

American Ideology and Science

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In discussing American ideology, it is useful to take into account the roles that rationality, science, and technology all play in its various manifestations.

Specifically, "science" has been challenged to be an ideology in itself by some theorists, while others argue that because of its objective nature, science, by definition, is not an ideology at all. In this discussion of science and ideology, I

① shall look at the various forms of ideological thought, specifically American conservatism and liberalism, and their views of science, and then I shall attempt to argue that science, whether

② it is or isn't an ideology, can be viewed as an ideological tool used by ideologues in proclaiming their ideas to be the most "useful" or "~~true~~" "true".

First of all, Horowitz in his work, Ideology Utopia in the U.S. contrasts ^{American} conservative ideology with ^{American} liberal ideology.

In his discussion, he mentions the role of science and how both ideologies view it. According to the conservative view, science is seen in rather negative terms. As Horowitz points out, in the nineteenth century the conservative philosophy came to consider it-

(self the guardian of traditional values against the encroachment of science and industrialism and the bourgeoisie that promoted them both." Because science was

tightly linked to progress and industrialization, the conservatives felt a direct threat to their ideology. This is so because among other things, tradition, religion and authority based on natural aristocracy were, under science, subject to rational scrutiny, and ultimately under science, these ideas were falsified. Today, conservative ideology still argues in favor of tradition, elitism, and religion because they keep the masses compliant and serve the interests of the state. While conservatives may have been forced to accept science and its by-products in their daily lives, what they want to do now is to keep education a privilege for the elite, and thus keep the knowledge of science and technology in their own hands. Again, according to Horowitz "Because harmony, not struggle, is the principle political end of the new conservatives, the values of elitism become self evident to the ruled as well as the rulers. Patriotism, love of God, and mythical heroes become important factors because they promote the stability of the state." Thus, conservative ideology in a sense promotes irrationality, and argues against science because it questions their basic assumptions directly. To sum up Horowitz's ideas on conservatism and science, "what modern conservatism confronts

this is
inevitable
variation
yet
not
blaming
projects

How does this fit in with it (e.g.) for Arthur's notions of society?

us with is a definite choice between a materialist tradition of freedom through the rational uses of technology, science, and social institutions, and a philosophy of myth and prejudice artifiually grafted onto the American scene from the backwaters of European idealist currents."

In contrast to conservatism, the liberal ideology has in the past viewed science very favorably. Because industrialization and technology were supposedly aimed at promoting the social advancement of society according to some theorists, it was a very useful positive and good thing. A pluralist government based on checks and balances would use science and technology in the (best) possible way.

According to Horowitz, "liberalism makes the assumption that the rule of mind or of reason will uniformly even out over raw power." This assumption, however, has historically been falsified. "Science, technology, and reason" have been and continue to be very much abused by those in power. Again, in a lengthy quote Horowitz argues that "the most telling weakness in liberalism is a consequence

of the gap between science and society. Many of its theorists, from James to Dewey to today's liberal voices, assume automatically that the spirit of science is good and that the spirit of ~~the~~ liberalism is scientific.

the crux →

But the clear and obvious demonstration that all social systems, fascist or communist, (or even democratic), can make use of basic science and can maintain a network of scientific programming and planning, sent shock waves throughout the liberal world. It made evident that the canons of science do not automatically translate themselves into the canons of liberalism. And the recognition of this fact, whether it be through the camp at Auschwitz or the bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ended once and for all the liberal monopoly on science and instead created the possibility of a scientific monopoly of liberalism."

How about Milton Friedman
Pinchot
For a more contemporary

In the U.S. today, science and technology play a crucial role in preserving the State and in keeping the status quo in power. This brings us to the question of whether science is an ideology or a tool of ideology. The views on these ideas vary. According to George D. Lundberg in Can Science Save Us?, he argues that "the advancement of science will cost the abandonment not only of individual concepts carried with us from pre-scientific times, it will require ~~us~~ us to abandon deeply cherished ideologies, resembling in form, if not in content, their theological predecessors." This idea, however plausible it sounds, has yet to occur, if it ever will at all. This is so because the world

of people today is still bound by ideologies. Man is not a totally rational creature. Passion wins out over science more often than not, and it is because of man's inability to divorce this passion from power that makes science a dangerous ideological tool. According to S. Kolakowski, in The Alienation of Reason, "most positivists believe that science and human thinking generally can be completely neutralized from a philosophic point of view, and that within the area of experience so neutralized, to which no existentialist determinants are ascribed, the scientific view fulfills the same conditions as Husserl's transcendental ego, i.e. makes the criteria of the correctness of knowledge completely independent of the cultural, historical, psychological, and biological conditions under which this knowledge is achieved." If I understand Kolakowsky correctly, positivism asserts that man can be objective and use science objectively, without letting his human experience get in the way. Historically, and unfortunately, this has not occurred. When one relates science to American ideology and its form of government, one finds that science and ideology have in a sense, merged, largely because ours is a very technocratic, bureaucratic, supposedly "rational" system. Again, to cite Kolakowski, "logical empiricism (science)

Another interesting quote from Kolakowski: "The distinction of sci. is not a fiction but a fact. It is a fiction that he distinguishes by..."

then, is a product of a specific culture, one in which technological efficiency is regarded as the highest value, the culture we usually call "technocratic."

It is a technocratic ideology in the mystifying guise of an anti-ideological, scientific view of the world, purged of value judgments." Pluralist theorists would have us believe that our technocratic scientific society, because of its system of checks and balances, is indeed promoting human welfare and is indeed if not value free, then highly valuable.

However, as ^{PO} Mills and H. W. Dombhoff have pointed out, the U.S. government is run by a ruling class whose interests it serves very well. Pluralism, science and technology all tend to strengthen the claws of those in power. They are then, important ideological tools for the ruling class.

In conclusion, W. T. Wilson, in The American Ideology, has pointed out that "the idea that knowledge is inherently neutral, that there is a unitary scientific method, or that science provides the pre-eminent explanatory model against which science must measure itself, constitutes the epistemic foundation of the American ideology.

This ideology is technocratic because it invokes science in order to justify policies aimed at realizing particular objectives. These processes take the form of allegedly neutral

techniques whose origin and concerns are distended from the interests they serve." Thus, American ideology and science have merged. Americans like to think that we are the most advanced society in the world. However, our ideology and outright abuse of science is on the verge of destroying the entire world. It's a shame that greed and selfishness have caused science to be mishandled and abused, when potentially it could help advance the entire globe and make it a better place in which to live.

this, indeed, is the central contradiction

You make a reasoned, well-thought through argument. Excellent job on organizing stuff - you definitely have a knack for book analysis.