and opposition to theory. They were nonplussed when we pointed out that facts by themselves were not significant in the process of acquiring knowledge except with reference to some theory and that the real problem was to distinguish between testable theories and speculative fancies. These Prussian and Deweyan commonplace were received with incomprehension.

Lazarsfeld at the second meeting, I recall, criticized me severely for saying that we could understand another person's feelings or state of mind without necessarily experiencing them ourselves—an issue that seemed peripheral to the main discussion. But he was very vehement about it. Years later at a meeting of the New York University Institute of Philosophy I reminded him of the incident and asked him why he was so excited at the time. He made very slighting references to Horkheimer's Institute, only vaguely recalled the occasion but said that he intervened probably to prevent us from having everything our own way.

At the second meeting at New York University Horkheimer used some illustrations from the history of art, the understanding of which he claimed required the application of dialectical principles. Meyer Schapiro contested his position. No longer remember the details but the upshot of Schapiro's criticisms was that Horkheimer was unable to indicate what kind of evidence he would accept as invalidating his statements. I do remember, however, Horkheimer's remark to him in the course of the exchange: "When you are older and more mature you will no longer believe that you can settle any important questions in the history of art by using scientific methods."

At these meetings I would occasionally make strong critical comments about what was happening in the name of dialectical materialism in the Soviet Union. But I did not elicit any word of agreement or disagreement. In interludes when mention was made of current political matters, Horkheimer and especially Pollack were very careful about the Communist Parties of the United States and Germany. But at no time did they say anything that could be considered as critical of Soviet Russia or of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

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Werner Cohn

We find the following passage in a scholarly British Journal devoted to the study of China: "Even before Liberation of course, the Communists had worked with law and had established a fledgling legal system. In the border and liberated areas, a series of laws and regulations had been promulgated..." The reference to "Liberation" and "liberated areas" may be interpreted in at least two ways: (a) the author wishes to convey that communist government in China brought liberty; or (b) the author has borrowed official communist terminology without supplying any judgment of his own. A careful reading of this passage allows for either of these interpretations. That is the problem of equivocation.

In the present article we examine much of the English-language scholarly periodical literature, appearing around 1970, that was devoted to the study of the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, and Nazi Germany. (See Appendix A for a description of the sample.) Eight of the 17 articles concerning the PRC contained non-trivial instances of equivocation. The same was true of only three of the 18 articles devoted to the Soviet Union. Not much was written on Nazi Germany at the time, but two of the three articles that were examined also contained serious equivocation. (See Appendix B for a résumé of findings.) The equivocation I am about to describe arises if and only if the reader cannot be certain of how to interpret the writer's meaning because of an unresolved conflict between two implied rules for interpretation.

One such rule, which we may think of as an observer's point of view, is supplied by the Western scholarly tradition under whose auspices all these articles have been published. This tradition provides the ideals of objectivity and an independent critical attitude. It also implies, in particular, that terms like "Liberation," "masses," and "elections" be understood in the sense of the ordinary language of the West unless otherwise labelled. The second rule for interpretation is provided by the societies under study, and may be called an "actor's point of view." Under it, "race" would imply racism when the subject-matter is Nazi; "election" would mean appointment by the central authority if the context is Soviet society.

Both observer and actor points of view are valid in scholarly discussion, but the reader must be told which is which. Careful writers on totalitarianism supply the reader with enough information to avoid confusion.

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ambiguity. For instance, a writer may attribute a given set of terminology to official communist sources, in which case, of course, there is no equivocation. Such attribution may be explicit, through quotation marks or phrases such as "according to . . . " etc.; or it may be implicit, the context clearly revealing the sense in which terminology and opinions are to be interpreted. When the attribution is merely implicit, an unsympathetic critic may pauince and charge the writer with equivocation. But such equivocation would clearly be trivial. I have endeavored, in the present paper, to count as equivocation only those instances in which an earnest, attentive, reasonably educated reader would be at a loss as to how to interpret an important passage.

In the descriptions which follow, I have divided my material into four types of equivocation. These types overlap to some extent, and, in any case, I attach little importance to differences between the types.

(a) Equivocation concerning motive

To attribute aim or purpose or motive to oneself, let alone to another, is notoriously difficult. One may or may not be truthful; one may or may not be aware; motives may be more—or less—mixed. This is obviously not the place to discuss so large a subject; but a small subset of it is relevant.

In reporting the motives of others, we may either simply reproduce what these others say about themselves (i.e. report the actor’s viewpoint), or we may use some other method in attributing motive (as an observer’s viewpoint). But the reader must be told whose point of view is being reported. If I say that Soviet troops entered Afghanistan in order to safeguard Afghan interests, I am equivocating unless I make it clear whether this is my own assessment or whether, on the contrary, I am merely reporting Soviet assertions.

