

IDEOLOGY AND DEVIANCE

by

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CLOSE TO THE EDGE OF  
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TO MY MOTHER,

MARIAN SZYMANSKI.

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## Summary of thesis

The work herein is essentially an exploration into social theory. This theoretical re-search was precipitated by my dissatisfaction with a semiological analysis of the press reporting of political demonstrations, which I worked on for 6 months in 1973. My critique of that analysis is presented in chapter five. A more fundamental driving force was my concern with the importance of dominant ideology. I soon discovered that Marxian analysis has tended to neglect ideology as an objective force in social history. The thesis constantly refers itself to the need for historical research on the social origins, forms and functions of ideology. Initially, I was attempting to establish a satisfactory paradigm in the sociology of deviance. Extant theories proved to be inadequate and Hirst's critique offered little. However, I found that Hirst implicitly reconceptualised deviance in a way that corresponded with my own nascent ideas; as a form of ideological formation. The search for a theory of ideology and a theory of deviance thus became doubly important.

Hence, the thesis has three main objects: (a) the concept of deviance, (b) the concept of ideology, and (c) a theorised reading of ideologies in discursive materials. I have concluded that the essence of deviance is as a social censure (a type of ideological formation reflecting collisions in class practices), that ideology is, in Marxian analysis, the structure of consciousness, and that one can only rationally read an ideology from a discursive text when one has a theory of its specificity and of the forms of appearance of its referent. In the process of the investigation I was forced to try to re-think the major concepts of science, class, dominant ideology, law, crime and social practice, and to develop the new concept of the ideological formation. The work can be seen as a prolegomenon to an historical analysis of political ideologies.

## Introduction

When I began the work embodied in this thesis, I intended to produce a description of the dominant ideology in the national press reports of a form of political deviance, demonstrations. I had become convinced of the importance of dominant ideology in Western capitalist societies as a feature of the current political situation. The analysis of the existence of that ideology in the produce of the mass media and its prophylactic effects on working class consciousness seemed an urgent task for the socialist movement. I still believe that this analysis is demanded, but, as a consequence of the theoretical exploration herein, I think that it requires us to examine in detail the development of (the now international) social relations in the twentieth century. No ideology can grip the minds of the masses unless it is well grounded in supportive social relations.

In 1973, I carried out a detailed and arduous semicological reading of a month's press reports on political demonstrations. As a result of that, it became very clear that (a) the concept of deviance was almost completely vague and unexplicated, (b) the Marxist theory of ideology was sadly neglected and (c) there was no developed, historical materialist practice of reading ideology in discursive texts. In short, it became obvious that the whole field of enquiry was a treacherous one; it had hardly been mapped at all by social science. There was no choice, I had to engage in an investigation of the theoretical problems that had arisen in my research practice. Consequently, what follows is an exploration in the Marxist theory of ideology. It is a determined attempt to produce a theory of deviance, a theory of ideology and a theory of reading ideology. At times the work is pedantic and at times it is polemical, but I make no apologies for this extremely abstract text. In some circumstances, social science research must examine its theoretical, epistemological and methodological assumptions before it can improve its empirical efforts. It is no use people complaining that it's all too abstract and theological in Marxism these days: the re-examination of basic concepts is an indexical practice in a very real crisis.



To his everlasting credit, Louis Althusser has raised the question of ideology and attempted to restore the dialectic to Marxian analysis. In my view, these are two big gains for Marxist research today. Alongside the analysis of international social relations and the developments in socialist societies, they appear to be bloodless and irrelevant. But the fact is that a Marxism without a theory of ideology and a dialectical methodology is really not worth the toss, and, indeed, does not match with my understanding of Marx's actual work. Imperialism and socialist development may well be the most important topics for empirical analysis, but without dialectics and a theory of ideology Marxism would only produce work of a totally economic, one-sided nature. If one believes that ideological formations are merely 'effects' and have no materiality or determining force, then that economism is sufficient, of course.

Unfortunately, I believe that Althusser's position is based on several major errors; one can read my thesis as an ongoing debate with Althusser's work. Throughout the thesis there is an attempt to avoid the pitfalls of humanism and anti-humanism in the belief that neither corresponds to a dialectical view. Real men with definite forms of consciousness, power and wealth are as important as the social structures within which they exist. They are vital elements in the process of history. They can be authors as well as agents. Whether they are one or the other (or both) cannot be legislated for in theory; it depends on their position within the structure of social practices. In the end, I hope that I have outlined a dialectical, materialist theory which will enable me to do sophisticated historical analysis of social ideologies.

It is important to stress that this work was carried out in the spirit and heat of exploration and, therefore, the concepts acquire a cumulative development. There would be little point in a reader just absorbing one chapter and leaving the others. The thesis is a cumulative development of concepts which achieve, finally, some degree of rigour. Uncertainties at the beginning are often resolved as the work progresses; however, I make no apologies for leaving several problems open. It is a work of exploration, not a work which embellishes extant riches. Whether I have 'discovered' anything 'new' is a matter for the reader to decide. For myself, I feel that I have turned over enough ground to keep me going in revealed research issues for at least one

lifetime. As theoretical exploration, the thesis has thus been extremely rewarding for me at least. I hope that it will be of some value to those Marxists who feel that Marxism has neglected the realm of ideology and that sociological studies have not produced any startling contributions. The currently popular phenomenological philosophy, perhaps, has a vital place in teaching practice, but it provides no social explanations for the forms of consciousness. As for economicistic Marxism, many socialists may not like its dogmas, but the need is to supercede them not just to scorn them.

Ideology is the key conceptual object within this work for two immediate reasons. Firstly, as I have said, I was concerned with the class nature of political consciousness. But, secondly, the critical reading of criminology and the sociology of deviance I had completed, described in chapter 1, convinced me that the 'deviance-ness' of deviance lay in its quality as an ideological matter. The fact that Hirst's critique of deviancy theory, and the conceptions of the various 'politicised deviant groups', seemed to involve a similar perception reinforced my own view. I developed the concept of the ideological formation, which seems a logical extension of Marx's work. The concept is elaborated further in chapters 8 and 9. In chapter 9, I argue that the type of ideological formation represented in the commonsense conception of 'deviance' is the social censure, a product of the observation of the forms of appearance of a particular social practice through the eyes of a determinate negative ideology. The conclusion that deviance was an ideological formation naturally directed my attention to the reading of ideology.

Chapter 2 contains initial formulations of the concept of ideology. Through a critique of Althusser, the integral position of ideology within any social practice is stressed. A dialectical conception of 'reflection' is brought out and the notion of ideology as an external effect of practice is rejected. An ideology is a form of consciousness necessitated by a particular social relation; this conception is developed in chapter 7. Chapters 3 to 6 focus on existing practices of reading ideology from its forms of appearance in discursive texts; their weaknesses are illustrated where possible by reference to any employment they have had in the study of mass media accounts of political deviance. Chapter 3 tackles those practices which focus on the 'content' of a discourse which is said to show the presence of ideology in the brains of the commun-

icators. These practices tend to assume that what is there to be reported or written up is 'obvious' as a body of facts and that ideology distorts the truth perceptible by an 'objective' observer. Chapter 4 is a critique of the very basis of structuralist thinking and acts as a foundation for chapters 5 and 6. All the work dealt with in these three chapters focusses on the 'form' of a discourse, a form which is said to produce the content. Structuralist reading practices tend to assume that there is nothing in reality to be written up in a discourse and that the substance of a discourse is a direct effect of its ideological structure. Chapter 5 involves a critique of semiology and of the semiological reading which I did in 1973. Chapter 6 is mainly concerned with demonstrating the inadequacies of Althusser's symptomatic reading. It is worth noting, finally, that all my own readings of theoretical works, discussed in this text, are, more or less, symptomatic readings of the relevant problematics. The only difference is that I have regularly tried to contextualise those problematics in their historical setting. My use of symptomatic reading is not contradictory to my evaluation of it as a method: it is simply a rigorous, subjective, descriptive reading and I have used it as such.

The chapters on reading ideologies may seem awkwardly placed in the flow of the work. This is explained by the fact that my initial response to the problems of my own reading practice was to examine the problematics of reading. Thus the critical work embodied in chapters 3 and 4 chronologically preceded that embodied in chapter 2. Yet these critiques themselves were revised to a certain extent by my investigation of the Marxian theory of ideology finally embodied in the later chapters. The preliminary formulations in chapter 2 thus introduce the basic conception operative in these critiques and the developments in the subsequent chapters are made in the light of them.

Chapter 6 concludes with a statement of the necessary direction for Marxian readings of ideology. Chapters 7 and 8 extend and develop that statement. Chapter 7 is especially concerned with the social nature of forms of consciousness and examines some of the theses of Althusser, Gramsci and Poulantzas in this light. Chapter 8 is mainly concerned with formulating the concepts necessary for an historical analysis of the origins of particular ideologies. Concepts of the superstructural practices are produced and comments are made on the

Marxian notions of class, dominant ideology and social formation. All these formulations are seen as vital in moving from the general propositions on ideology towards future, empirical, historical research. The new direction for the reading of ideologies is outlined in principle and the concept of the ideological formation is clarified accordingly. This latter concept is, perhaps, the most important development in the thesis. It stands as a rejection of empiricist views which take observed reality as given in its appearance, and of structuralist positions which take the substance of observation as a complete reflection of the observer's ideological structures. Chapter 9 applies the concepts of ideology and ideological formation to the question of deviance. In this process, the concepts of negative ideology and social censure are outlined as central for future work in this area. Finally, the notion of 'deviant behavior' is rejected as inadequate and it is argued that each censured practice must be viewed as a separate form of social practice with its own specific conditions of existence.

I believe that this reconceptualisation of deviance in terms of Marxist theory collapses the existing sociology of deviance into the Marxian analysis of ideologies. The critique of the extant positions on crime and deviance, found in chapter 1, was written in 1973, before the publication of several recent works in radical criminology. Nothing published since 1973 has systematically addressed the question of the concept of deviance, and, therefore, I did not feel it necessary to update the critique. After the direction was set up in chapter 1, I was simply concerned to get to the bottom of the question of ideology and its reading. That single-minded pursuit has also meant that the comparison of my conclusions with those of some unmentioned, Marxist writers (such as Habermas, Renner and various people at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham) has been delayed. Moreover, I have put off a detailed analysis of the works of Ruesche and Kirchheimer, E.P. Thompson, Hay, Foucault, and Radzinowicz; all of which examine the historical contexts of law emergence (and possibly of censure also, although I doubt it). Comparisons with unmentioned theorists, critique of recent radical criminology, programmes of political strategy, detailed historical research, contemporary sociological analysis: all these are necessary tasks still to be accomplished. However, they had to take second place here; it is necessary to develop a theory before one can elaborate all its implications.

The field of enquiry examined here is fairly modern and lacked rigorous development: deviance, ideology and reading were all confused concepts, and class, dominant ideology and science were all controversial, when I began this research. Further theoretical work is still required: I am only too well aware of the limitations of this analysis. But, I hope that I have made sufficient gains to make research (both historical and sociological) into social ideologies much more penetrating and fruitful. One thing is certain, this fantastically complex question of ideology will not be resolved without this kind of painstaking theoretical deliberation.

Colin Sumner

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IDEOLOGY

AND

DEVIANCE

PART ONE

DEVIANCE AS IDEOLOGY

### Introduction

The questions that drive the discussion in this chapter are of a fundamental nature for any Marxist who has worked within the field of the sociology of deviance: why are the existing concepts of deviance incompatible with Marxian theory and what is to be put in their place? Without an answer to these questions Marxist work in this area may find itself caught in the dilemma of trying to apply a particular theoretical system to an object conceived in the thought of other opposing systems. Such a dilemma could have several consequences, the likeliest of which are (a) an impasse where Marxism finds itself blocked and impotent confronted with the barrier created by its opposition, and (b) the revision of Marxism in order to provide a knowledge of the alien theoretical object. It would appear necessary to remove any offending theoretical obstacle and, within its destruction, create the appropriate concept enabling Marxism to develop its social science. Only then can Marxism conquer this field in any relevant sense. To struggle with the enemy on his own terrain is not an end in itself but a means by which victory can be achieved and a new terrain developed in its place. Similarly, to defeat the enemy on his own theoretical terrain carrying no theory which could transform that terrain, and merely armed with spirited critiques of the enemy's purposes, would be to establish the spirit of struggle without the material conditions for an improved future.

This is not to imply that marijuana-smoking, juvenile delinquency, political demonstrations, rape, prostitution etc. are not worth study from a standpoint of revolutionary socialism. Such 'things' considered as behaviours may be said to be illustrations of social deviance and it could therefore be argued that my opening statements are



guilty of closing off these behaviours to radical enquiry. But this accusation would miss the crucial point that, although these behaviours may be illustrations of social deviance, they themselves, in their very nature, do not give us the concept of deviance. Deviance, as a concept, is not derived from the behaviours that are said to illustrate it. Such a proposition would be logically absurd, for unless we had a firm concept of deviance how could we say that these behaviours illustrate it. The study of these behaviours could not tell us anything about deviance unless we had applied a concept of deviance in the first place which defined such behaviours as forms of deviance. In which case it is clear that the concept of deviance applied, and integral to the postulated accusation, is that deviance is a type of behaviour, or that types of behaviour constitute the realm of deviance. Now, by theoretical enquiry, we may come to the conclusion that deviance is not a behaviour but, in fact, a social ideology. Having arrived at that point we may then proceed to examine the kind of social conditions which produced the social ideology, or we may wish to examine the kind of practices which this social ideology was connected to at a particular historical conjuncture in a particular social formation, i.e. we may wish to consider which practices involved the 'living out' of this social ideology. Each of these examinations could be reasonably defined as studies of particular types of social deviance and yet the concept of deviance is not one of 'behaviour'. Hence, by arguing that the Marxist concept of deviance must be constructed, I am not automatically excluding the study of political demonstrations, theft or rape (for example). In fact to put the argument in a positive fashion, I am simply advocating that we do not wander into research assuming that there is such a thing as "data" which is the same from every theoretical standpoint, that the everyday terminology is adequate and not in need of questioning, that the wording of a theoretical argument is irrelevant, and that any social science research is possible without theoretical work constructing its concepts, object and methods.

Thus it is not possible, if the researcher is interested in producing a coherent knowledge, to begin an analysis of the ideological representation of a form of political deviance in the national press without examining the key concepts of 'ideology' and 'deviance'.

Similarly one cannot just "read" without explicating a concept of 'reading'. Unless the analyst constructs his object, concepts and methods in a rigorous fashion he literally does not "know what he is talking about", he is merely "playing with the unknown" or "searching in the dark". This applies to all research not just the Marxist variety.

Consequently, this work as a whole can be seen to be directed to the explication of the object of its theoretical enquiry, the concepts corresponding to that object, and the methods of procedure consistent with the production of a knowledge of that object. I am uncertain at the present time whether I have developed a new direction for Marxist theory, but I would hope that the theoretical investigation contained here is sufficiently rigorous to have at least clarified (a) what it is to 'read ideology' and (b) what is necessary to be done to develop a knowledge of the object (ideological formations) constructed in this work. However I would strongly suggest that a knowledge of ideological formations is a correct aim of Marxist theory and just as important as a knowledge of economic and political formations. It seems to be right to argue that unless we understand each of the three elements of a social formation in themselves and in their connexions with each other then our knowledge of social formations must remain partial or unbalanced.

