

MICHAEL FERBER

The Social Vision of William Blake



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PREFACE

Are not Religion & Politics the Same Thing? Brotherhood is Religion.

The present book had its origin in my attempt to understand this line from Blake's *Jerusalem* (57.10). It is not a particularly remarkable line, I admit, nor does it offer readier access to the mysteries of Blake than fifty or a hundred others from the same poem, but it struck me with unusual force when I first read it twelve years ago. I no longer remember what I made of it then, but I know I brought to it some intense feeling about religion, politics, and brotherhood. It was not long before reading *Jerusalem* that I had gone to the Arlington Street Church in Boston and turned in my draft card in a "ceremony of resistance" to the Vietnam War along with two hundred other young men who I felt were my brothers. We were part of what seemed a whole generation that took upon itself an original rethinking of what it meant to be political and religious in America, and how it might be possible to revive a failing democracy through organizations based on brotherhood—and, later, on sisterhood. In various ways and on various registers Blake had been a presence in our culture, or more often our counterculture, and I had always admired his lyrics and designs, but it was only after I had experienced moments of fraternity like the one in the church that Blake spoke peculiarly to my condition. I began to read him with new questions and expectations.

I am hardly the first to have taken Blake seriously as a social and political thinker or visionary, but those who have done so have always been a minority among his students and disciples. As George Orwell said of Dickens, Blake is well worth stealing, and occultists, Neoplatonists, Cabalists, Jungians, and even orthodox Christians have all tried to make off with him. Perhaps they are each entitled to keep a portion of him, but I think his "staminal virtue," as he would say, belongs to none

of them. No doubt I will press my own claim too far in the pages that follow, but I do so partly as a corrective to these reductions and sanitizations, partly, as well, to see what certain unlikely features of his work will yield when pushed. I cannot deny a motive to steal him back and enlist him in the present phase of the cause he joined in his own day, the politics of spiritual fraternity.

Perhaps uniquely among western nations, America preserves the close conjuncture of religion and politics that was normal in Blake's England. One need think only of the revival of rightist fundamentalism in the 1970s and the more recent rise of "left evangelicalism" and Catholic peace activism. Many of the ideas and programs of the secular left in Europe have found a wide following in America only in a religious framework, and America's strong resistance to Marxism and socialism, even at their most moderate, has much to do with their supposed "atheism." In trying to account for this rejection of secular socialism, Robert N. Bellah writes, "one may wonder whether, if Karl Marx had studied a little less at the feet of David Ricardo and a little more at the feet of William Blake, he might not have had a far more powerful impact on English-speaking intellectuals."¹ Marx would not have been Marx if he had, of course, but Bellah's point about Americans, if not about all English-speaking intellectuals, seems right. Taken seriously as a visionary socialist, Blake offers something crucial to the heart of a movement for liberation and social justice—to its mind, too, but especially to its imagination, verve, and courage. No theory of history and society, no strategy of political change, can provide it, and without it no theory or strategy will usher in a society much better than the one we now have.

A similar claim might be made for Shelley or William Morris, for Thoreau, Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day, or Robert Merton (Merton's great spiritual pilgrimage began with a dissertation on Blake), but Blake's very difference from ordinary modes of thought, his difficulty, his combination of poetry and visual design, his archaic biblical diction, all confer a certain distinction on him. There is no need to plead for him in any case, for he draws ever larger numbers of readers. There

is also no need, of course, to choose Blake to the exclusion of anyone else; too much has gone wrong with every kind of society on earth for us to be dogmatic as to where we garner wisdom or courage.

It is thus no help to the cause when Marxists, or those who think they are Marxists, make Blake over into another Marx, or a proto-Marx. That, too, is theft, and no less a flattening of his prickly particularity than the opposite claim, which would have Blake wandering only through the streets of his mind, thinking only about eternity or his anxieties as a poet. There is nothing very Marxist in the attempt to make Blake into another Marx, and in any case we do not need another Marx. We need Blake. Although Blake often sounds like the young Marx, who was himself a Romantic poet before he turned to philosophy and economics, it is their complementarity, even their conflict, which is valuable, not their resemblance. So I agree with E. P. Thompson when he says, "If I had to devise my own pantheon I would without hesitation place within it the Christian antinomian, William Blake, and I would place him beside Marx."² Side by side, they can argue it out in what Blake called "the severe contentions of Friendship," and so can we.