Equivocation concerning motive is found in at least six of the articles under review.

The paper by Pfeffer, highly favourable in tone toward Mao Tsetung, has a number of such instances. A particularly puzzling one occurs on page 21: "Mao’s vision of the ideal society is a kind of Christian Utopia, collectivist, austere, egalitarian, and without the need for coercive institutions. . . ." This passage gives very conflicting clues to the reader. On the one hand, the language suggests that there is a simple reportage of Mao’s views ("Mao’s vision . . ."). But since there is talk of "Christian Utopia," hardly consistent with a self-evaluation by Mao, we now assume that here is an evaluation by the author. Then what are we to make of "without the need for coercive institutions"?

The equivocation, embedded in the context of this article as a whole, is not merely between author and observer viewpoints but also between an ideal, professed intention on the one hand, and actual practice on the other. In other words, not only do we not know whether it is Pfeffer or Mao who is speaking, but we are also left wondering whether Mao opposed coercive methods in actual practice or only in theory.

Where Pfeffer’s attitude is highly favourable toward the regime he describes, that of Murray Feeshbach, in his article concerning the 1970 Soviet census, is fairly hostile. This difference in tone makes Feeshbach’s equivocation less conspicuous but thereby perhaps also more insidious. It occurs at the beginning of his article when he states that "the primary purpose of the census was to collect the data necessary to make a detailed assessment of the population and manpower resources of the USSR. . . ." The author does not tell us how he arrived at this judgment.

If he is merely reporting the professed purpose of Soviet officials, the statement is unsurprising and hardly worth making. If, on the other hand, he has himself judged that other possible purposes (social control, propaganda, or whatever) were all less "primary" than the assessment of population and manpower resources, he should at the very least have told us that he has made this judgment.

There are further examples of equivocation concerning motive in Pfeffer, Lü Suttmeier, Roberts, and Fitzgerald. (b) Equivocation concerning category

One expression may denote more than one category of thought, but we can usually tell from the context whether "heavy water," for example, refers to a substance useful in nuclear reactors or to a load I might carry in buckets. We would surely not think highly of an author who fails to indicate which of the two he has in mind. But when writing about totalitarianism, writers are more often equivocal concerning category than in any other way.

Perhaps the most interesting instances come from two of the three articles on Nazi Germany. Larry Thompson, writing about a "eugenic" policy of the Nazis (see also below under (d)), mentions "Aryan ancestry" and "racial examinations." Both "Aryan" and "race" have certain meanings in the context of Western scholarship, entirely different meanings in the context of Nazi doctrines. Thompson is not at all clear which set of meanings he wishes to convey. The same
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There are further examples of equivocation concerning motive in Pfeffer,7 Li'8 Suttmeier,9 Roberts,10 and Fitzgerald.11

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9 Li', op. cit. p. 54, 110.
14 Ibid. p. 41.
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generally hostile in tone toward the Soviet regime, Alec Nove seems to
accept—or does he?—the notion of "election" as applicable, without
explanation, to the management of Soviet agricultural settlements.14
Since almost half of all the articles dealing with communist China
contain some equivocation concerning category, it would be tedious to
quote from more than one example.

Victor H. Li devotes a good deal of space to explaining that "the
masses" are involved in Chinese criminal procedures. "The Party uses
the masses to act as a check on official actions...." etc.15 But "masses,"
given his context, can mean at least two things: (a) the majority of
the people, without regard to political opinion; and (b) those who approve
of the communist government. Mao Tse-tung himself helps us in
appreciating the more specialized meaning:

The term "the people" has different meanings in different countries,
and in different historical periods in each country. ... At this
stage of building socialism, all classes, strata, and social groups
which approve, support, and work for the cause of socialist con-
struction belong to the category of the people (renmin), while those
social forces and groups which resist the socialist revolution and are
hostile to and try to wreck socialist construction, are enemies of
the people.16

Nowhere in his article does Li make it clear how he wishes his reader to
interpret "masses" (or certain other other social categories). As a result, we
never know whether the picture he paints is of a variant of democratic
processes or of political repression.

