership cards of society. They tell us who is like us and who may be against us. Opinions held in common are powerful bonds." Not for nothing do Chris-

tians call one another "brother" and communists call one another "comrade." Christians and communists, unlike neoclassical economists, have long recognized the importance of identity and its relation to solidarity. It is no coincidence that these two systems of belief have probably mobilized more people for mass political action than any others in history. "As absurd as communist ideology may appear from the outside, it provides a consistent view of history to those who adhere to it and makes even the simplest citizen feel as though his life has meaning, thus fulfilling . . . a basic spiritual need."[30] By internalizing the values and precepts of their communities of shared belief, people not only feel better about themselves but become trustworthy adherents who will act in accordance with their ideology without, or even in opposition to, external material enticement.

We have good reason, then, to rewrite the utility function for purposes of public choice theory as

$$U = f(C_1, C_2, \ldots, C_n, I)$$

where I denotes the degree to which one's self-perceived identity corresponds with the standards of one's chosen (or merely accepted) reference group, that is, with the tenets of the ideology one has embraced.

Clearly, behavior directed toward the maximization of such a utility function cannot properly be called irrational, even though it may sometimes require the sacrifice of one's own consumption of economic goods and services in order to establish or maintain one's identity through solidary activity with like-minded people. Ideological action of this kind is completely rational; the stigma of irrationality need not attach to those who participate in political action even in the large-group case. The truth, as Samuel Bowles has succinctly expressed it, is that "people act politically both to *get* things and to *be* someone."[31]

While the recognition of ideological commitments allows us to explain mass participation in political action, it also helps us to understand why some issues evoke more, and more passionate, political action than others. Obviously many political issues do not inflame the minds and hearts of the populace. Should the local public utility issue bonds of twenty-year or thirty-year maturity? Should the state legislature convene its annual session in January or March? Should the Department of Agriculture or the Department of the Interior manage the federal timber lands? Few citizens care. But other issues, in stark contrast, so excite the citizenry that public consideration of them takes place only with great difficulty, often degenerating into acrimonious displays of mutual distrust and hostility.

When the contentious questions are mainly economic (put aside such inflammatory but mainly noneconomic matters as capital punishment or

abortion) they tend to fall into two grand classes: one relates to the maintenance of the essential character of the economic order (often, capitalism versus socialism); the other has to do with distributional conflicts within the economic order (often, the rich versus the poor). The two grand classes of issues share a common capacity to call forth moral, as opposed to instrumental, considerations. They involve not simply questions of what is technically better or worse; rather, they are seen to involve good and evil.[32] Those who propose to deal "pragmatically" with such questions are doomed to fail—witness as a striking example the failure of neoclassical economists to gain substantial political support for such "efficient" schemes as lump-sum transfers of money income to the poor or market incentive (tax/subsidy) methods of pollution control.[33] One cannot demolish an ideological fortress with the weapons of neoclassical economics.

Questions about maintenance of the economic order are most likely to be raised when that order is either seriously threatened by external aggressors or widely perceived as malfunctioning. Great wars (or the threat of them) and deep business depressions inevitably provoke Great Debates and hence ideological contention. Those who, like Keynes in 1936, propose to "save capitalism" by such large extensions of governmental authority and function as the "socialization of investment" are certain to provoke the resistance of defenders of the status quo, not so much because the conservatives doubt the curative powers of the proposed remedies as because they regard large-scale reform as "revolutionary" and therefore morally reprehensible. To the extent that the adherents of competing ideologies perceive a political issue as decisive for determining the essential character of the economic order, they are likely to consider it on moral rather than instrumental grounds and to plunge into the struggle full of the political passion appropriate for confrontations at the barricades. What is at stake, they say, is "civilization itself" or "the very future of the society."

Distributional struggles within an enduring economic order provoke less heated responses, yet they also call forth ardent ideological controversy. When their consequences are greatest, as in disputes over the "progressive" taxation of incomes, they shade into conflicts over the essential character of the economic order. (The conflict over the income tax in the 1890s, to be analyzed later, is a striking example.) But even at less significant levels, as in arguments about tax loopholes or regulation of public utilities or conservation of natural resources, ideological elements inevitably enter, because different policies have different impacts on the wealth, welfare, and social status of various groups, and the question of fairness is sure to be raised. Ideologies deal readily with the question; a belief system that did not, on the other hand, could not be an ideology (by definition). The oft-lamented failure of the

social sciences to provide guidance for "solving" such distributional problems is actually unavoidable.