In Blake one thing leads to another in an endless network, and I soon felt far from my original subject. Often when I felt farthest from it, however, one more step brought me back into the midst of it. That led to the problems of presentation most Blake scholars seem to have wrestled with: where to start, where to stop, what to leave out. As the book grew, moreover, I found I was synthesizing, or at least making ample use of, the two preeminent works on Blake, Northrop Frye's *Fearful Symmetry* and David Erdman's *Blake: Prophet Against Empire*. In common with every other student in the last thirty years, I learned to read Blake through Frye's wonderful book, and it has partly inspired the integrating gestures, the use of analogues, and perhaps even the tone of my own. The trouble with Frye's book is that it is almost too wonderful: it is so thorough an internal elaboration of Blake that it dazzles and intimidates as much as Blake himself does. What is needed is an external elaboration, a study from one or several external

standpoints that will not submit to the blandishments of Blake's seemingly unified vision, but will hold it at sufficient distance to "comprehend" it—as a cultural object of a certain sort, in a certain context, at a certain historical moment.

David Erdman's masterly study of Blake's historical context and allusions is indispensable to any attempt to do that. I have borrowed heavily from his erudition while paying only scant returns with a discovery or two of my own. Erdman's book is ordered chronologically, whereas I have tried for larger integrations of Blakean ideas than would have been possible had I bound myself to the order in which his works were produced. In exploring a series of themes like brotherhood, liberty, labor, and history, I have dwelled on Blake's two completed epics, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, but have drawn freely from every phase of his career. I have also tried to be somewhat more introductory than Erdman and have presumed a little less on the part of the reader. This book remains demanding, however, and anyone who has been good enough to read this far should be sure to have gone at least once through all of Blake's poems before deciding whether to continue.

My attempt to "integrate" Blake, incorporate Frye and Erdman, and still appeal to the inexpert reader began at one point to swell the book unmanageably. I was drawn, too, to Jean-Paul Sartre's inspiring ambition to "totalize" his subject with "a supple, patient dialectic," an approach that would acknowledge the particularity or specificity of a poet-painter while accounting for him by inserting him in a series of mediations, "regressions," and cross-references.³ A glance at Sartre's enormous yet unfinished study of Flaubert sobered me up, however, and I would now be content if what I have written could serve as materials toward a totalization of Blake, and if I have avoided the premature closures and reductions that come of forgetting that Blake lived when and where he did, knew certain people but not certain others, hated war during a war-crazed time, made little money, had a dear brother who died, spent a lot of time engraving copperplate, and the like.

In getting this book down to reasonable proportions I have left out several chapters of sustained "close readings" of whole

works (texts and designs), which ought to be the proof of the pudding. These will probably go into a second book.⁴ I have also had to be selective in singling out themes to explore, and I have compromised between those that are most central and those that have not been much discussed by others. More important as a focus, however, is the concept of ideology, which I introduce in the first chapter. Ideology has many theoretical difficulties, and in crude hands it has led to crude literary criticism, but in recent years in better hands it has shown its subtlety and fruitfulness. It is just about the only category adequate to the task of mediating between social history and literary or aesthetic meaning. It is not the master key to Blake, but without it certain doors of perception will not open.

The remaining seven chapters press the notions of totality and ideology less heavily than chapter one does, since I wanted the themes to be drawn out with a certain autonomy and thoroughness before being folded back into the Blakean whole or referred to the social context, but at many points they link up with each other and with the opening argument. I may at times have indulged a suggestible and digressive tendency on my part, but it seemed more honest to let things unfold as they seemed to demand and to trust the reader, as Blake did, to make the connections, rather than to tie things up and click them shut with my governing theoretical premises. Life is short, and Blake is bottomless. I have done my best, however, to bring out the social and political bearings of each topic, and that is a large part of ideological analysis. Ideological analysis, in turn, does not exhaust the meaning or value of Blake's social and political vision, which at several points, as I shall argue, pitches beyond ideology into something more critical, universal, and true.

All eight chapters, finally, are more or less independent of one another and may be read in any order with little loss. Their sequence is not entirely arbitrary, nevertheless: the argument is intended to accumulate toward Blake's own attempt at totalization, which I call *apocatastasis*, or the restoration of all things. If my first chapter seems a categorical net to catch a rare and eccentric species, my final chapter may be taken

as a humble acknowledgment of the vastly braver and more ambitious striving of my subject to comprehend everything that has ever lived.

