Book Review

Ernst Topitsch, Sozialphilosophie zwischen Ideologie und Wissenschaft, Luchterhand, 2. Auflage, 1966

To be a good *Ideologiekritiker*, two conditions seem to be prerequisite. First, one must be fully trained in the rational-critical techniques of logical and methodological analysis. Second, besides possessing unusual historical acumen, one has to be thoroughly familiar with the time-honoured tradition of Western metaphysics which has been the perennial source of ideological literature. Many of the contemporary Anglo-American philosophers amply satisfy the first condition, and equally many of their continental colleagues the second. But it is extremely difficult, in my opinion, to find scholars who are equipped well enough in both respects. Before the War, we had such great *Ideologiekritiker*s on the Continent as the late Vilfredo Pareto, Hans Kelsen and Karl Popper. But the rise of totalitarianism and the subsequent War had for a time suffocated this line of development in Europe (though Kelsen and Popper have been extremely productive in America and Britain respectively).

Slowly but steadily, however, from the early 1950's onward, there arose in West Germany and Austria a movement for reviving the line of research initiated by these great pioneers. The author of this book, Professor Ernst Topitsch, now at Heidelberg, is one of the most outstanding representatives of this trend.

The first major work which won him international reputation was the masterly treatise which appeared in 1958: *Vom Ursprung und Ende der Metaphysik* (*On the Origin and End of Metaphysics*). A rare combination of superb clarity and a typically Teutonic *Gründlichkeit*, this work is a continuation and development of Kelsen's critique of Western ideologies, including natural law doctrines and Marxism. The author sees in the history of Western philosophy from the earliest times up to the present an imposing array of projections, reflections and sublimations of the modes of thinking which characterize ancient as well as uncivilized peoples. In particular, he focuses his attention on anthropomorphism (in the broader sense of the word), which he classifies into 'biomorphic', 'sociomorphic', and 'technomorphic' patterns of thinking. His penetrating analysis of these patterns — especially the second — enables us to interpret the whole history of metaphysics in an entirely new light.

The volume which I have chosen for review: *Sozialphilosophie zwischen Ideologie und Wissenschaft*, (*Social Philosophy between Ideology and Science*) 1961 (2nd ed. 1966), is a collection of Topitsch's essays in *Ideologiekritik*. While the above-men-

tioned "*Ursprung*" was primarily an historical survey, the essays contained in the "*Sozialphilosophie*" are focused on the contemporary scene. The titles of the essays are as follows: (I have given tentative translations in English.) 1. The Concept and Function of Ideology 2. Restauration of Natural Law? 3. Human Rights as a Problem of *Ideologiekritik* 4. Toward a Sociology of Existentialism; Cosmos-Existence-Society 5. History and Sociology (*Geschichtswissenschaft und Soziologie*) 6. Conventionalism and the Problem of Value in the Social Sciences 7. Social Theory and Its Function as a Social Determinant (*Sozialtheorie und Gesellschaftsgestaltung*) 8. Belief in the Soul and Selfinterpretation 9. The Motives and Models of Kantian Moral Metaphysics 10. Marxism and Gnosticism 11. Alienation and Ideology, Toward an Emancipation of Marxism from Mythology 12. On the Value of Scientific Knowledge. (Essays 3 and 11 are new additions in the second edition.)

Space does not permit me to go into details here, and I must be content with a few scattered remarks.

Essay 1. serves as an excellent introduction to the whole volume, while essay 12 sums up in conclusion the author's main contention, namely: that the rational, critical, sober (*nüchtern*) and 'value-free' (in the sense in which Max Weber used the word) attitude of science is, in a certain sense, contrary to human nature; that for the naive human mind it is more 'natural' to have recourse to various pseudo-interpretations and pseudo-explanations of the world and one's self so that one may feel emotionally securer; that we must candidly recognize the painful fact that there is no 'pre-established harmony' between truth and value or between the development of science and the progress of mankind; and that, although ultimate valuations are not amenable to 'scientific proof', this does not deprive the search for truth as such of its intrinsic value. In this contention, Topitsch is avowedly following the footsteps of the great rationalists of the German-speaking world, including most notably Max Weber, Kelsen and Popper.

Of special importance, in my opinion, are essays 10 and 11, which deal with Marxism. They are particularly *à propos* in Japan, where Marxism has even now the strongest spell over the intellectuals, apart from countries where it is institutionally ordained as the official doctrine. The author points out that the Hegelian doctrine of dialectic, together with the whole inventory of esoteric notions such as 'alienation' and '*Aufheben*' is originally derived from the mystic literature of the ancient Gnostics and Neo-Platonists. With thorough and convincing documentation, he shows that the so-called dialectical method, far from being an outcome of the rational-scientific approach, is historically bound up with a mystic, theological interpretation of the world — which is even tinged with magical-ecstatic motives —

in which the whole cosmic and human process is conceived of as a 'drama of fall and re-ascension (*Wiederaufstieg*)'.

I do not suggest that the antiquity of a notion or a doctrine automatically discredits it. But, after logical and methodological analysis has shown the inadequacy of dialectic as a scientific method (as in Popper's classical article: 'What is Dialectic?'), it is really worth-while to inquire into the genetic problem of how it all came about.

E. Topitsch's *Sozialphilosophie zwischen Ideologie und Wissenschaft* is a remarkable collection of essays, all pertinent to the intellectual climate of our time and especially to that in Japan, where the tradition of German Idealism still has the firmest sway outside Germany.

(Junichi Aomi, University of Tokyo, 14 January, 1968)