IDEOLOGY IN ANALYSIS

If everyone had an ideology but no two persons had the same one, social scientists could make little use of ideology as an applied analytical concept. We could deal with ideology only as economists traditionally have dealt with consumers' tastes: admit that they are profoundly important yet, lacking the capacity to measure or directly observe them, assume that they are constant and therefore can be ignored in causal analysis of changes in consumer behavior. Such an approach (more precisely, nonapproach) is unacceptable in dealing with ideology. As Sartori has said, ideology is "an important variable in explaining conflict, consensus and cohesion . . . [and] the decisive variable in explaining mass mobilization and manipulation."[34] To understand the great events of modern political history, including the growth of government, we must develop an analytical framework for studying ideology.

The theory of ideology, like every other social theory, must make some assumptions. My first, most fundamental assumption is that, trivial differences aside, ideologies do not exist in profusion. Because an ideology is a somewhat coherent, rather comprehensive belief system—that is, an intellectual corpus not readily contrived in every man's sitting room—it is unlikely that more than a few will have much importance in a given time and place.[35]

Second, as Sartori has said, "mass belief publics appear to be dependent variables of elite belief publics."[36] Opinion leaders are the producers and distributors of (a limited number of) ideologies; the masses are mainly consumers. This fact—if indeed the assumption is valid—creates an opportunity to view ideologies. Although one cannot hope to penetrate the minds of the millions, certainly not in much detail, one can ascertain with some reliability the publicly expressed beliefs of the important elite disseminators of ideological messages. An informative recent study of five leading molders of economic policies, for example, rests on the assumption that "'the choice of individuals who not only wielded political power, but also who left an extensive written record of their ideological development, provides an excellent opportunity for analyzing the way in which ideology influenced the evolution of the American political economy. . . . [T]heir lives reflect the crucial point of intersection between ideas and actions."[37]

Curiously, some political scientists deny that ideology shapes the behavior of the masses in American politics. Those who maintain this position usually adopt the restrictive conception of ideology, which denotes doctri-

naire beliefs and fanatical behavior; they then contrast ideological politics with the "pragmatic" politics generally taken to be the norm in the United States. But simple confusion is also evident among the political scientists. Robert Dahl declares that "Americans are a highly ideological people." Then, a few pages later, he asserts that "[m]ost Americans . . . simply do not possess an elaborate ideology."[38] Thomas Dye and Harmon Zeigler, following well-known studies by Philip Converse and Herbert McClosky, conclude that "[e]xcept for a small, educated portion of the electorate, the ideological debate between the elites has very little meaning. Since the masses lack the interest and level of conceptualization of the educated, they cannot be expected to possess an ideology. . . . At best, one-third of the electorate can be classified as having an ideology or near ideology."[39] But the findings of virtually all empirical studies by political scientists are consistent with Dahl's conclusion that "the more active a person is in political life, the more likely he or she is to think in ideological terms." It is important to add, as Dahl does, that "it is these very people, the activists and leaders, who more than any others shape not only policies, party platforms, and nominations but constitutional and political norms." So, whatever the ideological status of the masses, ideologies "do have a significant effect on American political life."[40]

Recently William Maddox and Stuart Lilie have argued that the apparently low proportion of ideologically impelled people in the American population reflects not the reality but only the insistence of political scientists and journalists that each person, to qualify as ideological, be located at consistent positions on the liberal-conservative spectrum for various issues. Maddox and Lilie argue that a fourfold categorization reveals more clearly where people actually stand. Their categories—populist, conservative, liberal, libertarian—are formed by the four ways in which people may favor or oppose governmental activism with respect to both economic intervention (say, wage-price controls) and personal noneconomic controls (say, prohibition of abortion). In light of the survey evidence on how people place themselves in the four categories, Maddox and Lilie conclude that "members of the public do have ideological viewpoints and, even though they may not be able to label themselves or articulate those views as well as the political communicators do, their ideological views make sense."[41]

We need not attempt here to resolve the debate over the extent of ideological convictions and behaviors among the masses.[42] For our purposes we can assume either that the elites generally shape the ideologies of the masses (the opinion-leader model) or that the masses have no coherent and persistent ideological commitments (the amorphous-masses model). No matter which model we adopt, our task is to focus on the elites in order to ascertain the ideological commitments that have systematic consequences for political behavior.