Firstly, let us turn to the question of 'deviance', in order to assess the suitability of the concept for Marxism. Through a critical examination of concepts of deviance outside Marxism I shall attempt to construct the concept required by Marxism. New concepts cannot simply be floated in from 'experience' or by analogy: they must be developed out of the destruction of the old ones. That process of destruction which contains construction within itself is the dialectic of knowledge. No concept can be destroyed without the imposition of a new concept, even if the latter is transitional and insecurely formed. However there are no guarantees that the new concept is secure - its security will depend on the rigour of the elaboration of its determinations. This latter process nevertheless depends on the process of criticism of the old concept for its ability even to begin. So before I elaborate any new concept of deviance I must begin at the beginning with an examination of

the non-Marxist concepts of deviance in the sociology of deviance and criminology (crime is but one form of deviance) and construct from this analysis a concept of deviance which will literally enable us "to know what we are talking about". That is, from this theoretical investigation of deviance, I want to establish the concept of the object under examination.

The problematics of deviance

Previous comparisons of different theoretical perspectives within criminology and the sociology of deviance<sup>1</sup> have been inadequate inasmuch as they have rarely examined or systematically exposed their own theoretical frameworks and thus the similarities between the critics and their victims have gone unnoticed. The tendency has been to sketch in general features and to move on to an equally general account of the social 'contexts' from which the perspectives allegedly emerged. What is lacking in these comparisons is the more rigorous concept of the theoretical problematic. As developed by Althusser the concept refers to a systematic thought framework, comprising epistemological,

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1. The works I have in mind include the following: S. Cohen "Criminology and the sociology of deviance in Great Britain: a recent history and a current report" in P. Rock and M. MacIntosh (eds.) Deviance and Social Control (1972 London: Tavistock), S. Cohen and L. Taylor "Contemporary British approaches to the sociology of deviance" (1972 Unpublished paper addressed to the Society for the Study of Social Problems, in New Orleans, U.S.A.), I. Taylor "Prospects for radical criminological theory and practice" (1973 Unpublished paper, addressed to the European Group for the Study of Deviance and Social Control in Florence, Italy), and D. Matza: Becoming Deviant (1969 N.Y. Prentice Hall) esp. Part 1.

theoretical and methodological standpoints<sup>2</sup>. A problematic constitutes the structure of any piece of theoretical discourse. The effect of the structuring lies at the empirical level, in the discursive text, and is constituted by the absence, presence, level of development and internal relations of the concepts in the text. A problematic, therefore, is the structure of thought which predicates certain concepts, which renders others impossible, and which links the predicated concepts in a limited variety of ways. Althusser's account of the 'problematic', however, tends to structuralism and the problematic sometimes looks like a Levi-Straussian or Chomskyan 'deep structure'. Hence I would wish to enter the key reservation to the above formulation of the concept: the concept of problematic is merely a descriptive one in referring to a system of thought which is found in its effects at the level of the text. Althusser's concept does not explain the historical origins of the elements and internal relations of the thought system. Notwithstanding this reservation, the concept of the problematic still has a vital degree of incisiveness because it breaks away from the notion that the presences of a text reflect its author's world-view or perspective.

The concept makes two important suggestions:

- (1) that the determinations of the text are effective in its absences as well as its presences;
- (2) that these determinations are not exhausted by the author's conscious beliefs, prejudices and purposes.

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2. See L. Althusser For Marx (1969 Harmondsworth: Allen Lane) and L. Althusser and E. Balibar Reading Capital (1970 London: New Left Books). Karel Williams has suggested that Althusser uses the concept in diverse manner ("Unproblematic Archeology" (1974) *Economy and Society* 3:1 pp.41-68), but this usage appears frequently in Althusser and seems to be the most appropriate one for his problematic. Miriam Glucksmann adopts the view of a 'problematic' as the fundamental question that defines a thought-structure's ability to question. Her approach seems to limit or reduce the concept to one level of reference - the theoretical; (see her Structuralism in Contemporary Social Thought (1974 London: Routledge, Kegan Paul) esp. ch. 1. The unity of a thought-structure or problematic, in my view, lies in the interrelation of its various elements rather than in the dominance of one element. The concept of 'problematic', as defined and qualified above, is used throughout this work.

Given this concept of the problematic, we can move away from comparisons of theories of deviance which draw out essential themes from the written words only. Of course, it may be argued that most intelligent readers usually make note of absences as well as presences in discourse. I would reply that, although that may be true as an empirical fact (and I doubt it, as a matter of fact), the value of the concept of the problematic is that it points to the existence of an invisible set of relations within the discourse, as it is constituted by absences and presences, and asserts that this set of relations is immediately and directly related to these absences and presences. That is an incisive theoretical concept and not one that naturally resides in the 'commonsense' of the intelligent reader, who would tend to see absences as the deliberate omissions or accidental oversights of the text's human author. Althusser's concept has developed from a critique of this everyday notion of discourse and, I think, is an advance on that notion. Thus, instead of describing the most prominent themes and expressed prejudices in deviancy theory, I shall attempt to describe the apparent structures of discourses constituting the field of deviancy theory, drawing attention to both the relations and the elements of those discourses. The relations (or structure) are so important, for no element of a problematic can exist in a vacuum and its nature and power can only be understood in its relation with the other elements. To sum up, the descriptive reading of the problematics of deviance, which I shall attempt in this chapter, will improve on previous comparisons in that (1) it will focus on the basic theoretical, epistemological and methodological elements of each problematic; (2) it will be able to see similarities as well as differences - empiricist 'thematic-essence' analysis, I would suggest, tends towards seeing only differences because it takes the empirical word as the sole source of its knowledge and in practice the words, their order, tone and texture usually differ with every author; (3) it will specify its own theoretical conditions of existence.

I shall compare the major elements of the problematic of 'dominant criminology' with those of the 'new deviancy' problematic. This will set up a foundation for a comparison of these major elements with the elements of the problematic in Taylor, Walton and Young's The New

Criminology<sup>3</sup>. I will be able to assess the so-called 'Marxism' of that text, which claims to lay down the 'formal theoretical requirements' for a Marxist criminology, by making this comparison and by outlining, what I take to be, the basic elements of the Marxian problematic. Only after these tasks are complete will it be possible even to begin the comprehension and assessment of the possibility of a Marxist theory of deviance or a Marxist criminology.

The dominant criminological problematic is that framework of thought which is most closely connected, financially, politically and ideologically, to the key institution of domination, which, in most societies of today, is the state. It is a thought framework expressing a form of dominant ideology<sup>4</sup>. In all stratified societies the dominant criminological problematic reflects, either simply or complexly, the ideological understanding within the ruling group of its conditions of existence. Dominant criminology is not so termed because it is the dominant problematic in criminology, but rather because of its economic, political and ideological connexions with the ruling group. It dominates criminological journals, grant-giving bodies, criminology courses and texts because it is the dominant criminological problematic, and not vice versa. In this effort to outline the problematic of dominant criminology, the discursive material held in mind is that which is dealt with on orthodox criminology courses - that is, the work that portrays criminal behaviour as the product of constitutional, psychological, psychiatric or sociopathic defects in the criminal. Such work is found in the writings of, for example, Lombroso, Eysenck, the Gluecks, Yablonsky and West.

The new deviancy<sup>5</sup> problematic is seen as that thought framework

3. (1973 London: Routledge, Kegan Paul). This text is considered to be of great importance by many writers in the field of the sociology of deviance. It attempts to destroy the theoretical bases of previous schools and perspectives in criminology and to lay the formal requirements of a Marxist criminology.

4. This latter concept will be examined more closely in the following chapters, esp. chs. 2, 5 and 8. For the time being, 'dominant ideology' refers to those forms of consciousness which spring immediately from the ruling class and the social relations in which that class is embedded.

5. The term was used by A.K.Cohen in "New deviancy theory" (1973 Unpublished paper addressed to the 12th National Deviancy Conference, York, U.K.)

whose effect is a declaration of opposition to dominant criminology<sup>6</sup>, and which fully emerged in the work of Becker, Lemert, Goffman and Matza. Its institutional base was, and still is, primarily, sociology and social psychology departments in the U.S.A.. Its ideological base was, and still is, primarily, in the pragmatism of the emergent, liberal, academic sociologists' sector of the American petit bourgeoisie.

Apart from a knowledge of the central object of this chapter (the concept of deviance), the work at this juncture has two secondary intended consequences. Firstly, the reading of deviance elaborated here will necessarily involve outlining a theoretical standpoint which will govern the chapters ahead and, at the same time, be developed in them. Secondly, the reading will sensitize us to the utility of materials, governed by the problematics analyzed, dealing with the social representation of deviance.

#### The problematic of dominant criminology

The most immediate element here is the notion that there is such a thing as the criminal man. People convicted of criminal offences are assumed to be different (ontologically, psychologically, physiologically, or sociologically) from other people. Thus 'deviance' in this problematic is the behaviour of those who are intrinsically different from the people (the vast majority) who are not convicted and who constitute, by implication, some kind of homogeneous mass. The differentiating feature has varied from study to study and many such marks have been proclaimed. Convicted persons have been alleged to be suffering from one or more of the following differences: high cheek-bones, mesomorphic body type, inherited criminal genes, XYY chromosome complement,

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6. 'Scientism', 'positivism', and 'behaviourism' are terms which new deviancy theorists employ to signify their conception of the 'perspective' they would say they oppose. The New Criminology also uses these terms and declares an opposition to dominant criminology, but it also declares an opposition to new deviancy theory, referring to it with the terms "labelling perspective" and "phenomenological sociology".

subnormal intelligence, depression, repressed traumatic memories, strong unconscious desire for punishment arising from strong unconscious guilt, maternal deprivation, broken homes, large family, weak ethical reactions, extraversion, anti-social tendencies or psychopathy, disorganized neighbourhood, a subcultural value system, and a lack of sophistication resulting in inability to learn norms of deference and to make realistic moves in conflictual interaction-sequences. I would not deny that some convicted individuals are the carriers of 'pathological' personality structures.<sup>7</sup> What is important is the role, even in the sociological variations of this problematic, of 'the empirical individual' as the basic unit of analysis, rather than social relations. The 'observable behaviour' of human subjects forms the basis of this problematic. Thus analysis begins from 'visible facts', such as the criminal conviction, and moves outwards further and further away from the 'concrete' until the concept of the 'criminal man' is discovered on the high plane of the dominant criminologist's speculation, where weird and wonderful forces, external to the conscious mind of 'criminal man', propel him, like an object, into criminal behaviour. Commonly, the speculation's fruits, 'variables', are correlated statistically and the results hailed as concrete, 'objective facts' (in opposition to 'the metaphysics of the social theorist'). In consequence, 'criminal man' is 'objectively' linked with some force, personal or social, which stands outside his conscious mind. There is little sense of men as agents of social relationships, of 'men making history but not as they please'.<sup>8</sup>

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7. Although the term 'pathological' would need redefining in terms of a less 'dominant-ideological' notion of the individual. For example we might say that particular historical sets of social relations prescribe particular dominant modes of individuality and that the contradictions in these relations produce individuals who develop other opposite modes. Such 'alternative individualities' could be conceived of as 'socially pathological', and hence could tend to be seen as intrinsically 'peculiar' or 'deviant', by those people living out the dominant mode of individuality (and possibly by those carrying the subordinate mode: good and evil are two sides of the same coin but not necessarily carried by different human agents).

8. See for an example of the latter, Marx's portrayal of that 'great history-maker', Louis Bonaparte, in his "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" in K. Marx and F. Engels Selected Works (1973 London: Lawrence and Wishart). It is not difficult to see how, without overthrowing the basic elements of this problematic, both new deviancy theory and The New Criminology could rebel against dominant criminology's 'man', propelled from without, and give him a consciousness, consequently emphasizing 'meaning' and 'purpose'. The total separation of 'man' from structure in dominant criminology is thus not altered one iota.



Earlier variations of dominant criminology, such as the Lombrosian variety, are explicit, and obvious in their commitment to this approach. Some later variations, of a sociological nature, have been committed to a 'social' explanation, but they, too, base their analyses on empirical individuals. Thus Merton argues that the value consensus in society is based on the fact that the majority of individuals subjectively fetishize money.<sup>9</sup> He fails to see that money presents itself, objectively, as a fetish in its condition of existence as the universal equivalent value, a product of the social development and structure of exchange-value.<sup>10</sup> As with Radcliffe-Brown and many other social scientists, sociologists of crime have based concepts such as social structure, subculture and opportunity structure on 'visible' individual behaviours rather than on invisible (but discernible in theory) social relations which govern, and effect themselves in, observed human relations and behaviour.<sup>11</sup> Thus, individual behaviours and human interaction patterns serve as a foundation for dominant criminology. Given that immediate, non-theoretical observation is a central aspect of 'commonsense knowledge' or ideology, dominant criminology, through its empiricist method expresses its structural condition as the servant of the ruling class. By operating as an ideology, on the basis of uncritical, atheoretical, immediate observation, dominant criminology acts as a prophylactic preventing the development of critical, social theory in this area. Its concentration on individuals and their behaviour works to deflect attention from the social relationships which produce these forms of individuality and behaviour.<sup>12</sup> And this is not to mention the fact that its aggressive self-righteousness often discourages the study of the social conditions of existence of particular historical moralities and their class connections. All in all, the allegation of oddity in the criminal or deviant is an act based on ideology (or 'commonsense') which serves in effect to ratify existing social relations and to conceal them from scientific enquiry.

9. Quoted in The New Criminology op.cit. p. 105.

10. See K. Marx Capital Vol. 1 (1974 London: Lawrence and Wishart) pp.43-88.

11. For interesting discussions of concepts of structure, see Glucksmann, op.cit., p. 15-64, and Zygmunt Bauman's Culture as Praxis (1973 London: Routledge, Kegan Paul) pp. 60-77.

12. See L. Sève Marxism and the Theory of Human Individuality (1975 London: Lawrence & Wishart) for an interesting discussion of the connection between social relations and individuality.

The epistemological element of the dominant criminological problematic that is embedded in and related to the focus on the 'criminal individual' is empiricism. Empiricism seems to be the dominant epistemological element of this problematic; its fundamental nature affects the form of all the other elements. I am using the term empiricism to designate a notion of the object of study as "immediately present to the senses" and a notion that the object can be isolated as such.<sup>13</sup> Hence the knowledge of the object is posited as part of the object itself.<sup>14</sup> There is no sense of the difference between the subjectively-conceived appearance of the empirical world and social reality,<sup>15</sup> nor of the need to explicitly formulate, in theory, the unseen laws governing the mediations of appearance, movement and context of perceived empirical 'realities'. Criminal man is seen as immediately 'visible' to all because he has been convicted and from there the forces propelling his criminality can be investigated. This conception of the criminal as a convicted person is a classic piece of commonsense ideology which is blind to the conditions of existence of the criminal law and its consequent *modus operandi*.

