

## [Common Error No. 62](#) [1]

Written by [Dr Madsen Pirie](#) [2] | Sunday 16 March 2008



### **62. "A person's economic or political viewpoint is only the unconscious expression of their class interest."**

This argument is elevated by the name of "Sociology of Knowledge" and implies that some views can be ignored because they reflect only the self-interest of those who hold them. The bourgeoisie support liberty, for example, only because they get rich when they are free to exploit. In its extreme form it rejects philosophy, art, literature and culture as no more than expressions of the self-interest of those who produce them. Deconstructionism, for example, supposes that any account reflects only ideological bias, and that history is only about power and domination.

The attitude is profoundly anti-intellectual and anti-rational. It suggests that people with an interest have no case to put. It might be that the condemned murderer awaiting execution has good arguments against the death penalty; but on this thesis they need not be listened to at all because they echo only his or her self-interest.

This analysis is a recourse of those who lose arguments. When the logic and the facts show their views to be erroneous, they respond by saying that this is only 'bourgeois' logic, and that there are no facts, just a series of experiences. In reality both the argument and the evidence are on the side of those who point to the creativity which freedom and enterprise unloose, and to the solid achievements gained by such societies in contrast with rival systems.

An interesting feature of this approach is that it is never taken to apply to those who use it. They are never taken to be expressing their own class interest as leftist intellectuals who would end up with power if their views prevailed. On the contrary, they are taken to be the only group whose "correct analysis" has cut them off from expressing any class interest. Just as one might expect.

[blog comments powered by Disqus](#) [4]

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/miscellaneous/common-error-no-62>

#### **Links:**

[1] <http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/miscellaneous/common-error-no-62>

[2] <http://www.adamsmith.org/taxonomy/term/5779>

[3] [http://disqus.com/?ref\\_noscript](http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript)

[4] <http://disqus.com>