My third assumption is that ideologies constrain as well as propel political action. Sartori declares that "ideologies are the crucial lever at the disposal of elites for obtaining political mobilization and for maximizing the possibilities of mass manipulation," but the ideologies embraced by significant elites also limit both the ends sought and the means employed in their political mobilization and manipulation of the masses. Many potentially gratifying ends and many powerful means are patently inconsistent with a particular ideology, and therefore infeasible if not unthinkable. While ideologies serve as levers, they also function as straitjackets. (The constraining role of ideology is evident in Grover Cleveland's defense of the gold standard and in Herbert Hoover's response to the Great Depression, to be described later.) As Alvin Gouldner put it, "Ideologies foster the suppression and repression of some interests, even as they give expression to others."[43]

Fourth, ideology becomes most prominent during social crisis. When the existing order is widely perceived as working poorly, breaking down, or facing serious challenge from foreign or domestic enemies, the incentives for ideological expression are heightened on both sides. On the one hand, supporters of the status quo find it imperative to articulate and disseminate their ideology to shore up threatened institutions. On the other hand, crises provide excellent opportunities for ideological entrepreneurs to find a market for their wares among the growing ranks of the disaffected. As Richard Hofstadter noted, "when a social crisis or revolutionary period at last matures, the sharp distinctions that govern the logical and doctrinaire mind of the agitator become at one with the realities, and he appears overnight to the people as a plausible and forceful thinker."[44] Because crises give rise to a more visible clash of ideologies than one could observe during normal times, they furnish excellent occasions for the historical study of this important social force.

In sum, by identifying the ideological imperatives of political actors we can better understand their actions. The identification can be obtained by an analysis of words (of elite opinion leaders) and deeds (of elites and politically active masses). As Sartori has said, "ideology is crucial to an empirical theory of politics because, and to the extent that, it is conducive to the understanding of *variations* and *varieties*." Ideology is most likely to be decisive during crises, when exceptionally fundamental social choices present themselves, and "unless we are sensitized to the existence of distinctly ideological publics and belief systems we are likely to miss the very nature of 'big conflict.'"[45] Ideology is decisive when it swings policy decisions or other political events that would, on the strength of nonideological influences alone, have gone the other way. An understanding of ideology is most likely to arise from the study of opinion leaders during crises. But what exactly should we look for in the pronouncements of the opinion leaders?

IDEOLOGY AND RHETORIC

The answer is that we must scrutinize their rhetoric. It has been aptly said that "[l]anguage and discourse are not neutral. . . . An ideological position has its own terms of discourse (dismissed as rhetorical by its adversaries) that give meaning to its positions. A change of terms is far more than a semantic shift. It is an imposition of one position over another."[46] Language itself, as some political scientists recognize, is one of the weightiest political resources.[47] Aldous Huxley went even further. "Conduct and character," he asserted, "are largely determined by the nature of the words we currently use to discuss ourselves and the world around us."[48] Successful politicians have always understood the power of words. It should not surprise us that what one politician calls "compassion and humanity" another calls "waste, fraud, and abuse."

Ideological expression aims to persuade, but not in the cool dispassionate manner celebrated by the rational ideal of science and philosophy. Of course it may be rational, at least in part, and it may appeal to indisputable facts. But the persuasive power of ideological expression arises for the most part from neither logic nor facts. It arises mainly from the unabashedly polemical character of the rhetoric employed. Said Lenin: "My words were calculated to evoke hatred, aversion and contempt . . . not to convince but to break up the ranks of the opponent, not to correct an opponent's mistake, but to destroy him." The ideologue wants to convince his listeners not only to accept certain interpretations and valuations of the social world; he wants also to impel them to act politically, or at least not to oppose or interfere with those who do. He knows that the most persuasive argument is not necessarily the most logical or the most factual. "You have to be emotional," says Richard Viguerie, the enormously successful conservative fund-raiser. Another veteran political fund-raiser observes that those who respond most often to political causes are "argumentative, dogmatic and unforgiving. Everything is black and white for them"—that is, they are especially impelled by ideology.[49]

Ideological rhetoric usually takes a highly figurative, quasi-poetic form. Metaphor, analogy, irony, sarcasm, satire, hyperbole, and overdrawn antithesis are its common devices. Ideological thought is expressed "in intricate symbolic webs as vaguely defined as they are emotionally charged."[50] We exaggerate only a little if we say that in ideological expression imagery is everything.