Dominant criminology has also assumed that the causes of criminal behaviour are visible and can be isolated as factors, e.g. the 'broken home' or the 'disorganized area'. It is an indication of its empiricism that the referent of these terms is rarely in dispute. But what is a 'home' and when is it 'broken'? What is an 'area' and when is it 'disorganized'? Never are these phrases seen as referring to uncritically and easily-adopted ideological assumptions, but always to real objects visible to all. Particular manifestations of this problematic-element of empiricism are multitudinous, but a general, empirical feature of dominant criminological work which it determines is the absence of theory and the presence of statistical operation (the hypermania of technological methodology).

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13. See Glucksmann (1974) *op.cit.* p.144 for a useful discussion of empiricism.

14. See Althusser (1970) *op.cit.*

15. See N. Geras "Marx and the Critique of Political Economy" (in R. Blackburn (ed.) Ideology in Social Science (1972 London: Fontana) pp.284-305).

Structured in form, although perhaps not historically determined in content, by the empiricist epistemology is the object of study of dominant criminology, the next element for consideration. The theoretical object of the main branch of criminology, which deals with the 'causes of crime', is 'criminal behaviour'. 'Criminal behaviour' is that behaviour which forms the basis of a conviction for the infraction of criminal laws. If there is a conviction, then the individual involved is conceptually defined as a criminal and the behaviour underpinning the conviction is taken as criminal<sup>16</sup>. To proceed by assuming that the behaviour producing the arrest is 'criminal behaviour' is to take the legal officials at their word and to implement in theory the practical definitions of the state and its agents<sup>17</sup>. More precisely, it is to posit as a thought-object something which is clearly constituted by a determinate, historically-specific set of social ideologies and practices. 'Criminal behaviour' is not 'an obvious fact of contemporary life' produced by people in some way different to others (either mad, bad, sick or indifferent), it is a practical, social construction of the ideology of the state's criminal law and the routine practices of the police and judiciary.

The existence of 'criminal behaviour' as an object of study and the need to explain its origins, of course, are not determined by empiricist epistemology, but rather, I would suggest, by the structural imperatives of the state to provide social control in order to maintain the ruling class. However, empiricism does shape the form the object takes, just as it shapes other elements such as the notions of causation and social control employed in the dominant criminological problematic.

Turning to the notion of causation, we find that 'causes' are taken to be active forces which impel the individual and are external to his behaviour. For example, 'poverty and a broken home drove the criminal to do his heinous deed'. This conception involves a linear notion of time, whereby an effect is the result of a chronologically earlier cause: time is measured by the clock not by its socially contextualized, historically-specific, reality - different contexts in social formations have different time scales<sup>18</sup>. Quite frequently, linear time becomes a cause in itself

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16. This assumption is reflected in the samples taken in research which are very frequently of convicted 'offenders', and a non-convicted 'control' group.

17. This is another example of the reflection of the existing social relations, and the everyday ideology supporting them, in the structure of the problematic.

18. See Althusser (1970) op.cit. pp.93-118 for a full articulation of this view of history.

(e.g. 'criminal tendencies pass as the criminal gets older'). It is also common to see one 'factor', or cluster of 'factors' added together, becoming the sole determinant.<sup>19</sup> Such a monistic concept of causation is shaped by the problematic's dominant element of empiricism, for it requires ideas of 'cause', 'force' and 'time' which specify 'visible' referents, whose obviousness conceals (and is concealed by) their existence in the realm of 'commonsense knowledge'. There is no sense of structural causation and thus of 'crime' as a regular practice in a complex social totality of practices in interrelation, each practice having its own time scale.<sup>20</sup>

The notion of social control, another key element of the dominant criminological problematic, is that of a passive group of agencies brought into action by the infraction of unambiguous, well-known legal rules by the subjects carrying the 'criminal tendencies', the criminal individuals. Both the agencies and the rules are supported by the majority of citizens, since they represent the rational conditions for the social order subjectively demanded by that majority. This notion shapes, and is shaped by, the form taken by the theme of the qualitative difference of the criminal: if a man cannot abide by the rational procedures for order, then his own rationality must be in dispute. The 'irrationality of the criminal' is the other side of the 'rationality of social control'.<sup>21</sup>

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19. Also a regular feature is the appearance of the cause in the subject in the form of the 'criminal tendency'. We then have the tautology: criminals are those people who commit crimes and they commit crimes because they are criminals. To understand the tautology requires investigation of the problematic and the functions of these terms in it, rather than isolating them from their conditions of existence and examining their use in specific texts.

20. I am only speaking hypothetically, since 'crime' may not yet be a valid theoretical concept for a problematic employing structural causation. On the notion of structural causation, see *infra* pp.35-36.

21. It is worth noting that the existence of the concepts together in a thought structure means that their specific form is shaped by the fact and form of that structure. Thus the mutually reinforcing existence of the two ideas (irrationality of the criminal, rationality of social control) is only a theoretical effect, not an aspect of the real object. This point is missed by exponents of the new deviancy problematic, such as A.K. Cohen, K. T. Erikson, E.M. Lemert and P. Rock, who have emphasized the function of deviance in maintaining the purity of the dominant moral order in societies. But how could these theorists see our point, when fundamentally the subject (the deviant individual) and object (deviant behaviour) in their problematic had changed little from those of the problematic of dominant criminology? What was a theoretical aspect of dominant criminology was simply brought into the open, without alteration or question, and dressed up as the concept of 'the social function of deviance'. In other words, what is a function between two elements of a knowledge is posited by the new deviancy theorists as a function between two elements of reality.

In consequence, the criminal difference takes a particular shape. Criminals are assumed to be lacking in morality or reason, or to be in such a situation as to be incapable of exercising morality or reason. Thus the list of marks of the criminal's difference made earlier constitutes a record of the findings of a search for the impelling cause of the loss, or lack, of reason and morality. Criminal practice (the regular practice of acts known to be illegal) is therefore meaningless to the dominant criminologist: his concepts or assumptions remove the subjective aspect of criminal practice and reduce it to a mechanical effect of outside forms - 'criminal behaviour'.

Finally, two theoretical elements of this structure of ideas are also of some importance: (a) 'crime is law infraction followed by conviction', (b) 'crime is a socially injurious behaviour'. The first element involves a view of crime as a behaviour rather than as a label.<sup>22</sup> Thus there is a neglect of the study of criminal laws in the search for the cause of crime. By and large, these laws are taken to be impassive and good, and 'criminal behaviour' is seen as active and evil. Conviction therefore implicitly follows infraction and is right. The law-breaker is assumed to be convicted and the convicted person is assumed to be a law-breaker. (These two assumptions are frequently found latent in the interstices of the work of even the most sophisticated dominant criminologists). However, because these assumptions are visible from within an empiricist problematic, there was always a likelihood of their sighting. Such a sighting occurred and was transformed into 'hidden delinquency' studies, and studies of the 'efficiency' and 'justice' of 'the criminal process'.<sup>23</sup> Of course these studies take place under the aegis of the problematic of dominant criminology and therefore are entirely empiricist in nature. Their place of birth limits them to a mere counting of secret 'criminals/deviants' and a listing or exposure of the 'deficiencies' of the administration of criminal justice. The second theoretical element mentioned above can be termed 'correctionalism'. Criminal behaviour is seen as a threat to the order of morality and reason: an idea clearly supposed by, and in, the concept of the nature of the criminal difference. Thus, explanations of criminal behaviour are transformed into practical policies with the

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22. An element producing an absence, a space. This space was subsequently filled by the problematic of new deviancy theory.

23. For an account of these, see R. Hood and R. Sparks: Key Issues in Criminology (1970 London: World University Library), chs. 1,2,6,7 and 8.

aim of correction. The explanations of 'aetiological' criminology are not, however, made for the purposes of correction, as is often implied.<sup>24</sup> But, correction is the only possible use of the explanations, given the nature of the problematic, which has built into its concepts an implicit need for the correction of criminal behaviour. In practice, institutional forms of correction reflect and sustain the problematic of dominant criminology in that they revolve around the revival, insertion or reinforcement of approved morality and rationality.<sup>25</sup>

. In conclusion, the problematic of dominant criminology is limited by the interconnection of its major elements, which are, briefly:

- (1) Empiricism - the dominant epistemological element;
- (2) Its subject: the empirical individual - in the shape of criminal man;
- (3) Its object: criminal behaviour - active and irrational;
- (4) Its notion of causation - external force and linear time;
- (5) Its notion of social control - passive and rational;
- (6) Correctionalism - its intrinsic social policy or politics.

This totality is the sine qua non of dominant criminology and determines the parameters of its structure and movement. It defines the possibilities of expansion and variation, and forms the very structure of that expansion and variation.

#### The problematic of 'new deviancy' theory

Common to both dominant criminology and new deviancy theory is the element of empiricism and its domination of their epistemologies.

24. D. Matza (1969) op.cit., for example.

25. Although it must be noted that there is a significant difference in time cycles between the history of the dominant criminological problematic and the history of correctionalist practice. The latter changes slowly and has a life of its own. The former is susceptible to other intellectual developments and is consequently more diffuse and quicker in movement than its corresponding practice. My brief analysis has tended to conceal this diffusion and change. This defect is the cost of a description which attempts to grasp the basic principles of the internal constitution and movement of the problematic.

Again, the knowledge of the object (deviant behaviour) is conceived of as a real part of a real object. The object, of which new deviancy theory provides the knowledge, is seen as real thing, pre-given to the senses, and it is the claim of new deviancy theory that it has extracted the essence of that thing. The knowledge produced by new deviancy theory, therefore, is conceived of as a pre-given sector of a pre-given object, when it is really the knowledge of its theoretical object.

Before we can illustrate our argument we must note that the object of new deviancy theory is not criminal behaviour - but rather deviant behaviour in general, acts deviating from the norm.<sup>26</sup> Any illustration of the empiricist element must take this into account. Hence we can say that the empiricism of new deviancy theory is exemplified in its major theoretical concept - the deviant label as the essential part of deviant behaviour, that is, as the activating mechanism of that behaviour (that which makes it deviant). New deviancy theory sees the deviant employing, internalizing, or managing an imposed deviant label, and concludes that systematic deviant behaviour is essentially activated by the integrated existence in the subject's consciousness of the validity of such a label. What purity of vision and patience the new deviancy sociologist must have! All he has to do is look (with an "appreciative" posture) and he can see 'deviant behaviour' (because it is pre-given to the senses). All he has to do is to look long enough, via the method of participant observation, through the eyes of the deviant,<sup>27</sup> and he can see the essence of that behaviour, the internalized deviant label and its activating power - an external force which effects itself in and through the human subject, the deviant. Thus new deviancy theory takes an object, which it assumes to be real and pre-given to the senses (deviant behaviour) and produces a knowledge of that object which specifies its essence to be the deviant label and its power.

Nowhere, even in the more sophisticated, phenomenological varieties of this problematic, is 'deviant behaviour' seriously questioned as the theoretical object. It may be argued that 'deviance' in this problematic is a socially negotiated and constructed behavioural phenomenon and, therefore, that it is not 'pre-given' for the new deviancy theorist. But this misses the point that the definitional processes in intersubjective inter-

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26. The definition of deviant behaviour is, of course, somewhat ambiguous and a bone of contention. It will be discussed more fully shortly.

27. What kind of theory is this, whose vision employs the eyes of others? Has the natural eye faded with some disease and been replaced by a plastic, mass-produced one? Or is the theory blind to its own vision? The latter seems accurate. Like the con-man on the street, new deviancy theory pretends to be blind and sells its wares. Unlike the con-man, for new deviancy theory the deception has the effect of making its vision seem absent.

action which allegedly constitute the 'social construction' of deviant behaviour are taken to be observable to the senses both in the problematic's theory and in its methodology. Hence deviant behaviour, once it has been palpably socially constructed by an interaction of definitions ending in an equilibrium (however temporary), is openly visible as such. This is true of both symbolic interactionist and phenomenological wings of this problematic. The fact that the object of the theory comes to the problematic unquestioned, uncriticized and unconceptualized is a hallmark of empiricist epistemology.<sup>28</sup>

In the dominant criminological problematic, the criminal statistics are used frequently (occasionally with caution) as indicators of the extent and existence of criminal behaviour - a logical consequence of the elements of that problematic as we have seen them.<sup>29</sup> In new deviancy theory, the dominant research method, participant observation, demands participation in the everyday lives of 'deviants' in order to observe the meanings they give to their social world and hence to observe the existence of deviant behaviour.<sup>30</sup> The method is obviously linked to its problematic in that it is designed to allow the 'observation' of the application, internalization, and effectivity of the deviant label - the essence of deviant behaviour. 'Deviants about their daily tasks of constructing and reconstructing their social realities and selves' are seen as a separate thing from the pure observation of the new deviancy sociologist with his commitment to "naturalistic" description, "understanding" and "appreciation".<sup>31</sup> Yet all the notions mentioned above (e.g. 'deviant', 'construction of social reality', 'self') are the means by which this method reproduces its theory in research practice; the eyes with which the theory sees.

28. See Althusser (1970) op.cit., esp. pp.35-41.

29. According to the premises outlined here of course, the criminal statistics are nothing but the ideological categories of their compilers in action. See B. Hindess: The Use of Official Statistics in Sociology. (1973 London: Macmillan) for an interesting version of this view.

30. See J.D. Douglas (ed.) Research on Deviance (1972 New York: Appleton, Century-Crofts) pp.3-34, J. Irwin "Participant observation of criminals" in Douglas *ibid.* pp.117-137, N. Denzin The Research Act (1970 New York: Aldine), H. Becker Sociological Work (1971 Harmondsworth: Allen Lane) and N. Polsky The Hustler (1971 Harmondsworth: Penguin) pp.115-147.

31. See D. Matza (1969) op.cit. pp.1-40 concerning naturalism.



The method is the theory in action. Again there is deceit inherent in the problematic: what is produced is presented as the real essence of the real object and as separate from the theoretical structure which determined the form of investigation and discovery, when, in fact, that structure reproduces itself in action through its categories of the method, the subject, the object and the essence. Both problematics discussed so far, being empiricist in kind, make claims for a reality which has no relation to the problematic itself yet is discovered by that problematic. As I have argued, such a reality is the produced discourse of a theoretical problematic in action and such products merely exemplify the ability of a problematic to generate and regenerate itself in research practice.

Inextricably linked with empiricism is the analytical unit of the empirical individual, the subject of new deviancy theory.

"In its simplest form, the theory (interactionist - C.S.) insists that we look at all the people involved in any episode of alleged deviance." (My emphases - C.S.)

Apparent 'supra-individual' categories are posited (e.g. groups, subcultures, societal reaction, interaction) but they only refer to multitudes of individuals acting together in certain symbolic contexts<sup>33</sup> and it is the individual who constitutes that environment.<sup>34</sup> Social institutions and associations, being processes composed of interacting, symbolizing individuals, are the 'structures' of this problematic. Everything is 'real' and 'observable' - including the meanings these individuals grant to others, situations and themselves. Never does the concept of the determinacy of social relations appear, except in an empiricist mode,

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32. H. Becker "Labelling theory reconsidered" in P. Rock and M. MacIntosh (eds.) (1972) op.cit. p.45.

33. *ibid.* pp.41-66.