SEPTEMBER, 1984

WASHINGTON, D.C.

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The author of a book so “woven with his life” and so long in the weaving ought to thank every one of his friends and everyone who influenced his thinking, but he would get small thanks if he did. So I will limit myself to those who directly helped me, either with ideas about Blake or comments on the manuscript.

Warner Berthoff took on faith that I had something worth saying about Blake and cheerfully agreed to supervise my dissertation at Harvard; for that and many years of friendship and support I owe him my greatest debt. To Zachary Leader, my fellow graduate student and “Blakemate,” I am grateful for a very careful reading of the whole book and many wise suggestions. David Erdman also read the book, at two stages, and helped me think my way out of several confusions. I owe more thanks than I can express for the deep encouragement of Nancy Schwartz, and for the doors she opened to ways of thinking I would have missed without her. Staughton Lynd and E. P. Thompson offered salutary criticisms of part of the manuscript and reoriented my thinking at crucial points. And Anne MacKinnon, with great editorial skill, made me look with disenchanted eyes at my often casual and clumsy sentences.

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ABBREVIATIONS

E	David V. Erdman, ed., <i>The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake</i> , Commentary by Harold Bloom, 5th ed., rev. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). All Blake quotations are from this edition.
Bloom, "Commentary"	Commentary in E
A	<i>America: A Prophecy</i>
Eur	<i>Europe: A Prophecy</i>
FZ	<i>The Four Zoas</i>
J	<i>Jerusalem: The Emanation of The Giant Albion</i>
M	<i>Milton: A Poem in 2 Books</i>
MHH	<i>The Marriage of Heaven and Hell</i>
NNR	<i>THERE is NO Natural Religion</i>
U	<i>The Book of Urizen</i>
VDA	<i>Visions of the Daughters of Albion</i>
VLJ	<i>A Vision of The Last Judgment</i>
PL	John Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i>

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The Concept of Ideology

For the past fifteen years or so English and American scholars have been catching up with the Continent in their theoretical discussions of the concept of ideology and its application to literature. A good deal of their work has been to translate, interpret, and extend the major theories: those of Georg Lukács (especially during his brief phase around 1922 as an independent Marxist), Antonio Gramsci, the Frankfurt School (Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse), Jean-Paul Sartre, and French structuralist Marxists such as Louis Althusser. In England, almost alone, Raymond Williams has been patiently working out his own theory of "cultural materialism"; he has now incorporated it with the work of younger English thinkers and of Europeans like Lucien Goldmann.

In the hands of "vulgar" orthodox Marxists ideology could break butterflies on the wheels of history; thus Wordsworth was "objectively" a reactionary petit bourgeois whose poetry expresses only the nostalgia of a doomed and marginal class, and so on. But ideology has been rescued from reductionists and given greater conceptual reach and subtlety by heterodox thinkers who have, on the whole, taken their young Marx with their old, absorbed Weber and Freud, felt the pressure of anti-Marxist critiques, faced up to Stalinism, and retained their love of literature. That theoretical problems remain, and that effective use in any concrete case demands a great deal, are no excuses for ignoring ideology any longer.

If universities—and in America, at least, it is mainly there that literary theory is produced—are to live up to their name, some such coordinating and cross-disciplinary notion as "ide-

ology" will have to come into use. It is indispensable for connecting the conventions of literature, in form and content, with the experience and interests of groups in society. The connections may be very complex and densely "mediated," but without such a way of trying to connect literature to its place in the social totality, literary history will remain anecdotal and claustrophobic. And without a grasp of the power and persistence of ideology, even in literature departments—the "departmentality" of universities, in fact, being a major ideological force—we risk falling prey to ideology in our own literary theories. We find today, for example, the widely propagated idea, born in part of the very desire to break out of the confines of a department or discipline, that everything is a text and that reading is the basic mode of human comprehension. It begins by taking what used to be called "works," a word with its own presuppositions, and naming them "texts," founding thereby a certain kind of critical activity which, however rich and brilliant it sometimes is, forgets what it erased in its opening gesture. To take the object as text is to fail to take account of its nontextual features. This school's next move is to globalize "text" to include not only other forms of culture but all of history and even nature. One hardly needs to say that this is not the same as situating a text or work in a larger context (the normal use of "context" invites this text-model); it is to assimilate the context under terms set by texts. There are even "Marxist" versions of this textual imperialism, according to which a text "produces" meanings, or ideology, or even the reading subject itself. It is not to deny their power if one points out the kinship of such theories to the ideology of Melville's "sub-sub-librarian" and the division of whales into folios, octavos, and duodecimos. In Blake's words, they "view a small portion & think that all, / And call it Demonstration" (J 65.27-28).