Scientists and (some) philosophers disparage this kind of talk. Metaphor, the most important device for ideological expression, they consider wrong. As a philosopher has put it, metaphor "asserts of one thing that it is something else." Even worse, adds Clifford Geertz, "it tends to be most effective

when most 'wrong.'"[51] People who respond to such communication appear to be, at best, intellectually obtuse.

Geertz argues that this assessment of the power of ideological expression, which seems to blame the stupidity of the audience, may itself lack acuity. A "flattened view of other people's mentalities" leads us to choose between two interpretations of the symbol's effectiveness: "Either it deceives the uninformed (according to interest theory), or it excites the unreflective (according to strain theory)." Conceivably, however, its power derives "from its capacity to grasp, formulate, and communicate social realities that elude the tempered language of science." Language may be a far richer resource than scientists and (some) philosophers appreciate, and ideologues may comprehend its richness better than their critics.[52]

Ideologues, hoping to attract those who lack the time or capacity for extended reflection, encapsulate their messages in pithy slogans, mottoes, and self-ennobling descriptions. When these terse war cries produce the desired effect they mobilize large numbers of diverse people. The secret of their success lies partly in their evocative moral appeal and partly in their ambiguity and vagueness, which allow each person to hear them as lyrics suited to his own music. When Marx and Engels declared that "the proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains," they surely understood that revolutionary workers had a good deal to lose—their lives if nothing else—and that workers were not physically tied to their jobs. Yet the image of people confined by chains, suggestive not only of painful and inescapable restraint but of the galling humiliation of the prisoner, had tremendous polemical force. American candidates for the presidency have promised New Freedom, New Deal, Fair Deal, New Frontier, and Great Society, ambiguous images suggestive of great improvements both material and moral. That linguistic purists and political cynics may scoff at the pie-in-the-sky quality of such semantic gimmicks does little to detract from their mass appeal—even educated journalists adopt them, spreading their usage and influence. No one is likely to campaign for the presidency under the feasible banner: Toward a Slightly Improved Society.

All ideologies employ flag words. I call them "flag words" both because they serve as semantic banners under which the faithful rally and because they signal the analyst that ideological expression may be in use. Flag words come in two varieties, discriminating and universalistic. Discriminating flag words are undoubtedly ideological yet call forth entirely different images depending on the ideological predisposition of the perceiver. "Communism" is an example. To a communist it brings to mind such images as human brotherhood, "to each according to his need," and a glorious future when the state will wither away and all people will live according to their true nature. To an anticommunist, in contrast, it connotes ruthless dictatorship, denial of

civil liberties, and slave-labor camps. Universalistic flag words, unlike the discriminating ones, have the same moral tilt regardless of the ideological predisposition of the perceiver. "Democracy," for example, now has a positive moral signification for almost everyone, though the empirical referents differ enormously. Democracy in China is not the same as democracy in Canada, even though the Chinese and the Canadians may be equally devoted to democracy in the abstract.[53]

Table 3.1 presents a short list of common ideological flag words. Of course, words often change their meanings over time; the list has been compiled with today's usages in mind. One may note that some words are ideological flags only in combination with certain other words or in a particular context. "Corporate" is not an ideological flag in the expression "corporate accounting systems," but it is in expressions like "corporate economy" or "corporate state."[54]

Ideological flag words often derive their special imagery from their usages in the lexicons of paradigmatic ideologues. Many expressions of today's radical Left, for example, come from Marx, who employed in more or less precise senses such terms as "exploitation," "alienation," "surplus value," "class struggle," "bourgeoisie," and even, as we have seen, the word "ideology" itself.