34. See Matza (1969) op.cit. pp.92-93, on the creative and transcendental capacity of the subject. Some writers within this problematic argue for the determinacy of external factors in some circumstances, but, the majority choose the predominance of the formation of a self-identity as deviant in accounting for systematic deviance, see E.M. Lemert, for example, Human Deviance, Social Problems and Social Control (1972 New York: Prentice-Hall) pp.62-64. Other writers argue that the individual totally constructs reality, see P. Rock Deviant Behaviour (1973 London: Hutchinson) pp.13-14.

that is, as the determinacy of human relations, where individuals (or groups of individuals) form the poles of the posited relation and where the relation is a purely intersubjective one (for example love, hate, prejudice etc.) Social relations in this problematic are human interaction patterns, rather than the relations between men and matter which constitute the underlying determinant of human actions (that is, the constituent relations of the social formation, in their complex structure in dominance, at the levels of the economic, the political and ideological).

Despite evidencing this highly bourgeois element of individualism, new deviancy theory is explicitly anti-correctionalist and argues that social control agencies create deviance by the imposition of deviant labels as much as they prevent it. Unfortunately the 'anti-establishment', pro-deviant, Leftish tendencies amongst most new deviancy theorists seem to celebrate, at first glance, collective political and moral stances at odds with the individualism of their problematic. For, although much of their work expresses a pro-underdog, critical stance towards 'middle-level agencies of control', their problematic contains an entirely orthodox analytic emphasis on the individual as definite as in the problematic of dominant criminology.<sup>35</sup>

Another central element in the problematic of new deviancy theory, clearly related to the empiricism and methodological individualism, derives from the focus on the individual's interactionally-located symbolic response to the signification of his behaviour as deviant by other individuals or groups of individuals. Investigations and theorization in the problematic often centre upon the relationship between the individual subject and his interaction with other subjects and this occurs whatever the defined context e.g. policeman-deviant, policeman-police organization, deviant-family, deviant-deviant subculture, deviant movement-social organization. It involves a particular concern

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35. I would argue that this is a stronger point than Gouldner's criticism that these writers ignore the "master institutions". It is not clear whether Gouldner is referring to social relations, as defined above, or powerful empirical institutions such as companies or governments. See A.W. Gouldner "The sociologist as partisan: sociology and the welfare state." (1968) 3 American Sociologist pp.103-116.

with the intersubjective situatedness of the individual's definitions and typifications.<sup>36</sup> Dominant criminology concerns itself with criminal behaviour and there is a powerful coincidence, on this point, of the focus on the individual, the unconscious mediation of the individual in the cause-effect sequence and the study of the criminal act and actors. The object, criminal behaviour, originating in the practico-social location of dominant criminology, demands such elements and their combination appears to give a knowledge of that pre-given object. The uncertainty surrounding 'criminal behaviour' as a theoretical category was not seen, and, thus, there was no impediment to the study of 'behaviour' and propelled, marked actors. In the new deviancy problematic there is the strong problematic-element of the ambiguity of the label based on the variable situatedness of intersubjective definitions. That is, the deviance of any particular act is now open to debate. Containing firm notions of cultural pluralism and moral relativism, as opposed to dominant criminology's normative consensus, this problematic is unable to maintain a steady emphasis on the 'deviant act' itself, but rather, is compelled more regularly to focus on the label given to the act. Perhaps the importance of the practico-social functions of 'criminal behaviour' as a theoretical object give it some fixity. 'Deviant behaviour', as a theoretical object, seems to be less pre-given by practico-social functions, and its diffuse, uneven and incomplete conceptualization as an object<sup>37</sup> corresponds with a notion of deviance as ambiguous and, therefore, to a theoretical concentration on definitions of deviance.

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36. A concern which takes an empiricist shape. Meanings placed on situations are presumed to exist and to be observable. Once fixed by the deviancy sociologist they are held to determine the individual's action. J.D. Douglas (1972) op.cit., provides an explicit manifestation of this remarkable empiricism of meaning.

37. The ambiguity over the theoretical object 'deviant behaviour' is clearly expressed in textbook definitions. Matza, using "any standard dictionary definition", defines deviation as "straying from a path or standard", (1969) op.cit. p.10; L. Taylor: "that behaviour which violates the accepted standards of the community" in his Deviance and Society (1973 London: Nelson) p.35; P. Rock: "Deviancy is a social construct fashioned by the members of the society in which it exists" (1973a) op.cit. p.19. Steven Box's antics are symptomatic of the whole problem. He considers the definitions of A.K. Cohen, Merton, Clinard and Matza, which all suggest normative consensus, and then emphasizes cultural pluralism, proceeds to define deviance as the breaking of the rules of the powerful and authoritative and decides to confine his book to criminal law violations: Deviance, Reality and Society (1971 London: Holt, Rinehart and Winston) pp.11-12.

Matza manifests the tendency clearly:

"...the difficulty resides in the nature of society not in the conception of deviation. Cultural definitions, especially in contemporary society, tend towards ambiguity. Since standards shift, members of society may respond to marginal phenomena with open ambiguity...  
 ...The social fact of pluralism, like that of ambiguity, must be lived with and appreciated. It cannot be evaded simply to expedite a rigorous definition of deviation. Shift, ambiguity and pluralism are implicated in the very idea of deviation; their net effect is to make even our nominal conception inexact and blurred out at the edges. The uncertainty cannot be liquidated, it can only be observed and reported."<sup>38</sup>

My point is simple: Matza has turned things upside down. It is because the "difficulty resides" in the concept of deviance and not "in the nature of society" that 'cultural pluralism' emerges, to be "observed and reported". The "net effect" of "inexact conception" of the theoretical object is the production of ambiguous concepts which correspond to an ambiguous object; concepts specifying 'shifting' standards, cultural pluralism, the importance of ambiguous definitions, fluid interaction process and individually located, symbolic identity. It is a problem in knowledge not in society. Concepts must be adequate to theoretical objects and, hence, if the object is ambiguous the concepts must assume and explain ambiguity. Given other elements such as empiricism and the empirical individual, the concepts produced, therefore, refer to conflicting individual definitions, and the research method of "appreciating" the particular peculiarity and 'unique richness' of individual worlds becomes logically appropriate. The unquestioned fixity of the nature of 'criminal' behaviour' in dominant criminological research has thus given way to the ambiguity of the deviant label in the research of modern, liberal sociology of deviance. Inherent in the problematic of new deviancy theory are notions of conflict, normative pluralism and the appreciation of unique individual worlds. It seems clear now that the 'radical edge' which new deviancy theory displayed through its support for oppressed groups is nothing but the combination of these three notions. What a fine radicalism this is - based on the obscurity of its theoretical object! 'Underdog sociology' fighting for the rights of deviant minorities therefore turns out not only to be based on theoretical confusion but to be shaped in its very radicalism by that confusion! Its politics 'fit' its problematic after all!

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38. (1969) op.cit. pp.11-12.

From the problematic's inherent tendency to ask questions about public definition there flows the essence of deviant behaviour - the deviant label or the signification as deviant. And, of course, the nature of that essence is that the label is surrounded by moral, legal and cultural ambiguity. The fact that new deviancy studies concentrate on such 'grey' areas of deviance as marijuana-use, stuttering, alcoholism, and prostitution is simply symptomatic of the lack of fixity of the problematic's object: areas of deviance are studied which are defined by commonsense knowledge and surrounded by moral legal or cultural ambiguity. Ambiguity seems to be the watchword for this problematic: its ambiguous object demands it, and concepts and studies of ambiguity result. The criticism of this perspective that it merely produces ambiguous concepts and studies misses the point slightly, and mistakes attempted concepts of ambiguity for ambiguous concepts.

The problematic employs a notion of cause-effect, like dominant criminology<sup>39</sup>. Frequently we see the active, external force propelling the deviant subject into regular deviance along a linear time-scale - only this time the propulsion is termed 'societal reaction', the linear time-scale is understood in terms of the 'career' and systematic deviance is a 'solution' not a sickness. Again the subject, the individual, mediates the cause and effect. But, in this problematic, man grants meanings, is active and unique and, therefore, the cause is a social definition, the mediation is the subject's struggle and negotiation with the definition and the effect is a stable self-definition as deviant thus producing systematic deviant behaviour. The active deviant makes symbolic reorganizations to accommodate, utilize, manage or reject the reaction: the effect is produced and the deviant is now allowed the privilege of having benefit from it<sup>40</sup>. Other causes of deviance (albeit irregular, tangential, "primary" deviance) are permitted by many new deviancy theorists but they are conceptualized as external forces à la dominant criminology<sup>41</sup>.

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39. There are some reservations to this, Matza being the most obvious. He does not employ linear time but a firm notion of subjective time.

40. Lemert's utilitarianism is not atypical:

"Defining oneself as deviant is instrumental in seeking out means of satisfaction and mitigating stigmatization. The redefinition of self leads to interpretation of past experiences, which in turn reduces inner tensions and conflict. Ends and means are more easily sorted out, and personal accommodations established necessary to utilize available alternatives." (1972) op.cit. p.84.

41. For example, Lemert's "polygenetic factors" ibid. pp.62-63.

We should note that the concern with, or tendency towards, the subject's definitions is not wholly forced by the problematic's ambiguous object or by its use of the individual as the basic analytic unit. It only takes its precise shape because of the conjunction of the object with other elements in the problematic e.g. empiricism, the active individual and the cause-effect notion. The fact and nature of this interrelation shapes each of its elements in its own specificity - their shape of origin (before their historically specific appropriation by this problematic) is moulded and altered by their specific location in the whole structure and its other elements. It should also be remarked, in passing, that an emphasis on meaning and subjective creativity does not fit well with a cause-effect notion of the kind employed here. There is in consequence a tension in the knowledge produced between the actors' creative powers and the determinacy of the deviant label and the debate over the importance of the label has been long and protracted.<sup>42</sup>

The appearance of 'interaction' and 'process' as theoretical terms within the discourse of this problematic should not blind us to the concept of the cause-effect sequence. They merely represent concepts of intersubjectively-situated action demanded by the concept of the cause, the concept of the effect and the mode of mediation of the sequence by the empirical individual. The sequence thus is described in the language of interpretation, creativity and ambiguity: but, in truth, a cause-effect notion hides under the protective clothing provided by the other problematic elements. In other words, the force of a sensually-pre-given empirical determinant (the definition as 'deviant') causes sensually-pre-given empirical effects ('deviant' behaviour) and the sequence is mediated by a creative man giving his unique interpretations to both 'cause' and 'effect' and making both possible. In passing it is worth digressing to note that any Marxist approach to 'deviance' born in the womb of the new

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42. See for example: R.L. Akers "Problems in the sociology of deviance: social definitions and behaviour" (1968) *Social Forces* 46:4 pp.455-465, J. Delamater "On the nature of deviance" (1968) *Social Forces* 46:4 pp.445-55, M. Mankoff "Societal reaction and career deviance" (1971) *The Sociological Quarterly* 12 pp. 204-218, S.A. Kirk "Clients as outsiders: theoretical approaches to deviance" (1972) *Social Work* 17:2 pp.24-32 and E. Lemert "Beyond Mead: The social reaction to deviance" (1974) *Social Problems* 21:4 pp.457-468.

deviancy problematic is likely to bear the birthmarks of its origin. The notions of 'interaction' and 'process' themselves have lent force to theoretical positions combining Mead, the social psychologist of this problematic, and Marx.<sup>43</sup> This combination requires a usage of the Hegelian works of Marx emphasizing creativity and an empiricist notion of dialectical process which owes little even to Hegel. More generally we would not be surprised to see arguments positing capitalism as the determinant and crime or deviance as the effect with a heavy emphasis on the empirical individual as interpreter of capitalism and 'creating' the effect. To such Marxian approaches we are tempted to rejoin, with Spinoza, that the concept 'dog' cannot bark. To the writers of the new deviancy problematic we might reply, with rhetorical licence, that all they have is barking without any concept of it - merely immediate impressions.

It is important to understand that the problematic concentrates heavily on the mediating empirical individual and the effect, deviance. Rarely are the origins of the cause, the societal reaction, a matter of study. When the origins are considered, we find that the label is a product of the routine definitions of officials in interaction with each other in a hierarchically-structured interaction context (a social control bureaucracy)<sup>44</sup>. Again the problematic sights empirical individuals granting meanings in, and through, 'observable' interaction. Therefore, to understand the origins of the deviant label, the new deviancy problematic is pressured to demand accounts of members' definitions of social relationships. Such a demand is best seen as the problematic's solution to the problems within itself, problems clearly seen by Paul Rock.<sup>45</sup>

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43. See R. Ropers "Mead, Marx and social psychology" (1973) Catalyst 7 pp. 1-8. The New Criminology bears the birthmarks mentioned - but more of that later. For the time being we can note that it emphasizes intentional praxis and radical creativity. Men interpret sensual determinants - again there is little sense that both the empirical determinants and the empirical interpretations are reflections of social relations. My argument is indexed by the acceptance in The New Criminology of a compatibility with ethnomethodology: ((1973) op.cit. p.294 fn.8) and the view expressed implicitly in the book that "mind and action are intentional and not determined". The last quote is from M. Phillipson and M. Roche "Phenomenology, Sociology and the study of deviance" in P. Rock and M. MacIntosh (1972) op.cit. pp.125-162.

44. See for example A.V. Cicourel The Social Organization of Juvenile Justice (1968 New York: Wiley).

45. See P. Rock "Phenomenalism and essentialism in the sociology of deviancy" (1973b) Sociology 7:1 pp.17-30.

Firstly he points out that description of deviants' accounts of their everyday worlds does not get the new deviancy sociologist very far since the deviant clearly provides more satisfactory accounts himself on these grounds. Some abstraction, he says, is necessary for better understanding, which involves "invoking influences which appear to have lost their immediate human authorship"<sup>46</sup>. Secondly he argues that the problematic is inconsistent with notions of social structures as real social relations independent of men's understandings and intuitions and this phenomenological astructuralism will render the problematic less useful and unable to go beyond description<sup>47</sup>. His solution, the description of members' accounts of social structure is a perfect solution within the problematic to its own problems, the lack of a concept of social structure. All it does is operate some of the various elements outlined here to solve the problems they produce in combination. And, of course, in consequence, all that happens is that the same problems appear in the solution.

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46. *ibid.* p.18.

47. *ibid.* p.19. See also J.M. Reynolds and L.T. Reynolds "Interactionism, complicity and the astructural bias" (1973) *Catalyst* 7 pp.76-85.

"Structure is a part of everyday reality and, as such, it is a necessary intellectual resource. Criminality, social class and ideology and the like are consequential social facts. The investigation of these alienated social facts is an entirely different enterprise from the sociologist's creation of his own reified systems. It enables the marriage of appreciation with at least one form of structural analysis." : P. Rock, *ibid.*, p.25.

