



Ca' Foscari
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Image: Die Montagehalle der Maschinenfabrik Escher Wyss in
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Does a Critique of Ideology need a concept of truth? Lessons from the early 20th century

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When Marx articulated his critique of the epistemic distortions in capitalism (by alienation and ideology, e.g.), his own epistemic "standpoint" was not one of the perspectives of the groups or classes affected, but the standpoint of science which could integrate and explain those various perspectives (and should be adopted by the workers' movement). However, in the 20th century, when the ideology critique was radicalized, science itself became problematic. It now appeared as one perspective amongst many which was itself torn by class interests and dominated by the power of groups. Can this relativism be overcome if we privilege one of the various affected "standpoints" for moral or political reasons? My talk discusses alternatives to this problematic option that were already discussed in the early 20th century, but are often misrepresented today: Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge did in fact discuss the "totalization" of ideology critique: no single perspective could be immunized against that critique, so no individual perspective can be privileged. This, however, was not a recipe for relativism, but to the contrary, Mannheim developed various methods to overcome this relativism. The paper reconstructs these perspectives with a focus on the concept of truth.