Despite his (and Engels' and many others') espousal of "scientific" socialism, Marx was an obvious ideologue. Consider the following passage:

Table 3.1
Some Ideological Flag Words

Discriminating	Universalistic
Government intervention	Democracy
Wage labor	Freedom
Class struggle	Self-determination
Profit	Justice
Capitalism	Public interest
Communism	Fairness
Free enterprise	Equality
Socialism	Security
Freedom of choice	Progress
Individualism	Dictatorship
Revolution	Racism
Corporate	Due process of law
Private property	Decency
Welfare state	The people
Imperialism	Oppression
Secular humanism	Coercion
Bourgeoisie	Tryanny

> [I]t is self-evident that the labourer is nothing else, his whole life through, than labour-power. . . . [I]n its blind unrestrainable passion, its were-wolf hunger for surplus-labour, capital oversteps not only the moral, but even the merely physical maximum bounds of the working day. . . . It is not the normal maintenance of the labour-power which is to determine the limits of the working day; it is the greatest possible daily expenditure of labour-power, no matter how diseased, compulsory, and painful it may be, which is to determine the limits of the labourers' period of repose. Capital cares nothing for the length of life of labour-power. All that concerns it is simply and solely the maximum of labour-power, that can be rendered fluent in a working day. It attains this end by shortening the extent of the labourer's life, as a greedy farmer snatches increased produce from the soil by robbing it of its fertility.[55]

Without embarrassment, Marx wrote about the capitalists' "were-wolf hunger for surplus-labour" and their "vampire thirst for the living blood of labour."[56] He routinely employed emotionally supercharged language that to a non-Marxist seems hyperbolic and ludicrous. Yet multitudes have found the rhetoric of this "scientific" socialism compelling.

Although Marx supplies excellent examples of ideological expression, we need not single out the ideologies of the Left. Consider, for example, a passage by the great classical liberal, John Stuart Mill:

> [T]he strongest of all the arguments against the interference of the public with purely personal conduct, is that when it does interfere, the odds are that it interferes wrongly, and in the wrong place. . . . [I]n these cases public opinion means, at the best, some people's opinion of what is good or bad for other people; . . . very often it does not even mean that; the public, with the most perfect indifference, passing over the pleasure or convenience of those whose conduct they censure, and considering only their own preference. . . . But there is no parity between the feeling of a person for his own opinion, and the feeling of another who is offended at his holding it; no more than between the desire of a thief to take a purse, and the desire of the right owner to keep it. And a person's taste is as much his own peculiar concern as his opinion or his purse.[57]

Here the analogy of a thief and the "right owner" contending over a purse guides the reader insidiously toward agreement with Mill on other, more ambiguous issues within the class under consideration. Notice, too, the parallel between Mill's purse-snatching thief and Marx's fertility-snatching farmer. Evidently the metaphor of theft is so powerful and universally evocative that no ideology can do without it—witness Proudhon's "property is theft" and countless other declarations on all sides of the property question. "Those who want to talk 'ideology,'" said Gouldner, "must also talk 'property.'"[58]

As a final example of ideological rhetoric, drawn from the right side of the political spectrum, consider the following passage from Frank S. Meyer's conservative credo:

> A good society is possible only when both these conditions are met: when the social and political order guarantees a state of affairs in which men can freely choose; and when the intellectual and moral leaders, the "creative minority," have the understanding and imagination to maintain the prestige of tradition and reason, and thus to sustain the intellectual and moral order throughout society.[59]

Note especially the critical position in the argument of such ideological flags as "good society," "moral order," "freely choose," and "creative minority," the last of which must have seemed problematical even to Meyer, who enclosed it in quotation marks.

In sum, one can study the rhetoric of opinion leaders in times of crisis to determine what the dominant ideologies were and how they changed over time. We shall see, for example, that the ideology of Grover Cleveland and his closest associates differed greatly from that of Franklin Roosevelt and his most trusted advisers, that the ideology of the Supreme Court majority in the *Pollock* case (1895) differed enormously from that of the majority in the Minnesota moratorium case (1934). Clearly ideology and ideological change are not so vague and shadowy that they defy empirical study. Although we cannot measure them as we would height or weight, we can learn a good deal about them qualitatively, and for certain purposes such knowledge may be adequate.

IDEOLOGY: EXOGENOUS OR ENDOGENOUS?