We might comment that this quote from Rock illustrates clearly the empiricism of meaning in new deviancy theory. We are left with a kind of Positive Phenomenology. Everyone else can have theories but the sociologist is to be content with the purity of his gaze with which he can see and describe these theories. At one and the same time the sociologist is privileged and deprived. Unfortunately just as the sexual chastity of the monk usually fails to remove his sexuality so the theoretical chastity of the new deviancy sociologist fails to eradicate his ability to theorize. As in dominant criminology, there is an implicit deceit in the problematic. And, just as the claimed scientificity of that former criminology fails to conceal it so does the claimed impossibility of 'false consciousness' in the latter. Neither problematic is aware of its own fundamental contradictions. This is brought out sharply by comparing dominant criminology's empiricist scientificity (separating knowledge and its operations from the object) and Rock's view that: "Although theorists and actors may inhabit the same world of phenomenological fact, a reasonable detachment from that world is a prerequisite of useful analysis". ("The sociology of deviance and conceptions of moral order" (1974) *British Journal of Criminology* 14:2 p.145). Perhaps the problematics of positive science and positive phenomenology provide the thrust for the priestliness of sociologists noted by Gouldner: see A.W. Gouldner The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology (1971 London: Heinemann).



In a later text,<sup>48</sup> Rock more clearly states his case. He sees new deviancy theory as a "focused sociology" and the areas peripheral to that focus, such as the politics of deviance, have been ignored or treated in the same way as the centre. Thus the level of analysis stays "on the ground" with the deviant/agent of social control dyad: "larger structures giving unity and order to the fragments" are untouched. The deviancy tradition fails to deal with "the organizational work which makes policing possible" - it is simply taken on trust. Rock thus wants the structural arrangements organizing the context of the defining encounters to be examined. From here he advocates study of moral order in depth so that we can unearth the fundamental taken-for-granted meanings that, unnoticed, structure all interactions in a given society. At first the innocent reader may have anticipated a shift in position, but no. Rock is simply reiterating one of the central elements of the new deviancy problematic: 'meaning systems' mediate the interactions between individuals out of which systematic deviance emerges. Deviancy theory has been superficial he says. We might have expected it: if meanings shape the "effects" in the cause-effect sequence then to understand more profound effects we must look at more profound meanings. So, to move the theoretical object from 'deviant behaviour' to 'the moral order' requires the transformation of the concept of 'symbolic interaction' to the concept of 'organizational work'. Rock fails to solve his own problem and must always do so as long as he remains within this problematic. His solution carries the same problems with which he started. His method of studying "larger structures" keeps him "on the ground" at the level of empirical interaction between symbolizing subjects in groups. The invisible, or the blurred, within the problematic must remain so. It is precisely because the concept of determinant social relations independent of man's consciousness and will is invisible for this problematic that it will never be seen through the vision of the problematic. New deviancy theory will never be able to engage in an analysis of 'the deviant label' as part of a social structure; it will remain tied to the understandings of that structure's agents and authors (its 'members') as they wrestle with those labels - it will never get 'off the ground' as long as it posits subjective definitions as the essence of social phenomena.

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48. (1974) op.cit.

The major elements of this problematic and the key inter-relationships between them have, hopefully, been dealt with. All that remains is to mention some of the more minor elements. Firstly, social control is not a passive, automatic reaction to deviant action. Given the ambiguity of the cultural definitions of the action, and the creativity of interpretive officials, social control is seen as active and patterned (discriminatory). Secondly, connected to the first point, the politics launched from the problematic involve the defence of alternative, deviant worlds in the normative pluralism of modern American capitalism and the critique of powerful definers who impose their worlds upon the deviants. The more radical versions of the politics of this problematic support 'doing your own thing', organized deviant resistance to conventional definitions, and a more effective democracy, unabused by the existence of power.<sup>49</sup> Thirdly, rather than seeing 'crime' as a behaviour followed by conviction, the problematic sees 'deviance' as a behaviour with a deviant cultural status and crime as a form of deviance. Fourthly, in connexion with the last point, it is sometimes argued that the deviant status of certain behaviours needs to be created for the stability of the social order. It is said to be functional in maintaining moral and cultural boundaries. This rare piece of abstraction is directly linked to the epistemological connection between the notions of the rationality of order and of the irrationality of deviance. This connection has been carried forward, untransformed from the problematic of dominant criminology and inserted into social reality.<sup>50</sup> Rather than investigating the historical and social structural origins of the labels and their patterned application, some new deviancy theorists simply note that both labels and patterned application exist and must, therefore, be functional for the social order.

In concluding this section we might say that, despite its surface difference in politics, research method, theoretical object and ontology, the new deviancy problematic is fired by much the same epistemological elements as the problematic of dominant criminology: albeit that these elements take a different shape specific to their existence and location in a different problematic. Empiricism, the focus on the empirical

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49. See R. Quinney The Social Reality of Crime (1970 Boston: Little, Brown)

50. See supra p. 15 fn.21.

individual and the astructural notion of causation still reign. The break from correctionalist criminology is made only at the level of the surface effects and not in the heart of the problematic. The deviant has been allowed an ability to grant meaning, social control is no longer 'impartial', crime and deviance may be functional, alternative realities are supported and the criminal/deviant is not ontologically different. But the focus remains "on the ground", definitions become all powerful, meaning is hal-  
 lowed and unobserved relations are 'reifications'. The new deviancy problematic opened up new lines of 'criminological' thinking which temptingly offer themselves to radicals in the field. However these new sightings are tainted by the vision of that problematic and are only 'new' within it. Whatever a Marxist criminology might look like (if it is x possible), its prime condition of existence would be a complete epistemological break with these two previous, fundamentally non-Marxist problematics. Any attempt to develop a Marxist criminology must be examined in that light. The next section examines briefly one attempt and confronts the question of the possibility of a Marxist criminology or sociology of deviance.

#### The New Criminology and Marxism

From the previous discussion it is evident that the dominant elements of the two problematics were the same in general nature and that the only difference lay in their specific forms within each problematic. It has been implicit that these three dominant elements (empiricism, astructural causation, methodological individualism) are alien to the Marxist problematic. At this point we should briefly outline the grounds for this view. Such an exposition must be brief and assertive since the argument raises issues of considerable complexity and debates of weighty documentation. Its function is to lay the groundwork of the study to follow which will enable the reader to comprehend the lines of development.

Fundamental to the Marxian problematic is its anti-empiricism. This element not only separates Marx from empiricism but also differentiates his later from his earlier works. I take it that Althusser's arguments on this question, in For Marx and Reading Capital, are correct, and that he demonstrates an epistemological break (albeit a graduated, uneven one) between Hegel and the later Marx and between the early and

the later Marx.<sup>51</sup> The Hegelian problematic is empiricist in that it identifies the real object with the object of knowledge.

"This investment of knowledge, conceived as a real part of the real object, in the real structure of the real object, is what constitutes the specific problematic of the empiricist conception of knowledge."<sup>52</sup>

In its production of knowledge the empiricist conception extracts an essence from a real object. The latter is seen as containing essential and non-essential sections. It is up to the empiricist theorist or researcher to discover and extract the real essence from the real object. The knowledge of the object is thus already present, pre-given, within the real object. Therefore the knowledge of the object is not the same as the real object since that knowledge, the essence, is only seen as part of the real object. Now, by that admission:

"...there are two distinct objects, the real object 'which exists outside the subject, independent of the process of knowledge' (Marx) and the object of knowledge (the essence of the real object) which is quite clearly distinct from the real object."<sup>53</sup>

Thus there is a deception in the empiricist conception of knowledge. It sees itself as discovering knowledge in a real object when it actually is only 'discovering' its own theoretical object - which, of course, is no 'discovery' at all since that latter object is already planted and hidden in advance by the empiricist investigator himself.

In Hegelian philosophy, empiricism involves a reduction of all the aspects constituting an historical epoch to one principle: the dialectic of the Idea. In Hegelian 'Marxism' the essence appears as the capital-labour dialectic (or, perhaps, as the forces/relations of production contradiction). Elements of the social structure such as the political and ideological are seen as simply epiphenomena, spin-offs from the essential dialectic. History is seen as the progress of essentially creative humanity toward its absolute realization in total socialist praxis. The later Marx breaks conceptually with Hegelianism explicitly in the 1857

51. See especially Althusser (1969) op.cit. chs.3 and 6.

52. Althusser (1970) op.cit. p.38.

53. ibid. p.40.

Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy<sup>54</sup>. This text, like any other, is open to widely differing readings, but nevertheless, there is some agreement amongst commentators with the points I take as fundamental.<sup>55</sup> Unlike Hegel, Marx separated the knowledge object from the real object. Also unlike Hegel, Marx posits the subject of theorizing as society - not the theorizing individual. Three important propositions are thus sketched in by Marx in this text:

- (1) The object in theory is a theoretical object;
- (2) The theoretical object and its concepts exist in the mind of the theorist and are merely representations of an objectively existing reality;
- (3) Reality, society, is the real subject and the real object of theory.<sup>56</sup>

"The totality as it appears in the head, as a totality of thoughts, is a product of a thinking head, which appropriates the world in the only way it can, a way<sup>57</sup> different from artistic, religious, practical and mental appropriation of this world. The real subject retains its autonomous existence outside the head just as before; namely as long as the head's conduct is merely speculative, merely theoretical. Hence, in the theoretical method too, the subject, society must always be kept in mind as the presupposition."<sup>58</sup>

54. Albeit in a transitional fashion. As Althusser comments, the concepts reflecting the break are not explicitly formed in the Introduction nor even in Capital: op.cit. pp.30-34.

55. See Althusser (1969) op.cit. pp.162-218, S.Hall "A reading of Marx's 1857 Introduction to the Grundrisse" (1973a Birmingham: Centre for Cultural Studies - stencilled paper), M. Nicolaus "Foreword" to his translation of Marx's Grundrisse (1973 Harmondsworth: Penguin) and K. Tribe "Remarks on the theoretical significance of Marx's Grundrisse" (1974) Economy and Society 3:3 pp. 180-210. It is also worth comparing the two most available English translations by C.J. Arthur (K.Marx and F. Engels, The German Ideology Part I (1970 London: Lawrence and Wishart) pp. 124-151) and Nicolaus (Marx (1973) supra).

56. This notion obviously collapses the philosophical subject-object distinction that is usually the vehicle for ideological intervention into theoretical debates. There is only one thing - that is, real men engaged in real practices, in specific times and conditions - the process of history. See L. Althusser "Marx's relation to Hegel" in L. Althusser Politics and History (1972 London: New Left Books).

57. Arthur's translation of this phrase is better; "... religious, and practically intelligent assimilation of this world." (Marx (1970) op.cit. p.14L).

58. Marx (1973) op.cit.pp.101, 102.

Marx is, of course, not saying that the process of knowing is separate from the theoretical object: rather that the theoretical process is an attempt to know the thought object specified as such by the theory.

These arguments developed by the later Marx are the moments of an epistemological break with Hegelianism: empiricism is no longer an element of his problematic. Marx may have "coquetted" with Hegelian terminology on the surface but his approach is radically different at the epistemological level. As Althusser argues, Marx's occasional use of Hegelian terminology is the effect of the relation between his theoretical break from Hegel and his conceptualization of that break.<sup>59</sup> We can exemplify the point: Marx states in Capital:

"For the rest, in respect to the phenomenal form, 'value and price of labour', or 'wages', as contrasted with the essential relation manifested therein, viz, the value and price of labour-power, the same difference holds that holds in respect to all phenomena and their hidden substratum."<sup>60</sup>

Here, in my view he is attempting to refer to the concept of *Darstellung*, the idea of the mediated effectivity of a structure on its elements or, "the concept of the mode of presence of a structure in its effects."<sup>61</sup> The signifiers used are those developed by Hegel but the concept, signified in the text (although never formulated explicitly), of the mediated existence of the structure in its effects, is Marx's.<sup>62</sup>

The argument that there is a unity in Marx's work based on an

59. (1970) op.cit.

60. (1974) op.cit. p.507.

61. Tribe (1974) op.cit. p.187.

62. The concept of *Darstellung* remains largely ungrasped and distinctly unelaborated. It is not the object of this project to approach such a mammoth task. The concept is, of course, used in this work but its specificity doubtfully even reaches that achieved by Althusser and Balibar (1970) op.cit. pp.182-193.

ontology is well documented. A recent exponent, Paul Walton<sup>63</sup>, posits the unity in Marx as the central ontological category of labour based on a concept of man's teleological nature. We could point to the different status and content of that category within the problematics of the early and later Marx but that would take us well outside the scope of this essay. It should be sufficient to say, with Nicolaus<sup>64</sup>, that if we wish to posit an 'ontology' in the later Marx then it is an ontology of nature not of man. It is true that, in Capital, Marx declares a creative man to be one of the elementary factors in the labour process.<sup>65</sup> But that creativity is not understood as prior to nature. It is a necessary condition, given the prior determinant existence of nature, for interaction between man and nature, or for 'labour':

"But coats and linen, like every other element of material wealth that is not the spontaneous produce of Nature, must invariably owe their existence to a special productive activity, exercised with a definite aim, an activity that appropriates particular nature-given materials to particular human wants. So far therefore as labour is a creator of use-value, is useful labour, it is a necessary condition, independent of all forms of society, for the existence of the human race; it is an eternal nature-imposed necessity, without which there can be no material exchanges between man and Nature, and therefore no life."

"the labour process, resolved into its simple elementary factors, is human action with a view to the production of use-values, appropriation of natural substances to human requirements, it is the necessary condition for effecting change of matter between man and Nature; it is the everlasting Nature-imposed condition of human existence, and therefore is independent of every social phase of that existence or rather is common to every such phase"<sup>66</sup>

The dialectical relation between nature and men, dominated historically by

63. This author is taken as our reference because of his close relation to The New Criminology and deviancy theory. The works under consideration here are P. Walton and A. Gamble From Alienation to Surplus Value (1972 London: Sheed and Ward) and P. Walton "From alienation to surplus value: developments in the dialectic of labour" in P. Walton and S. Hall (eds.) Situating Marx (1973 London: Human Context Books) pp. 15-36.

64. M. Nicolaus "Comment on Paul Walton's paper" in Walton and Hall (1973) *ibid.* pp.37-43.

65. (1974) *op.cit.* p.174.