The task—if this needs to be said—is to study everything and fit it all together. To put it practically, it is to learn something of the different planes of knowledge and how they intersect, to respect the integrity of an object or event in culture while trying at the same time to "explain" it, to trace its nearer ramifications and at least acknowledge the farther

ones, indeed, to gain a standard of near and far in relevance, and to accept and enjoy the communality of scholarship. To put it negatively, the task is to avoid the twin temptations of premature synthesis and chronic analysis, the hypertrophy of a single method or set of terms and the noncommittal pluralism of insulated approaches. The concept of ideology, of course, is not immune to overgrown pretensions, but I will try to live up to my brave words and offer a definition and defense of it, if not as a sovereign conceptual key, then as a useful coordinating or regulating idea.

Blake presents some special problems. Faced with his heroic efforts to hammer his eccentric and multifarious thought into unity, those of us who take Blake seriously may become what we behold, and do the same with our own critical commentary. Northrop Frye's well-titled *Fearful Symmetry* is the greatest example of Blake's contagion, greatest in being most Blakean in its formal spirit and intuitive understanding, though for those reasons losing some of the distance proper for critical leverage. In other critics Blake seems to have magnified the general tendency to methodological exclusiveness; they have unified their commentaries by finding one or another outside standpoint from which to pry him up, and so we have the series of one-dimensional contractions of his work to Neoplatonic, Cabalistic, or Swedenborgian sources or to Jungian, Freudian, or Marxist analogues that have made the Blake shelves in the library so unbecoming to behold. A reaction against such books has set in, and many Blakeans are now content modestly to labor in their patch of the common field and leave to future generations the gathering in. Much of the ground for their work and my own has been cleared magisterially by David Erdman; his own caution before grand generalizations certainly warns me sufficiently. It is my impression nonetheless that some of the careful studies of this or that minute particular have come up against limits not surpassable by tying the particulars together link by link, as it were; rather, the particulars demand a multiplanar organizing interpretation to situate them properly. Blake's own example of persisting in folly also remains before us, and life is too short to await all the returns before trying to assess him. I am one,

too, who believes Blake can make an essential contribution to the vision and program we need in order to reconstruct the damaged societies of the world, and we do not know how much time will be given us for that work.

Blake may seem peculiarly resistant, finally, to a specifically ideological analysis. His difficulty and eccentricity kept him even from readers of his own time who shared his social status and political allegiances; his effect on readers now, even after all the scholarly attempts to attach him to familiar traditions, begins with the strong impression that he is like nobody else in the world. That his idiosyncrasies will test any comparative or triangulating method, however, is no reason to shrink from trying it. Rather the opposite: his obvious orneriness may help keep the method honest, and his very difficulty may be the best place to begin.

* * *

We may distinguish at the outset the ideology of a social class, the ideology of an individual, and the ideology of a work.¹ There is nothing simple, however brief our labels might be, about specifying the ideology of a social class, for classes are always changing their characteristics as the structure of the economy changes, merging older classes, splitting into new ones, struggling against competing ones, and so on. Their ideologies change similarly, blending, fissuring, hardening, and absorbing new experiences. Among complications there are the permeation of an underclass's ideology with crucial features of the ruling ideology, as in the wide acceptance of the middle-class values of self-help and individual upward-mobilism by a working class for whom only concerted action will bring progress, and the reverse process, no doubt weaker, the "trickling up" of democratic and populist traditions, which may limit the options of the ruling elites, or at least force them into hypocrisy. The history of Christianity from its plebeian provincial origins to its adoption by the patricians and overlords illustrates this permeation in both directions, and it reminds us too of another factor, the "drag effect" or conservatism of ideology, its persistence after its appropriate social

basis has altered, as well as the persistence of archaic institutions in the base itself. There are different tempos of change in culture, all bearing complexly on each other.

