

7. IDEOLOGY, UTOPIA, AND FUTUROLOGY

I

Karl Mannheim¹ once made the distinction between "ideology", as the justification and glorification of the existing social order, and "utopia," as the rejection and overcoming of the status quo: "Viewed from the standpoint of sociology, such mental constructs may in general assume two forms: they are 'ideological' if they serve the purpose of glossing over or stabilizing the existing social reality; 'utopian' if they inspire collective activity which aims to change such reality to conform with their goals, which transcend reality".

Hence not only those political and social movements, parties, and philosophies supporting outmoded economic and governmental systems such as traditionalism or conservatism would be considered ideological in this sense. The term would also apply to trends in philosophy attempting to prove that the existing world order constitutes the "best of all possible worlds". In the last analysis the theodicies of Leibniz as well as of Hegel could be called ideological, since even in Hegel's system the conservative elements are stronger than the critical approach of his dialectics; presently even this dialectic tends to be formalized and integrated into a closed system.

Marx himself believed that by overcoming utopian socialism, he had also disposed of utopia. To the extent that his system reveals itself as a theodicy, holding out an unbroken and absolute hope, it remains very much in the tradition of utopian thinking. The dialectical dynamism all too soon freezes into a closed structural system. Not only the writings of Lenin and Stalin, but the work of Marx and Engels reveals the beginnings of a fatal tendency toward dogmatic estrangement, formalization, and paralysis. In other words, we do not criticize Marx for presenting unverified theses; he had every right to do so. He does not, however, treat these theses as if they were hypotheses; in reality he turns them all too easily into unassailable dogma thus betraying the spirit of his own Feuerbach-theses. This dogmatic tendency also pervades his dialectic. The one synthesis represented as the only possible solution time and again displaces the variety of possible theses and antitheses. Thus the dialectic reflects a monistic tendency: The future is unveiled and fore-ordained. As with Hegel, dialectics becomes a one-way street, without by-ways or detours.

1) "Utopia", Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 15, 1953, p. 201.