In the analysis of politico-economic history, one may view ideology as exogenous, recognizing that it has important consequences for political behavior and hence for economic institutions but simply accepting the ideologies prevailing at any particular time as parametric—that is, outside the explanatory boundaries of one's analytical framework. Although this approach has obvious shortcomings, it is clearly superior to ignoring ideology altogether. Economists traditionally have treated the initial distribution of property rights, the tastes of consumers, and the technologies of production as parameters of the neoclassical model. If they are justified in doing so, surely one is just as warranted in making ideology a parameter of a model of the political economy. In this approach one makes no attempt to explain why ideological changes occur; one simply recognizes that they do and tries to understand the consequences.

A priori, viewing ideology as endogenous seems a better approach. As Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann have written, "the relationship between 'ideas' and their sustaining social processes is always a dialectical one." They argue that

> theories are concocted in order to legitimate already existing social institutions. But it also happens that social institutions are changed in order to bring them into conformity with already existing theories, that is, to make them more "legitimate." The experts in legitimation may operate as theoretical justifiers of the *status quo*; they may also appear as revolutionary ideologists. Definitions of reality have self-fulfilling potency. Theories can be *realized* in history, even theories that were highly abstruse when they were first conceived by their inventors. . . . Consequently, social change must always be understood as standing in a dialectical relationship to the "history of ideas." Both "idealistic" and "materialistic" understandings of the relationship overlook this dialectic, and thus distort history.[60]

If we accept the validity of this reciprocal relation, our task becomes the identification of the specific ways in which ideology and society are linked.

Attempting to solve this great problem would carry us far beyond the scope of the present book. We can, however, take notice of some factors that scholars have identified as socioeconomic determinants of ideological change.

Marx related "consciousness" to one's position in the class order, though he also imagined discrepancies, the "false consciousness" (actually Engels' term) of the capitalists and the unawakened proletarians. Without accepting the entire Marxist model, one can gain insight from it. Class membership, whether defined by Marxian or other criteria, does have an association with ideological commitments, though the form, strength, and persistence of the association are open empirical questions. As Seliger affirms, "class membership and specific economic conditions are important but not sole factors in the formation of ideological postures."[61]

Others have associated ideology with various nonclass social attributes: occupational, religious, familial, ethnic, and geographic.[62] Eduard Bernstein, the Marxist revisionist who wrote at the turn of the century, anticipated the pluralistic view.[63] As the distribution of occupational, ethnic, and other attributes changes because of industrialization, urbanization, or international migration, a society's ideological composition presumably changes, too, though the causal connections seem nowhere to be spelled out. Merely to propose that we assume "a flexible, competitive and pluralistic configuration of causal determinants" is not very helpful.[64] The explanatory blanks must be filled in.

We must also take into account "beliefs and disbeliefs in their own right."[65] Anyone who has lived among social thinkers knows that ideas have a life of their own, or at least a life that seems unrelated to the positions in the social structure of those who propound, accept, and reject them. Intellectuals, the specialists in the production and distribution of articulate social thought, are subject to fads; from time to time they are carried away by one notion or another for no apparent reason.[66] On the other hand, many ideas have persisted through the ages, proving that whatever the conditions that

spawned them, their vitality is independent of their long-extinct social origins. Many aspects of modern ideologies were familiar to Plato and his contemporaries.[67] If ideas are developed autonomously, independent of their enveloping social structures, the dialectic described by Berger and Luckmann does not form a closed system; an element of exogeneity if not of pure randomness intrudes.

How, then, should we think about ideology, as exogenous or as endogenous to the political economy? To assume endogeneity is clearly better if we can specify the connections between ideological and socioeconomic change, that is, if we possess a useful theory of the causes and consequences of ideology. Unfortunately, practitioners of the sociology of knowledge have not produced a useful theory at a level of generality low enough to have much empirical applicability. Propositions like "all social thought is socially conditioned" tell us something, but are too vague and abstract to help us answer the specific questions of the present book. Moreover, if ideological thought has a life of its own—a possibility that cannot be ruled out a priori—any social structural theory of ideology is doomed to remain incomplete. In the next chapter I shall present a partial theory of ideological change, one designed specifically to deepen our understanding of the upward ratcheting growth of government in twentieth-century America. For a general theory of ideological change expressed at an empirically useful level of generality, I can only wait and hope, though I hardly expect my hopes to be fulfilled soon. Except as partially explained in the next chapter, ideological change will be viewed in this book as exogenous to political and socioeconomic change. Even if we do not know much about the causes of ideological change, we can still try to take into account its consequences.