The remaining instances of this sort of equivocation, all concerning
China, are found in Burdham,17 Fitzgerald,18 Suttmeier,19 Wu,20 Domes,21
and Chang.22

13 Herbert S. Levine, "Local Authority and the SS State: The Conflict over Popula-
tion Policy in Danzig-West Prussia, 1939-45." Central European History, Vol. II,
p. 390.
15 Li, op. cit., p. 74.
16 Li, op. cit., p. 74.
17 Quoted in Michael Walzer, The Language of Communism (The Bodley Head,
18 Frank K. Burdham, "Chinese and Indian Agriculture: A Broad Comparison of
Recent Policy and Performance," Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. XXXVII, No. 3 (May
19 Fitzgerald, op. cit., p. 25.
23 Pisni-Malini, "The Second Decade of Maotu Rule," Problems of Communism,
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13 Li, op. cit., p. 74.
14 Quoted in Michael Walzer, The Language of Community (The Rockefeller, London, 1970), p. 120.
16 Fitzgerald, op. cit., p. 28.
17 Suttmeier, op. cit., pp. 157, 163, 166.
China contain equivocation concerning evaluation: Wu,26 Bardham,27 Fitzgerald,28 and Li.29

The examples from two articles on Nazi Germany are both embedded in work with a clearly hostile tone toward the Nazi regime, and the equivocation concerning evaluation would seem to be unwitting. But it is nonetheless genuine.

Levine speaks of "the racial purity of the Greater German Reich . . ."30 in such a way that one wonders whether or not he accepts, in this instance, a certain validity of Nazi values. (He equivocates concerning both evaluation and category in this one sentence.) He also repeatedly cites a German "struggle against Polish domination."31 and one cannot be sure whether he merely means to voice Nazi sentiments or whether he is furnishing his own evaluation.

Thompson32 is similarly confusing. His article deals with the Nazi "eugenics" policy, and the reader is left to wonder whether he holds that "eugenics" here involves an effort toward some sort of objective improvement. There is also doubt about his frequent use of the phrase "racially valuable,"33 and, in a somewhat different way, in regard to "certain moral and economic criteria."34 He does not specify whether the "moral" refers to some generally accepted standard or only to the requirements of specifically Nazi morality.

One could no doubt find equivocation—perhaps as prominently as we have found it here—in fields other than the study of totalitarian regimes.35 There are always certain terminological difficulties, for example, in the study of non-Western cultures by Western scholars.36 But there is probably no other field in which confusion has been cultivated with such apparent deliberation, nor in which the resulting disorientation—both intellectual and moral—has been quite as devastating.

The language and the categories of totalitarian propaganda not only differ from those used by liberal Western scholars. They differ in ways that are subtle and seem to have been designed for confusion. It is not merely a question of "democracy," say, meaning one thing in the West

27 Fitzgerald, op. cit. p. 30.  
28 Levens, op. cit. p. 311.  
30 Ibid. pp. 343, 345.  
32 Ibid. p. 67.

The problem of equivocation in regard to observer's versus actor's point of view has been very cogently discussed by the Bishop Kenneth L. Flinn, who introduced the distinction between "ethic" and "eman" standpoints. Other writers have followed up on his suggestions. See Kenneth L. Flinn, Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior, (Meadow & Co., The Hague, 1963), Chap. 2. Marvin Harris has recently supplied a review of the literature: "History and Significance of the冲击/impact Distinction," Annual Review of Anthropology, Vol. 4, 1975, pp. 329-70.


and another in the communist world. The communist propagandist will insist that his is the "true" democracy; that institutions in the West are not at all "democratic." The problem here is not primarily one of misunderstanding but one of dissimulation. One who speaks of Soviet-style elections as "democratic" is not using words differently from the way we would use them; he is disingenuously putting forth a particular point of view. Annie Krieger has justly observed that "la duplicité qu'on reproche aux communautés n'est pas que dans les mots, elle est au niveau de la conception."37 It is for reasons of this kind, both intellectual and moral because involving the question of scholarly integrity, that a neutral attitude toward totalitarianism is probably not possible.

Much of the difference between those who do and those who do not accept a given totalitarian regime relates to elementary interpretation of reality. Totalitarian countries do not, as a rule, admit to the existence of evil within their domain, unless such evil has first been officially certified in the controlled media. It has been said, for example, that prostitution does not exist in the People's Republic of China. Those who say it does, unless and until the Party press says so, are enemies of the regime. The same holds for traffic accidents, natural calamities, etc. Here is another reason for true neutrality concerning a totalitarian regime to be so difficult to imagine: if one accepts the official interpretation of reality over the evidence of one's senses, one is a supporter of the regime; if one does not, one is its enemy.

It is, in fact, rarely difficult in this group of 38 articles to gauge the author's attitude toward the regime he describes. The clues of a hostile attitude are numerous and usually unmistakable. There may be use of more-or-less pejorative language, as, for example, when a Soviet publication is described as a "badly truncated postcard."38 Whenever the apparatus of repression is discussed in any detail or with any insistence, as is done, for instance, in Maurice Friedrich's article on Soviet Jewry,39 the author's hostility is obvious. Failure to discuss repression, on the other hand, may be a sign of an author's sympathies for totalitarian rule.40

But such sympathies, very common indeed among sinologists, are perhaps most typically evidenced by the equivocation we have discussed; provided, that is, that this equivocation is in some way intentional or at least conscious. (It goes without saying that any intentional equivocation, being a species of dishonesty, should be beyond the pale of scholarly discourse.)