One component of class ideology we may call aesthetic ideology: a body of conventions, genres, styles of discourse, themes, and notions of the artist's function and means of making art. One of the most important studies in aesthetic ideology is Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel*; whether or not he has got them right, Watt is making the sort of connections between the common life of a social class and the forms and styles of its literature only seldom attempted. Another example would be Lukács's effort to correlate the shift in mode from "realism" to "naturalism" in the French novel with the bloody class war of 1848. Within the region of aesthetic ideology we might want to distinguish an ideology of artists, a slant or bias in favor of the producers of works that express overall the ideologies of the classes that sponsor and consume artworks. To give a charming if obvious example, in the *Odyssey* the role of the bards is more or less what it probably was in reality—to sing at aristocrats' tables and memorialize the deeds of their ancestors—but we can detect a whiff of "bardic ideology" in the special protection they are granted, Odysseus' deep response to one of them, and the bardlike traits of Odysseus himself.

From these kinds of class ideology we should distinguish an individual's ideology, which may be a very complicated affair. As Sartre memorably put it, "Valéry is a petit bourgeois intellectual, no doubt about it. But not every petit bourgeois intellectual is Valéry."² The biographical point of insertion into class ideology is mediated at the very least by the family, itself a changing historical institution but with certain features that may cut across class lines and persist over centuries. Moreover, some individuals rise or sink in their class affiliations, or they serve another class and identify with it, or they think for themselves and reflect on their own situation and may rebel a little or a lot, and so on. I do not want to suggest that a measure of objectivity or "truth" is beyond reach, nor would I confine it solely to the very abstract "science" that some French Marxists say is the only realm free of ideological con-

tamination. But ideology touches all experience, and the sense of having transcended ideological illusions is very often itself an illusion born of the clash of two or more of them. Yet such a clash may also genuinely remove illusions, I would argue; Blake's peculiar insight into ideology, which we will note throughout this book, may owe a good deal to the conflicts to which his social position exposed him.

Finally, I think it makes sense to say that all literature has an ideology, or components of an ideology. Some Marxists, as I mentioned earlier, would prefer to say that literature *produces* an ideology, a way of putting it that seems to bring out the active process of reading, but that also seems to assign that activity mainly to the text itself—as if by being so good as to read it a reader becomes putty in its hands—rather than distributing the determining activity between text and reader as co-producers of the “ideological effect.” I suspect too that this parlance is itself a product of a new desire for rigor among Marxists who are restating aesthetic theory in terms of production, Marxism's founding concept. But we may leave aside this refinement; it will do for now to say that all literature “has” an ideology.

To put it simply, literature has designs on us, palpable or not, and those designs have social bearings, however remote. All literature teaches, even if it claims only to delight. In fact, the claim only to delight not merely is false but has a fairly evident ideological ring. Certain highly self-conscious works, deliberately critical of prevailing ideologies and alert to their social bases, might make an exception to this rule, though of such works it might be truer to say that they project an anti-ideological viewpoint that is itself partly ideological. So one might argue of James Joyce's *Ulysses* that, while its many narrative stances and styles seem to sweep away all Archimedean points from which to comprehend, or at least speak about, the world, the careful continuity of its “realistic” level beneath all the devices, and the final surfacing of that level in the seemingly artless soliloquy of Molly, endorse after all the standpoint of “life,” of empathy, of realism, of something like Albert Camus's anti-ideological decency, whose ideological features are not hard to discern.

Perhaps, too, certain very short works, such as sonnets or haiku, do not carry much of an ideology, perhaps only fragments or gestures vaguely consonant with more than one, yet we can see that the very *forms* of sonnet and haiku trail little ideological clouds from their former uses in courtly games, their conventional sublimation of desire, or their equally conventional adumbrations of satori. The apparent purity of some forms of art, ritual, and game, it could be argued, serves precisely to ratify as Olympian and objective the way of life of a leisured group with very particular interests. There are, in any case, ideologies of form, or ideologies *in* form. For Shakespeare to write a play about a merchant-adventurer, a Jewish usurer, a soldier of fortune, and an heiress "richly left" in the form of New Comedy in the "scapegoat" subgenre is to organize obviously political and economic material into a form in which love and "nature" always successfully bring about a social renewal and resolution, a universal pattern of action and value governing anything-but-universal interests or positions.