66. Marx (1974) *op.cit.* p.50 and p.179, respectively.

nature, is the theoretical concept to keep in mind. It is not a Marxian approach that lifts man out of that dialectic and gives him creativity: this is clearly Hegelian essentialism. The economic 'creativity' (for example) of men (specific, historical men) is dependent on the relation between the laws of nature and the level of development of men's productive practices, and, therefore, on the relation between the forces of production (the result of the harnessing of those laws of nature by productive practices) and the relations of production (the relations structuring the productive practices) - that is, upon the historically specific conditions of economic production. 'Creativity', of course, could appear at all levels in the social structure and its nature, absence or potential at each level are the product of the relations between levels and, in particular, the domination of the level of the mode of economic production (in other words, 'creativity' is the historically specific product of social relations). Talking simply about the level of the economic, Althusser succinctly makes the point:

"This determination of the labour process by these material conditions is at its own level a denial of every 'humanist' conception of human labour as pure creativity." (my emphases)<sup>67</sup>

This leads us to the second element in question, the astructural notion of cause-effect. The notion of 'causation' in the later Marx is radically different from that extant in empiricist problematics. Historical materialism is a theory of social formations and their histories based on concepts such as 'mode of production', 'relations of production' etc.. It is a theory of social structures, their movements and interrelations; social structures which themselves are related to a complex of sub-structures with specific movements and interrelations. The term 'causation' like the terms 'cause' and 'effect', is really inadequate to the Marxian concept of structural determination. We should, instead, talk of Darstellung, the effectivity of a structure in its elements, the relative 'weighting' of social substructures at their stage of development, uneven development, relative autonomy, and differentiated social time. Historical materialism necessitates specification of the important structures in a social formation, the interrelation of these structures and the relative

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67. (1970) op.cit. p.171. See also pp.170-173.



effectivity of the whole structure in its elements. This, of course, requires the specification of previous elemental configurations in order to understand the movements of the present configuration and its present shape: it is one thing to theorize the effectivity of a structure on its elements and another to theorize the emergence of that structure as a whole. However the synchronic and the diachronic are obviously intimately connected. Investigations at the synchronic level would be static and structuralist if they ignored the complexity of substructural movements which shift the 'balance' of the whole structure and its effectivity. Diachronic analysis which failed to specify structural configurations would produce a historicism based on the notion of contemporaneous time across structures. Clearly, then, there is never a 'cause' outside an 'effect'. Structures and movements are not external propellants of elements but internal mechanisms: elements of structures are not simple effects but have their own internal organization and movement. It is the relations between (or structure of ) social substructures in movement that is the 'determinant' of their shape and time, and that is not external but the condition of their co-existence as relatively autonomous entities. And, to reverse the coin, we might add that it is the internal relations of the relatively autonomous elements that determines the content and limits of the whole social formation.<sup>68</sup>

Marx's later work clearly dictates the approach outlined and Marxism is opposed to problematics with a structural notions of cause-effect. The position outlined above is similar to that in Hall,<sup>69</sup> but different from that in Godelier<sup>70</sup> which tends towards a static structuralism. It is radically different from Hegelian Marxism which has an essentially creative man causing effects which limit his potential (without altering his creativity, usually) and which require creative action for their removal to enable further creativity etc., etc..

Our third point is that the Marxist problematic does not involve any analytic individualism. The object of Marxism is the social

68. The importance of the term 'formation' can perhaps be seen from the above discussion. A 'formation' is an entity in process composed of the determinations of its opposing elements in conjunction. It is opposed by the concept of entities as one-sided elements with consequently no internal determinations.

69. (1973) op.cit.

70. See M. Godelier "Structure and contradiction in Capital" in Blackburn (1972) op.cit. pp.334-368.

formation, that is a structure of social practices in movement. Thus the basic unit of analysis is the relation rather than the individual. Men are not, in a sense, the makers of history since, so far, they have only made history within social relations as the agents of those relations. The individuals inhabiting a social formation are its supports as well as its creators. Those Marxisms that emphasize continuity in Marx based on a concept of the essentially creative man see the individual as the creator of social conditions, by which is usually meant physical conditions and/or empirical institutions, and as the potential creator (in a mass, i.e. collective action) of conditions more suiting his creative potential. It follows from our arguments on structural 'causation' that a problematic which takes social structures, or relations, in movement as its object sees the individual as secondary to the relation between man and nature and his mode of individuality as constituted by his position in the complex of social relations.

I hope that I have indicated the grounds for viewing the Marxist problematic as sharply different to the two criminological problematics dealt with earlier. The three dominant elements of these problematics are all alien to that of the Marxist. If a 'Marxist criminology' is possible, then, one of its conditions of existence is that it retains none of the dominant elements (and consequently the subordinate ones also) of earlier criminological problematics. Thus we can turn now to a brief examination of the discourse of The New Criminology to see whether any of the dominant elements of the 'old criminology' are significantly operative.

A Empiricism

Taylor, Walton and Young are fairly explicit about their aims. They want a "fully social theory of deviance". To obtain this they engage in an "immanent critique" of the old criminologies. They insist that a "new criminology" must break with correctionalism and the labelling perspective. Both these previous positions are inadequate since "the causes of crime must be intimately bound up with the form assumed by the social arrangements of the time."<sup>71</sup> In consequence of their critique they specify seven formal requirements of a fully social theory of deviance.<sup>72</sup> These requirements are: (1) a political economy of crime, (2) a social psychology of crime, (3) a social dynamics of "the act", (4) a social

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71. p.282.

72. pp.270-278.

psychology of the societal reaction to the deviant act, (5) a political economy of the societal reaction to deviance, (6) analysis of the effect of reaction on the deviant, and (7) the "nature of the deviant process as a whole".

What is wrong with this drive to put deviance into a full social context? It is precisely the object of these seven approaches. The frequent interchanging of 'crime' and 'deviance' in these requirements, and in the rest of the book, signals the issue - it is symptomatic of the absence of the concept of the object. What is at stake is that they assume that deviance (or crime) is a real object, a form of individual behaviour - pre-given to any theoretical standpoint that wishes to approach it. Let us take the example of 'prostitution'. It could be said that it is obviously 'deviant behaviour'. My reply would question its 'obviousness'. If walking the streets with the intention of having sexual intercourse with someone who will pay for it is prostitution then there are many prostitutes in modern societies. So perhaps it is not deviant after all. But is the above definition of prostitution adequate? There are many who sell sex for money who do not walk the streets but who advertise through magazines, shops, friends etc. It could be replied against me that both the supposed definitions constitute prostitution and obviously so. But what if I rejoin with the question: is a sexual relation for economic gain therefore 'prostitution' or do you have to 'behave' using a telephone or a red plastic raincoat and black fishnet stockings? The answer would be: obviously the latter option is silly and prostitution is a sexual relation for economic gain. But there are many types of 'sexual relation for economic gain', for example, the 'nuclear family'! What distinguishes 'prostitution'? The fact that it is 'immoral' and, at times, effectively or formally illegal, according to the dominant ideology of the day? If the latter is true then prostitution is not an act but a social concept built up out of several other concepts and beliefs, i.e. it is an 'ideological formation'. Thus we eventually have reached an adequate general concept of 'prostitution' (a particular ideological formation) through critical deliberation of obvious, commonsense notions of it - and this is the concept of deviance and the theoretical method that runs throughout this text. Would a different theoretical standpoint produce the same concept of deviance? No - because different constituent concepts would be used in thinking the problem. Clearly deviance (and its forms) is not pre-given to the senses and cannot be taken as read. Its concept requires specification. Taylor,

Walton and Young fail to do that. Whether their object is deviance or crime, the point is that a problematic should specify its own theoretical object not operate on the object of another problematic or of everyday ideology. The assumption of the availability of objects for a theory is classically empiricist - the implicit premise being that there is a world of objects whose properties are immediately given to the senses of everyone and that the knowledge of these objects requires no conceptualization. The argument that objects 'given to the senses' arrive clothed in everyday ideology to one degree or another is unrecognized in The New Criminology. The need to define an object in order to produce a knowledge of it is unfelt.

How far this empiricism dominates other themes or elements in the problematic (such as it is, being explicitly, and in fact, undeveloped) of The New Criminology is not at issue. The fact that the element is effective at all in an important way is enough. What is required is a Marxist concept of 'deviance'. That is, Marxist concepts must be used on the commonsense, ideological impressions of deviance to produce a Marxist concept of the inner structure, or reality, behind the appearance. Althusser's remarks about the concept of 'history' sum up our objection:

"As it (history) is adopted and understood it is an uncriticized concept, a concept, which, like all 'obvious' concepts, threatens to have for theoretical content no more than the function that the existing or dominant ideology defines for it."<sup>73</sup>

Taylor, Walton and Young may argue that they have actually been engaged in the task of reworking commonsense conceptions of deviance and crime. In reply I would state that they have merely laid down signposts to the silences in the commonsense notions - and even then only implicitly. They have not reconstituted the theoretical object - in fact they give little indication that the object itself needs reconstituting, and argue that merely the approaches to, or viewpoints of, 'it' need revising. Their discourse is itself silent as regards the object. Such a silence invites the noise of a concept of deviance, or crime, steeped in everyday ideology or, only slightly better, one derived from a non-Marxist theoretical problematic which, if taken at face-value, could lead to the revision of Marxian concepts to fit the object.

#### B Individualism

With the stress on social theory we would expect Taylor, Walton

and Young to take their basic unit of analysis as sociality or social relations. Unfortunately this stress seems to be more an unwitting pointer to the weakness of previous criminology than a conscious index of their approach. The individual appears to be of central importance. For example:

"In particular, it (the conception of consciousness as determined - C.S.) leads to an approach to crime in which action is merely and simply a product of powerful interests or unequal society - as opposed to being the product of purposive individual or collective action taken to resolve such inequalities of power and interest."<sup>74</sup> (my emphases).

Frequently we hear in the book of men consciously and creatively acting against a backdrop of oppressive and unequal social institutions. The concept implicit in this seems to be that the social relations, institutions and conditions (all together in one unconceptualized morass) are the earth upon which man walks freely - apart from the dangers underfoot. It is a 'quicksand' concept of capitalism where men are men and social conditions are their tormentors or pleasures. There is little sense that men cannot be detached from their places within social relations. Simply by announcing 'consciousness', 'purposiveness' and 'creativity' - in true Hegelian Marxist style - men are extracted from their social relations.<sup>75</sup> 'Man' is seen as essentially creative, and hence by that conceptual stroke he is detached from his historically, societally and regionally (in the social formation) specific social relations. My argument is given strength by the following quote:

"A full-blown Marxist theory of deviance, or at least a theory of deviance deriving from a Marxism so described, would be concerned to develop explanations of the ways in which particular historical periods, characterized by particular sets of social relationships and means of production, give rise to attempts by the economically and politically powerful to order society in particular ways .... it would assume, that is .... a degree of consciousness bound up with men's location in a social structure of production, exchange and domination, which of itself would influence the ways in which men defined as criminal or deviant would attempt to live with their outsider's status."<sup>76</sup> (my emphases).

74. Taylor, Walton and Young (1973) op.cit. p.267.

75. "Once upon a time a valiant fellow had the idea that men were drowned in water only because they possessed the idea of gravity. If they were to knock this notion out of their heads, say by stating it to be a superstition, a religious concept, they would be sublimely proof against any danger from water. His whole life long he fought against the illusion of gravity, of whose harmful results all statistics brought him new and manifold evidence. This valiant fellow was the type of the new revolutionary philosophers in Germany." K. Marx and F. Engels (1970) op.cit. p.37.

76. Taylor, Walton and Young (1973) op.cit. p.220.

At first glance the obviousness of the sentiment against those ideas that posit man as a billiard ball or mindless physique can blind us to its theoretical weakness. The key terms, which are symptomatic of the problematic at work here, are "give rise to", "a degree of consciousness", "of itself" and "influence". They index the conception that the consciousness of the "men" concerned is somehow separable from its connection to the social relations in which they exist. A dichotomy is inscribed in the language here, and (more obviously) at many other points, between men and their social conditions (which are usually conceptualized in diffuse form i.e. by 'relations', 'conditions', 'institutions'). My point is that men and their consciousnesses are inseparable from, although not identical with, the social relations in which they exist. That is not to say that no one man can think further or in radically different ways from any other - far from it - the relations of social existence are diverse, complex and contradictory and prescribe an uneven development of 'consciousness'. 'Consciousness' is structured in social relations; not "against" them, or "bound up" with them, or "influenced" by them, or "arising from" them. This problematic element of Taylor, Walton and Young's, that 'creative man' is potentially separable from the inextricable connection with his relations of social existence, is evidenced in their textual imagery of the criminal as a pre-political revolutionary, fighting against oppressive social conditions. In Hegelian theatre, Al Capone appears as Robin Hood.

My argument, then, is not that Taylor, Walton and Young reproduce exactly the analytic individualism of the earlier criminological problematics but rather that the element appears, complexly, in contradictory juxtaposition to a genuine element of Marxism, (albeit an element conceptualized here in an uneven way), the determination of social relations. Their basic unit of analysis is neither "the empirical individual" (Weber's phrase) nor social relations but both at once! The dialectical connection between the two is never formulated explicitly and, in consequence, there is an odd sort of theoretical dualism evident throughout the work.

### C Causation

There is no reason after reading The New Criminology to doubt Taylor, Walton and Young at their word as regards causation. They reject



any notion of cause and effect:

"For in social explanations causes are 'inner and conceptual' - that is to say, the connection between physical movement and the outside world is in terms of what men believe (the purposes to which they hold) .... a social theory must have reference to men's teleology - their purposes, their beliefs and the contexts in which they act out these purposes and beliefs."<sup>77</sup>

To exemplify their position they give the following example:

"The man who breaks the window of the British Embassy in Dublin might well have poor autonomic response but both his lack of reflex and violent behaviour can only be understood in terms of the meaning he gave to the situation and the social context of the movement for a united Ireland."<sup>78</sup>

The interrelation between their notion of social causation and their 'individualist' Marxism is clear. As we noted, they take as their units of analysis both social relations and the individual and here we see both as key aspects of causation. It appears that objective social "context", as it is subjectively interpreted, constitutes the etiological recipe for human action. From the standpoint of a Marxist problematic, however, one cannot take the individual out of his social relations, but that is not to say that the individual is identical with his social relations:

"Upon the different forms of property, upon the social conditions of existence rises an entire superstructure of distinct and peculiarly formed sentiments, illusions, modes of thought and views of life. The entire class creates and forms them out of its material foundations and out of the corresponding social relations. The single individual, who derives them through tradition and upbringing, may imagine that they form the real motives and the starting-point of his activity."<sup>79</sup>

Taylor, Walton and Young's notion of causation has not escaped the subjectivist form that has dominated 'new deviancy' work. Again external, active forces either in isolation or combination bring about events: social relations become external to the individual and the individual becomes external to social relations. Social 'factors' are the ultimate cause but are only effective through the subsequent interpretation of them by the individual subject - as if the social relations within which men live are

77. *ibid.* p.61.

78. *ibid.* p.60.

79. K. Marx and F. Engels (1973) *op.cit.* p.117.

perfectly transparent, waiting merely for men to interpret them according to the purposes, beliefs and world-views which those men hold dear. This combination of consciousness and material conditions can be dressed in dialectical clothing, and frequently is in The New Criminology, but remains a linear flow of separated factors. The determinacy of "contexts" and "conditions" is combined with the determinacy of conscious, purposive creativity - the latter being ultimately victorious. This seems like a remarkable mix of dominant criminological 'determinism' and the humanist essentialism of new deviancy theory. But, if one separates man from his social relations in a 'Marxist' approach, it should be no surprise when the product is a dualistic notion of causation, mixing determinism and humanism.