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Werner Cohen
In the case of two of the articles on Nazi Germany, the authors show by numerous comments and by the general tone of their work that they harbour no conscious sympathies for the regime. Their equivocation with respect to category and evaluation is probably for the most part inadvertent, although their style leads us to believe that, in some particulars and without full realization, they have come to accept some of the Nazi assumptions. Similar remarks could be made about certain of the writers on the Soviet Union. All this apparent inadvertence is not only a sign of carelessness on the part of these writers; it is also a tribute—cautionary and admonitory for the rest of us—to the seductive powers of totalitarian propaganda.

Finally, we must point to the much greater frequency of equivocation in sinology when compared to Sovietology. This seems to be as true now as it was 10 years ago. The materials at hand indicate that academic work on China is not only more often muddled, but also much more often favourable to the communist regime. The two seem to go together.

Appendix A: The Sample

This study was begun as an effort to study the English-language scholarly literature on totalitarianism during the post-second world war period. The present sample deals with 1970; a period not so recent as to be embodied in current controversy, nor so dated as to be irrelevant for the present. The results should be compared with the author's much less systematic review of some recent literature.

The following journals were searched for relevant articles:

- Slavic Review (Columbus, Ohio), Vol. 29, 1970, all issues.
- China Quarterly (London, England), No. 41 (Jan.–Mar., 1970) and No. 44 (Oct.–Dec., 1970). There were two other issues published during 1970, viz. Nos. 42 and 43, but since an examination of all these issues would have greatly expanded the necessary research effort, the first and the last issue were taken as representative of the whole year for this journal.
- Central European History (Atlanta, Georgia), for articles on Nazi Germany. In this case, only one article on the relevant subject was found for 1970 (Vol. III), so the volumes published in 1969 (Vol. II) and 1971 (Vol. IV) were examined as well.
- Problems of Communism (published under US government auspices in Washington, DC). This journal had six issues in Vol. XIX, 1970, all of which were examined. In addition, Vol. XVIII, No. 6 (Nov.–Dec., 1969), a special issue devoted to communist China, was also examined in order to increase the number of articles dealing with China from this source.

These journals were selected in order to obtain a representative sample of the most prestigious scholarly writing in the periodical English-language literature on the three totalitarian regimes. The titles of the journals reflect their coverage, except that one article in the China Quarterly (that by Jacobs, issue No. 41) turned out to deal with the Soviet rather than the Chinese regime, and was counted as such. Problems of Communism, dealing with communism world wide, was particularly helpful because it allowed for comparisons between sovietology and sinology while holding editorial auspices constant.

Each article in the examined issues of these journals which dealt with the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, or the Nazi period in Germany was carefully read and instances of equivocation were marked. However, this was done by me alone, and it is possible that another reader may have found additional instances; conceivably too, but less likely, some instances found may not have been judged as equivocal by another reader. I followed the rule of resolving doubts by not counting a given instance as equivocal. For that reason, the number of items marked equivocal should be regarded as minimal, and judgments of presence of equivocation should be more reliable than judgments of absence.

All instances of equivocation found in these articles have been mentioned in the text of the present study and have been cited in the footnotes. A complete listing of all examined articles by authors' names is given below. Items marked with an asterisk have been judged to contain some equivocation.

Slavic Review, Vol. 29, No. 4: Bachman; Horst; Brown.
China Quarterly, No. 41: Bridgham; Cheng; Swamy and Burki; Chi; Jacobs.
China Quarterly, No. 44: Fitzgerald;* Li;* Doron;* Suttmeier.*
Central European History, Vol. II, No. 4: Levine.*
Central European History, Vol. IV, No. 1: Thompson.*
Problems of Communism, Vol. XVIII, No. 6: Chang;* Pfeffer;* Sims; Lisann.
Problems of Communism, Vol. XIX, No. 3: Fiose; Fossbach.*
Problems of Communism, Vol. XIX, No. 5: Wolfe; Schroeder; Unger.
Problems of Communism, Vol. XIX, No. 6: Feuer; Friedberg.
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[84]
### Appendix B: A Summary of Findings

<table>
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<td>6</td>
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<th>Percentage of Articles with **</th>
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*many articles figure in more than one column
**each article figure in only one column
***very inadequate sample of literature