CONCLUSIONS

Beliefs matter, and ideologies are the belief systems of greatest consequence for the political economy. Despite plausible arguments that participation in large-group collective action is irrational, not everyone is paralyzed by the neoclassical economist's Iron Law of Collective Inaction. Many people routinely participate in such large-group political actions as voting or giving money and time to political pressure groups, and they episodically join in mass endeavors to alter society on a grand scale, sometimes in violent attempts to overthrow the government. They take these actions, I have argued, not because they are irrational but because their self-perceived identities are at stake. By acting in concert with others who embrace the same ideology, they enjoy a solidarity essential to the maintenance of their identities. They cannot

receive this form of utility without acting; there is no closet solidarity. To behave differently a person would have to be different. Being different would require the internalization of a different ideology. Ideologies give rise to the personal-political complex of identity, solidarity, and political action largely because of their inherent moral content. Ultimately many if not most people treat the choice between right and wrong as more fundamental than the choices they view as purely instrumental.

Ideologies reveal themselves most clearly in the crisis-time pronouncements of opinion leaders. To understand ideology, one must study symbols, paying special attention to rhetoric. How the ideologue expresses himself may be as important as what he says. Imagery holds the key to the identification of ideological motivation and program. Language is an important political resource, at once more delicate and more powerful than hard-nosed people—mathematical economists, for example—generally appreciate. By taking linguistic symbols seriously one opens a window for viewing ideologies in action.

It is, however, a foggy window. Ideological analysis is a necessary part of the study of political economy, but it is an extraordinarily difficult part. Not least of the difficulties is the absence of a full-fledged theory of ideology: a set of relations to characterize at an empirically useful level of generality the interactions of ideology with political and socioeconomic structure. Treating ideological change as exogenous to changes in the political economy creates the potential for a confusion of cause and effect. In addition the likelihood that some ideological dynamics feed only on themselves makes the analysis even more complicated. While the problems of characterization, observation, and qualitative assessment of change are not insuperable, the analysis of ideological change is likely to remain a complex and delicate art.

Unfortunately the artistry raises the odds that ideology will become a deus ex machina drawn into the analysis of change in the political economy when one cannot identify other plausible or convincing causes. The danger cannot easily be avoided. The main safeguard must be the competence and honesty of the analyst (and the critics) throughout the research but especially in the handling of symbolic artifacts. Problems of determining the representativeness of the evidence and resolving ambiguities in its interpretation will plague the study of ideology.

Finally the most fundamental danger must be faced: the analyst may become an ideologue. In social thought a thin line separates ideology from science, "since the latter is very often ideological in both its roots and consequences."[68] But although they border on one another, ideology and social science are not the same thing, and the existence of ideology does not preclude the possibility of social science. As Geertz emphasizes, they employ different symbolic strategies.

> Science names the structure of situations in such a way that the attitude contained toward them is one of disinterestedness. Its style is restrained, spare, resolutely analytic: By shunning the semantic devices that most effectively formulate moral sentiment, it seeks to maximize intellectual clarity. But ideology names the structure of situations in such a way that the attitude contained toward them is one of commitment. Its style is ornate, vivid, deliberately suggestive: By objectifying moral sentiment through the same devices that science shuns, it seeks to motivate action.

Social science is diagnostic and critical; ideology is justificatory and apologetic.[69]

David Joravsky has said that "the analysis of ideological beliefs cannot avoid statements that are uncomfortably similar to accusations."[70] Examining people's social values and beliefs moves one insidiously toward *ad hominem* arguments. Still, a real boundary separates the practice of social science and the profession of ideology. The standards of social science include affectively neutral terminology, openness to criticism, empirical testing, welcoming of new (and potentially damaging) evidence. The hallmarks of ideology are retreat to valuational defenses, emotive expression, and a constant orientation toward action. Science, in its pure form, aims simply to understand. Ideology strives above all to call forth political commitment and provoke political action. Hence science and ideology don different costumes. Alertness to their fundamental differences of symbolic style can help to protect the would-be consumer of social science against an acceptance of ideology in its stead.