In conclusion of this brief commentary, The New Criminology displays a complexity of newness and oldness and a complexity of inter-relationships between Marxist and non-Marxist elements. It is new in that it does employ Marxist theoretical elements, albeit in crude unclarified form, to analyze its object. But it is catastrophically old in that it has not managed to remove the elements of empiricism, a structural causation and analytic individualism as they are effective in shaping the object of theories of deviance and crime. These themes appeared as key elements in older deviancy problematics, and, despite the peculiar, specific forms in which they appear in The New Criminology, they play the same role in its problematic. And, for students of Marx and Hegel, there is the familiar sight of non-Marxist epistemology mixing with Marxist concepts and revising the latter into a half-Marxist end-product. All in all, The New Criminology is epistemologically largely a misnomer and Hirst's indictment of recent English attempts at a Marxist theory of deviance seems to be applicable to The New Criminology (even though Hirst conflates the new deviancy problematic with that of The New Criminology):

"Radical and conservative theories of deviance take as their point of departure the given actuality of crime and law, and of ideological conflicts reflecting standpoints within that actuality. Radical deviancy theory takes as its scientific point of departure the desire to develop a critique of the orthodox positions in the field. It seeks to explain and justify the criminal as a product of social relations, to situate the



criminal as the victim of processes of labelling and punishment which serve the interests and represent the values of the establishment, and to question the nature of laws and values as the property of that establishment. Radical deviancy theory therefore questions the value assumptions underlying justifications of establishment interests and the ideological stand of orthodox criminology, but it<sup>80</sup> very rarely questions its own position, assumptions and interests."

Having looked at the two major deviancy problematics and the first major attempt at a Marxist revision of them, we can firmly argue that all three problematics take either 'crime' or 'deviance' or both together (explicitly, implicitly, or in confusion) as their object. All three are, in other words, knowledges of an unclarified theoretical object. All three carry three epistemological elements which are thoroughly alien to Marx's problematic. Therefore Marxism must break with them - Marxism is epistemologically incompatible with theories of 'crime' and 'deviance', as currently conceived. Marxism could be compatible with a theory of deviance if the term 'deviance' referred to an object constructed and constituted by Marxist concepts. But that is not the case.. With Hirst, we must argue that the objects of Marxist theory are produced or specified by its concepts: no pre-given object can be taken without commonplace social ideologies being at work in constituting its form and content and without the consequent dangers of revisionism.<sup>81</sup>

#### Hirst's critique

I would not wish to support in their entirety Paul Hirst's somewhat polemical remarks about 'crime' and 'deviance' simply disappearing into the general concerns and understandings of Marxism and the impossibility of a Marxist criminology or theory of deviance. Although the concept Hirst is referring to is correct, his language has left many wondering what there is in 'deviance' that is so repulsive to Marxism, and no doubt most of these people have missed the point Hirst makes, which

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80. P.Q. Hirst "Marx and Engels on crime, law and morality" *Economy and Society* (1972) 1:1 p.29.

81. *ibid.* See also P.Q. Hirst "Radical deviancy theory and Marxism: a reply to Taylor and Walton" (1972) *Economy and Society* 1:3 pp.351-356.

emphatically demands that Marxism constructs its own theoretical objects. But, and this is important for the future, Hirst's aversion to the term 'Marxist criminology' does tend towards a closure of theoretical development since it indicates a concept of the inherent and irremovable referents of the terms 'crime' or 'deviance' (as signifying non-Marxist objects). What seems to have happened is that the vehemence of a necessary attack on radical English deviancy theory has closed a circle that should have been left open. That is, 'deviance' and 'crime' are taken by Hirst to be pre-given, eternal concepts rather than terms which have, historically, referred to particular concepts within particular theoretical formations. Within a Marxist problematic an object could be constituted by Marxist concepts which could be given the term 'deviance' or 'crime'. It is only a 'symptom' of a theoretical revolution that new terminology is created, not a fundamental prerequisite. Theoretical revolutions do not automatically produce a new terminology - some terms may continue in use for a long time - not all Marx's terms were original, although many of the concepts, which they signified, were.<sup>82</sup> The terms 'crime' and 'deviance' have no pre-given, once-and-for-all, conceptual reference - the referent has been constructed within each theoretical problematic. 'Crime' and 'deviance', as terms, certainly are loaded with the histories of the concepts they have carried and their irresponsible, unqualified usage opens up those histories to the reader enabling him to interpret the terms in line with one of their historical concepts. But such concepts are not pre-given, intrinsic or eternal. 'Crime' and 'deviance' carry the concepts of the problematics that use them and there seems to be no reason in principle why a Marxist problematic should not entitle an object, which it has constructed, 'crime' or 'deviance'. This distinction between the signifier, a term, and the signified, a concept, may seem trivial but, as we have seen, it is a sharp one and helps our comprehension; without it we would have missed Hirst's closure of the development of theory in this area.<sup>83</sup>

Hirst's critique closed the question of 'crime' and 'deviance' by sliding the signifier into the signified to produce the illusion that the terms are eternally bad and not filled by problematic-specific concepts. That question can be reopened by remembering that it is the concept of the theoretical object that is important in theory and that the term we attach

82. See also Althusser (1970) op.cit. p.157.

83. The distinction will also be of importance later in the discussion of semiology and structuralism.

to it is better judged on its repercussions for theoretical and political practice rather than on the grounds of our dislike for its previous homes (reactionary/liberal/radical humanist problematics). What is necessary now is to waste no more time on objects given by everyday ideology or epistemologically non-Marxist problematics but to construct a Marxian object to replace the old objects. Of course the Marxist object will not simply occupy the same theoretical space as previous objects but will have its own space, time and structure. It will be conceptualized from the Marxist critique of the old concepts: its embryonic space is that created in the critique not that of the old concept lying in the womb of the old problematic. And thus we must look to the Marxist critique of the concept of 'deviance'. That critique is only to be found in Paul Hirst's work, yet he has closed off the question for further development. So, it would appear that nothing is possible. But wait! If Hirst was suggesting, as he clearly was, that 'deviance' was an unfit topic for Marxism, then he must have a clear concept of 'deviance'! We must investigate further the problematic driving Hirst's critique.

Paradoxically, but naturally of course, when Hirst's texts declare 'the concept of deviance' to be alien to Marxism they logically presuppose that Hirst's own Marxist problematic involves a concept of 'the concept of deviance' (This may sound clumsy but it is vital that it is taken literally). That simple dialectical point is the key to the comprehension of the Marxist notion of 'deviance'. Hirst's critique is driven by a problematic carrying the effective concept of 'the concept of deviance'. In other words, the Marxist idea of 'deviance' is that it refers to a Social Concept: the Marxist problematic views 'deviance' as a term referring to a socially and historically determinate concept belonging to the realm of social ideology and not to the realm of theory. As Hirst himself puts it, deviance is an object "constituted prior to theory by practico-social ideologies", it is "untheoretically given in social experience".<sup>84</sup> Deviance, then, is not a theoretical concept or a theorized notion, but rather an 'everyday idea' carried by deviancy sociologists along with other members of society and which is thus implemented in writing and research in the 'sociology of deviance'. 'Deviance' is, in the Marxist concept, not a behaviour but a social concept which forms part of and is formed by, "practico-social ideologies". This is the Marxist concept of deviance which lay hidden and unnoticed in the recesses of Hirst's problematic and thus undeveloped at the textual level.

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84. (1972) op.cit. p.351.

But what a surprise! This discovery runs contrary to all expectations. On the one side, after Hirst's criticisms, the radical deviancy groups in this country simply re-asserted the existence of 'social deviance' and thus kept its conceptual status non-problematic; their dislike and ignorance of Hirst's epistemology, combined with an impulse for a purely political 'praxis', enabled the sociology of deviance to be continued as a viable sociological enterprise, albeit with a sense of crisis and lack of confidence. Hirst, himself, in his two articles had made it clear that he believed Marxism and 'deviance' to be alien matters:

"There is no 'Marxist theory of deviance' either in existence or which can be developed within orthodox Marxism".<sup>85</sup>

It was unclear to him that by an empiricist conflation of the term 'deviance' with its popular, historically specific concept and by a legislation of the permanence of the concept referred to by the term, he was activating a new, Marxist definition of deviance (as a social concept or an idea). He had produced a new concept of deviance, which remained unformulated, enmeshed in the interstices of his theoretical discourse, and yet he failed to realize that fact. What had happened was that Hirst had produced the Marxist concept of deviance but not discovered it: he had produced the 'thing-in-itself' but not the 'thing-in-its-concept'. Consequently he did not develop the concept in all its determinations.

Thus, having discovered the Marxist concept of deviance in the problematic of Hirst's discourse, I must now move on to outline the finite, determinate nature of that concept. But before doing that, let us recap. In an attempt to abolish 'deviance' as an object of Marxist theory, Hirst inadvertently produced a Marxist concept of 'deviance'. This concept existed in itself at the level of his Marxist problematic, but at the level of textual discourse it appears by chance, as contingent to his attempt to close off the question of 'deviance' for Marxism, and clothed in the garments of that attempt. This being so, I conclude that there is a Marxist concept of 'deviance'. That concept holds that deviance is social ideology. Deviance is thus a fit object for Marxist theory since it exists in its concept within the Marxist problematic.

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85. (1972) op.cit. p.29.

### Deviance as an ideological formation

Let us now turn to the task of outlining the determinate nature of the Marxist concept of deviance: the determinations of the concept-in-itself. Hirst had seen the term 'deviance' as referring to its extant, popular, historically specific concept and had granted that concept to be the permanent property of the term 'deviance'. I would say that this is not wholly true but contains a kernel of truth. 'Deviance', in the time and space of the Marxist problematic, refers to a type of social idea, which I would add, takes particular shapes or forms at particular historical conjunctures, and thus what is permanent about deviance is its ideological nature in general and not its forms at any particular time or place. What Hirst had not seen was that his conception of 'deviance' as an ideological matter constitutes a new, Marxist conception of deviance, formulated in the concepts of Marxist theory.

Deviance, I have argued, is in general a type of social idea, which has its particular forms at different historical conjunctures.<sup>86</sup> So far I have used the term 'social idea' to capture in simple language Hirst's notion that deviance is "constituted prior to theory by practice-social ideologies". To develop an account of the nature of deviance, I must explicate this reference. By 'social idea' I mean to refer to a thought matter constituted as a totality by elements of feelings, percepts, images and elements of spontaneous, unsystematic reflections on these feelings, percepts and images.<sup>87</sup> That is, I refer to a formation composed of a unity of thought-elements in a loose relation. I propose to call this an Ideological Formation. I shall develop this concept throughout the following chapters. For the moment, I am using the term 'ideology' to denote a form of thought which combines with the images of perception to constitute an ideological formation. (Implicitly I am defining a

86. We can now permanently omit the inverted commas around the word, deviance, which have represented the process of transition that the concept it refers to has been involved in. They have marked a doubt about its correct reference for Marxism. Their omission indexes the return of an acceptable concept to the term and the beginning of a new stability in usage. The term, deviance, now refers to a type of ideological formation.

87. C.f. Hegel's view of the experiential elements and of their existence as reflections of the movement of the Absolute Idea in his Logic (1975 Oxford: The Clarendon Press), especially in the introduction.

theoretical formation for the moment, as systematic thought or a tight structure of thought-elements.<sup>88</sup>) These determinations do not exhaust the definition of 'a social idea', however, for there is the 'social' aspect of this 'idea' which requires attention. That is, ideological formations are elements within the wider whole of a social formation and are related, in one way or another, to the social relations and practices of that totality. It is this social existence and location of ideological formations which is the determinant of their social form and content. And, in turn, ideological formations are one of the determinants, along with the other elements of the totality, of the mode of development and existence of the social formation.

The object of press discourse frequently referred to in this project, 'political demonstrations' is a provisional example of an ideological formation. What I am talking about when I mention 'political demonstrations' is a loose cluster of images, stereotypes, concepts, faiths and prejudices which have associated emotional connections. We are not talking about a number of men and women walking down a street. 'Political demonstration' is a historically determinate, ideological formation composed of a number of clustered ideologies and images in loose conjunction.

This form of deviance is normally thought of as a collective behaviour but the theory being developed here renders this conception inadequate. The 'deviance-ness' of the deviance, I am arguing, does not lie in the behaviour but in the ideological formation applied to (and in) that behaviour. This 'collective behaviour' can only be thought of as 'deviant' because the widely sustained ideological formation of 'political demonstrations' contains elements that define the act of collective political protest as a Bad Thing. 'Protesters', 'militants' etc. are thus seen spontaneously in ideology as irrational, misguided, subversive or manipulated, and 'demonstrations' as 'a waste of time', 'disruptive of traffic', 'a symptom of infantilism' and so on.

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88. Whether the elements are of the same kind as those in ideology is an issue not to be taken up in depth in this work. I would suggest that theoretical formations are composed of (a) logical relations between (b) generalized reflections or abstractions. That is, theoretical formations do not contain within themselves such elements as percepts and images. In other words the theory-ness of theory lies in its logically interrelated, generalized reflections or abstractions. (See chs. 3 and 7 for some consideration of the relation between ideology and science). By 'theory' I do not necessarily mean scientific theory.

Deviance is a social ideology and can only be understood as such. If criminologists and sociologists want to understand why 'political demonstration' is deviant they should examine the question of ideology and attempt to find out where the ideological formation, 'political demonstration', came from and what maintains its existence. For criminologists and sociologists to examine the social backgrounds or attitudes of the 'demonstrators' is to imply (1) that they assume or believe 'political demonstration' to be deviant, (2) that, therefore, the people demonstrating are deviants and (3) that since they are deviants there must be something 'peculiar' about them which makes 'them' different from the rest of 'us'.<sup>89</sup> This means that existing criminology and sociology has, by and large, accepted current ideology at its word without questioning where this ideological notion came from, what its history is and what its social consequences have been. Although this acceptance may have been unconscious or unthinking, it is nevertheless a political statement of implicit commitment to the status quo and an approbation of an ideological notion which may have been and may still be instrumental in the suppression of political rebellion and criticism. Would those same academics have decided to examine the social backgrounds and attitudes of Jews in Nazi Germany or Kulaks in Stalinist Russia? For after all, being Jewish or Kulak in those societies of the time was also obviously deviant. No, of course they would not have done that. They would have examined the reasons for the ruling classes' definitions of these people as deviant. What kind of 'science' is this, which varies its approach with its moral/political evaluation of the society under consideration? As I have said above, these so-called sciences, when studying their own societies, operate within the current ideological formations; they are therefore ideologies and no more. I am interested in a scientific analysis of social deviance and therefore maintain that a deviation is an ideological formation related to a historically determinate social formation. 'Political demonstration' is an example of one such formation in modern Britain and constitutes a continual illustration throughout in this investigation.

Of course, the remarks above only form a general outline of the determinations of deviance and no more. This outline of deviance in

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89. See, for example, E.L. McDill and J.C. Ridley "Status, anomia, political alienation and political participation" (1962) A.J.S. pp.205-213, A.Portes "Political primitivism, differential socialization and lower-class leftist radicalism" (1971) A.S.R. 36 pp.520-835, R.G. Braungart "Family status, socialization and student politics" (1971) A.J.S. 77:1 pp.108-130.

general has been necessary, even though it has involved reference to concepts as yet undeveloped (e.g. the concept of the location of ideological formations as elements in social formations), because, without it, we cannot develop the full conception of deviance in society. To perform this task, I required an explicated concept of deviance-in-itself and that has been provided. However the concept of deviance produced is by no means a finished product: it will, of necessity, be developed further in the following chapters and, hopefully in the works of others. All I have achieved so far is a beginning, formulating some basic aspects of the Marxist concept of deviance, and the process of making that beginning is part of the overall process of the development of the Marxist concept of ideology as an aspect of social formations. It is to that latter concept that we must now turn. But, before I do that, allow me to briefly summarize the developments so far.

