

- What is an Ideology? How ideology differs from religion, propaganda and political culture?
- Give different perspectives on ideology.
- Post modernist critic of ideology.
- Short note on end of ideology thesis.
- Short note on end of history thesis.

What is ideology?

Today ideology has become a hotly contested term. It has been observed that a particular philosopher or a follower of particular school of thought projects his thinking as scientific & those of competitors as ideological. To understand the different perspectives of ideology we have to trace the evolution of ideology.

Origin of the term ideology:

The term ideology is supposed to have been coined by French thinker Count de Tracy. He was contemporary of Napoleon Bonaparte. He defined ideology as "Science of ideas". He was influenced by enlightenment & wanted that human society should be based on scientific ideas.

Ideology as a term met with altogether a different fate rather than what desired by the creator. Tracy treated ideology as science of ideas. But at present ideology is associated with non scientific thinking.

Tracy's project was impacted during his times.

The project of ideology came under political criticism. He and his followers came to be known as supporters of Republicanism.

We do not see any academic or political usage of the term till Karl Marx used ideology & linked it with earlier thoughts & differentiated his thoughts as scientific & earlier thought as ideological. On the basis of his base and superstructure model, he puts ideas & ideologies as elements of superstructure. According to him ideology generate false consciousness. He has criticised both ideology as well as religion for distorting reality. According to him ideas are never neutral. In every epoch the ideas of ruling class are the ruling ideas. Those who control the economic structure also control the ideological structure.

- Marx started the tradition of differentiating ideology from science. However his attempt to project Marxism as science was defeated by his own followers. Both Lenin & Bernstein felt that working classes need their ideology. Marxism to be an ideology of working class, Lenin even talks about hiring middle class intellectuals & giving them task of propagating the ideology of communism.

- Gramsci made significant contribution in the understanding of ideas & ideologies. He gave the concept of hegemony or a dominant truth prevalent at the time. Hegemony is actually actively manufactured. We tend to take dominant idea as common sense.

Gramsci also suggests that working class should create a counter hegemony. They have to first fight the war of position. Counter hegemony to be manufactured by organic intellectual. From Gramsci it is clear that purpose of hegemony is to achieve dominance, rather than discovery of truth.

By this time, Marxism was established as ideology of the working classes & many liberal scholars started projecting liberal societies as "open societies" & communist & fascist countries as totalitarian societies sustained by ideology & violence. Karl Popper is a critic of communist states. Communist states give recognition to only 1 ideology, i.e. socialism/communism.

Communist states do not have competitive party system. Karl Popper gave the concept of falsification as a criteria for scientific theory.

Any system of thought which is open for critical examination can be considered as scientific & any system of thought which is made beyond criticism cannot be treated as scientific. Scientific theories can emerge only in open societies where open freedom of speech & expression exists.

Karl Mannheim

Book: Sociology of knowledge

Concept: Ideology & Utopia

No theory in social sciences can be an unbiased explanation of reality. Every theory has its sociology

means social context. Every theory represents the interest of a particular class.

Ideology & Utopia

He classified systems & thoughts into 2 categories -

1) Ideologies

The ideas which are dominant, ex. liberalism can be an ideology. Ideologies are status quoist.

2) Utopia

It is an ideology of the exploited class. Utopias are forward looking. They promise emancipation.

Oakeshott

Book: Rationalism in Politics.

In the world of politics we float in a bottomless & borderless sea. It is beyond the capacity of human mind to comprehend the truth.

Thomas Kuhn

Book: Structure of scientific revolution

Concept of Paradigm

According to him there is nothing called absolute knowledge. Even scientist can't claim that they have understood the foundational principles of universe. Scientists also work with paradigm. Paradigm is a dominant mode of thinking. Paradigm is a reference point of a particular age. We understand the reality with reference to paradigm. Ex: Liberalisation, globalisation, human rights are paradigms of our age.

The concept of paradigm can be related to the theory of relativity.

Post Modernist ^{criticism} View of Ideology

Introduction

- Post-Modernism is critical evaluation of modernism. It is critical about some features of modernity as they found it having negative consequences for environment, society as well as individual.
- Post-Modernism is more prominent in field of Art, Culture & Literature. Post-Modernism & such theories are still relatively new as far as Political Inquiry is concerned. Post-M
- Post-Modernism is traced to 1960's. However we can also trace criticism of modernity to the works of Rousseau.

Prominent thinkers of Post-Modernism

Nietzsche

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According to him "God is Dead" and Plato is the biggest liar who not only held that there is an ultimate idea which can be discovered, but also held that man has reason & capacity to understand / comprehend that idea.

Lyotard

- Post-Modernism is in incredulity towards meta-narratives (grand ideologies/religion).

- It means lack of faith in ideologies, grand theories or religion.

Foucault

- Knowledge is Power.

- It implies that every theory serves the interest of some or the other section of society.

- No knowledge, ideology or theory is an unbiased explanation of reality. There is never literal explanation. Every explanation is metaphysical.

- For him there is not testable theory, only story. Even science is also not disinterested pursuit of truth. Scientists also tell one story out of many stories. Every image of reality is manipulated and manufactured.

- Foucault gives the concept of discourse. Discourse implies that all knowledge is from a particular point of view. He also uses a term "Regimes of Truth". There is no ultimate truth but competing competing regimes of truth or discourses.

Derrida

According to him reality is fiction. Every reading is misreading. Every understanding is misunderstanding.

Truth is relative. What we call as a truth is our standpoint. He gives the concept of deconstruction. It means every theory need to be deconstructed and meaning to be reconstructed.

End of Ideology Thesis

End of ideology thesis is often linked to Cold War. It was primarily advocated by political scholars of western world. The prominent scholar is Daniel Bell. He suggested that ideological conflicts have lost their relevance. Both for east and west development is a main concern. Today economics has taken the front seat and politics backseat. Both societies are moving on similar lines of development. In both East and West, bureaucratic, technocratic state & societies have been established. Thus east & west can work together. Regarding domestic context, theorists of End of Ideology suggested that capitalism has resolved the contradiction between labour & capital with introduction of welfare state. End of Ideology Thesis was primarily supported by western political scholars.

- It didn't have much appeal either in 2nd world or in 3rd world.
- For Socialist scholars ideology didn't lose its relevance. They believed that end of ideology was itself an ideology. The objective was subtle defence of capitalism. They continued to believe that welfare state can not resolve all contradictions & is bound to face legitimatisation crisis.

End of History

- The thesis was given by Francis Fukuyama in the context of disintegration of USSR.
- He applied Hegelian and Marxian concepts of history to show that neither fascism was end of history nor communism was end of history or ultimate synthesis. History has proved that capitalism has been a better idea, & an ultimate synthesis and "Endpoint of Ideological Evolution". There is a near universal acceptance around the globe that liberal western model of politics & democracy is the best approach to life of public policy.
- End of history is more offensive than end of ideology and a stronger defence for the supremacy of western values, in general & USA in particular. It is a proclamation of unipolar world order & the recognition of USA as a single superpower & global acknowledged of US leadership.

Criticism of End of History

Samuel P. Huntington proposed his "Clash of Civilizations Thesis". He held that it is premature to think that history has ended. Only one form of contradiction has ended and new forms of contradictions have emerged. This new contradiction is clash among civilizations. Most prominent clash predicted is betⁿ western civilization and Islamic civilization. The other civilizations Confucianism & hinduism.