The ideology of a work is combined in complex ways with the ideology of the author. Marx and Engels themselves anticipated modern suspicions of the intentional fallacy in their praise of the reactionary Balzac. We might say there are artistic methods and conventions with enough momentum of their own to transform the conscious and unconscious attitudes of the artist, and that even if the form, to put it simply, does not undermine the manifest tendency of the content, it may by "foregrounding" it put it at a distance sufficient for scrutiny and critique. Althusser speaks (somewhat mysteriously) of the "internal distantiation" of art, a retreat that lets us see "the ideology from which [the work of art] is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it alludes."³

Not only forms, of course, but discrete, seemingly innocent stock objects, characteristic human types, and historical individuals may gather an ideological nimbus from their changing contexts in real social life as well as in extended ideological argument. The name "Milton" might mean a safe religious writer or a republican and regicide, according to what asso-

ciations a context triggers. Why does Blake make his hero Los a blacksmith? One factor might have been an aura of subversiveness or at least political loquacity that higher classes sensed in real blacksmiths. They might, to borrow Fredric Jameson's term, have been potential "ideologemes" ready for activation, seconded by older traditions about the volcanic Vulcan, in a particular narrative context. Certain highly specific, seemingly neutral systems of thought may gain, or lose, a political edge. Along with the associations of blacksmiths, it would be interesting to know why Jacobins like Thomas Holcroft and Blake's friend Henry Fuseli were seriously interested, as Blake was, in Johann Kaspar Lavater. Was there something we can meaningfully call "left physiognomy"? These are examples of the sort of thing I shall pursue in this book, though often I will only raise them as questions.

I have been slowly backing into a definition of ideology. I will use the word to mean a set of related ideas, images, and values more or less distorted from the "truth" (which presumes some grasp of the way the social totality really works) through the impact on it of the material interests, conscious or unconscious, of those who believe and propagate it, insofar as they are divided from one another in classes with conflicting interests. That is a Marxist definition, though it is not the latest model. There are other definitions that might be precipitated out of Hegel or Weber and that deny the priority of material conditions, and there is Karl Mannheim's more positivist and relativist theory that denies any privilege to the standpoint of the proletariat. I would defend the materialist clause, but gratefully accept from Weber some sense of the "elective affinity" of certain beliefs with certain ways of making a living, and from Hegel the idea, partly assimilated by Marx, that the false is the partial and the true is the whole. I think it is no longer true, however, if it ever was, that the industrial proletariat is in the best position to grasp the truth of the social totality. (I am not sure who is, however. Mannheim says scholars and intellectuals are, but then Mannheim was a scholar and intellectual.)

Any *theory* of ideology must assume the existence of a meaningful totality in which all material, social, and cultural objects,

events, and forms find their specifiable "places" and in which there is no such thing as an autonomous feature or level entirely free of the impress of the social whole. Ideology is one domain in culture, and it bears the marks of its continual emergence from and reimmersion into its social environment. Any particular ideology can be understood, and its pretensions or "self-understanding" debunked, by following these marks back to the social formations that gave rise to the ideology and that the ideology in turn reinforces. The pretensions of ideology are usually two: first, a claim to universality, as I mentioned earlier, which typically depends on the "naturalization" of something social and the exaltation of a part into the whole, and secondly, the very claim to be autonomous or *audessus de la mêlée* that a theory of ideology must assume to be impossible. What the Germans call *Ideologiekritik* can proceed "immanently" by working out the consequences of the ideology's premises until its absurdity is glaring, and extrinsically by showing that the world, if not heaven, has more things in it than are dreamt of in the ideology, things indeed which generate that ideology or condition it. Non-Marxist theories can do this, too. They all practice what Paul Ricoeur calls a hermeneutic of suspicion and offer explanations for the features they suspect. The oldest example of *Ideologiekritik* on record, if we exclude the Old Testament attack on idolatry, goes back to Xenophanes in the sixth century B.C. He was even a materialist. He wrote: "The Ethiopians say that their gods are snub-nosed and black, the Thracians that theirs have light blue eyes and red hair." And if horses or lions had hands, he added, they would draw pictures of horse-shaped or lionlike gods.⁴

Having established ideology's pedigree, I conclude these preliminaries by noticing the tendency in some recent theories of ideology (particularly Althusser's) to so expand its range that it covers all experience and all thought (except the "science" of Marxism itself). It is said that the acquisition of language, any language, draws the child into a realm of illusory subjectivity (the effect, in part, of deictic pronouns like "I"), and it is on the notion of a subject that all ideologies are erected.⁵ Whatever interest this theory may arouse it is not