I have claimed that the Marxist concept of deviance specifies deviance as an ideological formation. That is, deviance is a unity constructed loosely by a conglomeration of pre-theoretical thought-elements. This unity is a fully social one in that deviance is a type of ideological formation and ideological formations only exist as elements in specific social formations. Ideological formations, like political and economic formations, are integral aspects of all known societies. Hence deviance, as a type of ideological formation, takes specific forms in particular societies with definite modes of economy, polity and ideology, that is, with definite economic, political and cultural social relations. The scientific explanation of deviance therefore, must discover the connections between forms of economy and polity and forms of ideology. That sociology and criminology, which thought it was explaining deviance by positing causative factors for people's behaviour, can now be abandoned as irrelevant for our purposes. If we are still interested in scientifically determining why people commit 'deviant acts' then we must realize that what makes a person appropriate commodities in an illegal or deviant manner (for example) is a totally different question to that which asks why certain modes of commodity appropriation are ideologically and legally disapproved of. The latter question is the issue of deviance and the former is an issue for social psychoanalysis (involving a scientific theory of psychic responses to specific social conditions). The realization that the emergence of deviance (or ideology) and the emergence of behavioural patterns are two different questions is long overdue - the confusion of the two questions in the sociology of deviance is the biggest single cause of its inadequacy. To



understand the emergence of behavioural patterns it is necessary to have a knowledge of psychic structure, social relations, social needs and their interconnection. To understand the emergence of forms of deviance it is necessary to have a knowledge of the social relations of economic production and political domination and their interconnection. Thus, to begin either project, the comprehension of social relations, the inner structure of social phenomena, is a basic necessity. Marx showed us the way with an analysis of the social relations of capitalist economic formations. The analyses of political and ideological formations are sadly neglected, yet without them Marxism must tend towards economism in one form or another. The work presented here is an attempt to clear away some debris hindering the study of ideological formations and to lay some simple, but sound, foundation stones to enable its successful completion.

## 2 IDEOLOGY AND SOCIAL PRACTICE

Introduction

The object of this chapter is to specify more precisely the determinations of ideology itself and ideology in its location as a social phenomenon. These formulations are seen, of course, to be within a Marxist theoretical problematic. They perform a double duty. In one respect they are demanded by the developments on the concept of deviance in chapter one. There, deviance was found to be a type of "ideological formation", existing in human social formations as an integral element. However, my specification of the concept of ideology demanded by that investigation was preliminary and provisional. Both sides of deviance, deviance-in-itself and deviance in society, require an elucidation of the concept of ideology. In another respect the formulations here are required as foundation for the consideration of a Marxist theory of reading ideology which will occur in the subsequent chapters.

It would be, in one sense, easy in this chapter to rehearse the exchanges within Marxism over the question of ideology. At the same time that would be difficult because of the quantity of relevant books and articles from the past and the many still appearing in the present. In any case I am not even going to spend time compiling long footnotes to impress, or depress, the reader with the extent of the literature on the subject. Some essays demand full referencing (for example, chapters 1,3 and 4 herein) since they involve the exposition of a reading of one problematic from the standpoint of another. However this essay involves a reading of the problematic from whose standpoint it is written and hence, given that 'internal' characteristic of the essay, the constraints on the form are different. The former discourse demands proofs of reading but this latter, 'internal' type more urgently demands sophistication, clarity and, most importantly, an advance. It is common, amongst Marxists, to practice the intra-problematic type of theoretical discourse with full references and comprehensiveness

but without much clarity and rarely with any advance in theory. This practice forms a component of the whole sphere of 'theory consumption' in British intellectual life: much theory is consumed (and referenced) but very little produced. My point is that when a discourse focusses on its own field its most important production criterion is that it produces some advance and that such a discourse can assume that its consumers have consumed sufficiently within that field to be able to 'read' such advances. As regards this particular topic, ideology, I shall be pleased if I can create a degree of clarity in the Marxist concept of ideology - an advance is optimistic in such a difficult, murky area with a low level of relative theoretical development.

### The concept of ideology in general

I have already used the term 'ideology' to denote the actual structure of thought-elements of a spontaneous nature. This forms a provisional answer to our question: what is ideology in its internal determinations in a Marxist problematic? The answer, however needs explicating since the unexplicated form was used, for simplicity and clarity, in the essay on deviance.

Ideology is, in Marx's conception, a form of consciousness carried by human agents. We may remember that in the 1859 Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy he talked of "ideological forms" as "forms of social consciousness", "the consciousness of men" and the consciousness of a period.<sup>1</sup> This reference also indicates the social nature of ideology, but, for the moment, let us just simply note that it does indicate the concept of ideology-in-itself mentioned here. If, then, ideology is a form of consciousness, what kind of form is it and what elements of consciousness are involved? The latter question clearly comes first logically since the form is only the form of the content, and not a

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1. See Marx and Engels (1973) op.cit. pp.181, 182.

form in the abstract. If Marx had systematically tackled Hegel in writing on our question I believe that the following propositions would have been developed out of his critique of Hegel's epistemology:

1 The elements of consciousness constituting ideology are of two kinds: (a) the feelings, faiths, images, percepts of experience, (b) thoughts blended into these elements in the process of reflection on experience. Ideology is thus distinguished from scientific theory which is constituted by thoughts which comprehend, and hence systematically organize, modify and transform, the thoughts produced in 'ideological reflection'. Ideology is the immediate, spontaneous form of consciousness.

Hegel had seen "law, religion and morality" as "modes of consciousness" containing "feelings and generalized images that have been moulded and permeated by thought".<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to read Marx with this in mind. In the much quoted passage from the 1859 Preface, Marx talks about the "legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic" forms ("ideological forms") in which "men become conscious" of explosive contradictions in the economic social relations during "an epoch of social revolution".<sup>3</sup> For Marx also, therefore, law, religion, morality, etc. are spontaneous modes or forms of consciousness produced through social practice. I think that this reading is justifiable since Marx is always reminding us in Capital that people's immediate consciousness is only of the appearance of things, that the first kind of 'knowledge', and the most primitive, is constituted by the impressions of the senses. Hence Marx would argue that the 'explosive contradictions' in the economy during a revolutionary epoch are not perceptible to the senses; that in such a time the human agents of social relations, only become conscious of the sensual repercussions of the social structural upheaval; and that this mode of consciousness, in its various appearances such as law, political doctrine and philosophy, is the form in which those agents "fight out" the structural conflict. Of course, there is one crucial difference between Marx and Hegel on this question.

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2. (1975) op.cit. p.5.

3. Marx and Engels (1973) op.cit. p. 182. See also The Eighteenth Brumaire ibid. p.117. where Marx talks of a "superstructure....of sentiments, illusions, modes of thought, and views of life" arising upon the social conditions of existence. See further The Poverty of Philosophy (1955 Moscow: Progress Publishers) p.95.: "The same men who establish their social relations in conformity with their material productivity, produce also principles, ideas and categories, in conformity with their social relations".

For Marx, philosophy, as it had hitherto existed, including Hegel's work, was also an ideological mode of consciousness since it too was founded on the sense-data of the experience of the agents of social relations. Philosophy may have woven a complex structure on top of that base but nevertheless the base was still there at the root. And thus Marx frequently castigated Hegel for providing a complex rationalisation of the structure of the German status quo. Using the terminology developed here, Hegel would have to be classified as an ideological theorist since he practised an ideological mode of consciousness at the level of theory: that is, he attempted to comprehend thoughts springing from empirical impressions but only with other thoughts of the same kind - his comprehension never left the grounding of the field of experience, except in his metaphysical declarations on the source of his reason.

2 Ideology is, therefore, the experiential or practical mode of consciousness and its constituent elements are the aspects of spontaneous experience (feeling, perception, faith, reflection).

3 As a spontaneous mode of consciousness, ideology is not wholly composed of conscious elements (e.g. 'reflection') but also contains unconscious elements (e.g. 'perception'). Similarly an element may sometimes be conscious and sometimes unconscious (e.g. 'feeling'). 'Consciousness' should not be conflated with that which is conscious at any given moment. Ideology can thus be said to take conscious and unconscious forms.

4 As the spontaneous, experiential mode of consciousness, ideology is thus flexible, adaptive to circumstances, pragmatic and unprincipled. Thus its form as a totality is that of a loose structure whose unity lies in its inextricable connection with social practice, the form of social experience - ideology's external determination. In itself it is a loose, adaptive structure with no coherence or internal unity, but in its existence as an aspect of social practice, ideology finds its unity. Ideology-in-itself, then, is a flexible form. As Marx commented in the 1859 Preface, ideology cannot "be determined with the precision of natural science."<sup>4</sup>

5 There is one further aspect of the form taken by ideology. Because

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4. *ibid.* There is no doubt that Marx saw ideology as fundamentally and precisely linked to social practice: see (1974) *op.cit.* pp.78-79 where Marx explicitly and precisely links the producers' view of value, as intrinsic to the commodity, to their everyday practice of exchange.

it is an adaptive mode of consciousness inextricably linked with the mode of social experience, social practice, it tends to provide in its reflections a rationalization of its produced sense-data. Hence ideology in its political, philosophical, theoretical forms tends to produce loosely structured defences of the world in which it exists. Put bluntly, ideology takes loose conservative forms when it reflects on itself. This point can be understood more clearly if we remember that reflection in the ideological mode of consciousness is the process of connecting, into some order, the sense-data produced in social practice. Such sense-data must tend to enable conservative reflections since the practices producing them will usually be part of the mainstream social structure of a social formation. This is assuming, of course, that the social formation in question is not disintegrating into fragments (i.e. classes) in conflict. If the social structure is shaken or mortified with active contradictions, then the tendency to conservatism outlined above will be matched by tendencies to oppositionalism or escapism. It is interesting that social formations with slow development of productive forces and slow maturation of contradictions in their social relations are often called 'traditional societies'. From what I have said it would follow that in stable, static or stagnant societies ideology obtains a fundamental role and a very conservative strength.

This is the Marxian concept of ideology in its internal determinations. My elaboration has of necessity required reference to the concept's external determinations and the crucial aspect of the location of its unity in determinate social practice. It is this nexus, the unity of ideology in social practice, that will form the heart of this chapter. But before moving to that question of the unity, let us attend to our duties to develop the new concept of deviance as an ideological formation. From what has been said about the internal determinations of ideology, is there anything worth saying that may refine our concept of deviance? I think there is. Firstly, an ideological formation is an association of ideological elements which finds its unity in its social existence as an aspect of social practice. This is not to say that the origin of each element lies in the connection with the social practice in question, but that the association of elements constituting an

ideological formation is connected to particular social practice or combination of practices. Forms of deviance, we can say, find their origins and support in social practices - although the practices of origin and the practices of support are not necessarily the same. Secondly, types of deviance exist at the spontaneous level of experience and hence are "obvious". For example, it is commonly considered that most kinds of deviance are "obvious" and other, ambiguous types are more "a matter of opinion" - an ideological view also found in sociology. Thirdly, deviance may exist at the conscious or unconscious level or it may be fragmented into its elements - some being conscious and others unconscious (the foundations of ambiguity). Deviance at the conscious level - that is, an ideological formation in the psyche's unconscious which is known to the subject - is one foundation for its own destruction. That is, being conscious of the constituents of the notion is one basis on which the annulment of those constituents can take place and hence a basis for the potential destruction of the ideological formation. Deviance at the unconscious level - that is, an ideological formation solely located in the psyche's unconscious, where the conscious is unaware of its existence - is the foundation for what, at the level of spontaneous experience, would be called "faith" or "tradition". Deviance at both levels - that is, an ideological formation broken up and dispersed - is a basis of "ambiguity", "indecision", "no firm belief", "flexibility" or "indifference". Fourthly, the ideological elements constituting a deviance (or a 'deviation') are pragmatic and adaptive to circumstance. The possibility of their easy displacement makes deviations essentially unstable structures: they are stabilized when their key elements are firmly tied to a stable social practice. In times of overall social upheaval, involving explosive contradictions within and between practices, deviations will be highly unstable ideological structures, but, even in more peaceful times, they will be prone to shift sharply in form at regular intervals and to have a permanent amorphousness. Fifthly deviations tend to be conservative formations and tend to be consistent with the status quo (whatever the society). This follows from the earlier remarks on the conservative nature of ideology.

All these developments flow from the theoretical determinations of ideology and are not reflective speculations based on experience or 'empirical' studies in the sociology of deviance. But, now, let us turn to ideology as an element in social formations through its location in

social practice. In itself we have found that it is incoherent, adaptive, pragmatic and flexible and that its unity of formation lies in its existence as an aspect of social practice. It is to that aspect we shall now turn.

### Ideology and the social formation: the concept of reflection

What are the social determinations of ideological forms of consciousness? Marx and Engels are usually said to have outlined the answer to the question in The German Ideology.<sup>5</sup> Various statements are often quoted to the effect that ideology is a sublimation of "the material life-process", "consciousness is a social product", "conceptions" are produced by men active at a definite level of productive development, consciousness is "conscious existence" etc., etc.. But, if Althusser's periodization of Marx is correct, as I argued in chapter one, then The German Ideology must be treated as one of the first works of a major epistemological break.<sup>6</sup> These works do not indicate a complete rupture with Hegelian idealism and Feuerbachian materialism and are scarred by the ideological struggle with Hegel and Feuerbach which produced them. In consequence they present "delicate problems of interpretation" as Althusser notes:

"As for The German Ideology, it offers us precisely a thought in a state of rupture with its past, playing a pitiless game of deadly criticism with all its erstwhile theoretical presuppositions: primarily with Feuerbach and Hegel and all the forms of a philosophy of consciousness and an anthropological philosophy. But this new thought, so firm and precise in its interrogation of ideological error, cannot define itself without difficulties or ambiguities. It is impossible to break with a theoretical past at one blow: in every case, words and concepts are needed to break with words and concepts, and often the old words are charged with the conduct of the rupture throughout the period of the search for new ones. The German Ideology presents the spectacle of a re-enlisted conceptual reserve standing in for new concepts still in training .... and as we usually judge these old concepts by their bearing, taking them at their word, it is easy to stray into a Positivist conception (the end of all philosophy) or an individualist-humanist conception (the subjects of history are 'real concrete men')."

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5. (1970) op. cit., esp. Part I.

6. See Althusser (1969) op. cit. esp. pp.21-40.

7. ibid. pp.36,37.



Marx and Engels' statements in The German Ideology therefore have to be treated with considerable caution for they reflect the incomplete, fragmentary nature of the rupture. Thus when Marx and Engels talk of ideologies as "reflexes and echoes" of the "life-process", we must not interpret this to mean that ideologies are an automatic, mechanical spin-off from the capital-labour dialectic or that they are the crude creation of the thinking, concrete individual subject. Such interpretations are clearly false since Marx's later work tells us that (a) levels other than the economic have relative autonomy and are also determinants of ideologies and (b) that men are not the subjects of history but that history is a process, "a development considered in the totality of its real conditions",<sup>8</sup> without a subject. The later Marx develops the concept of the social formation which denotes a complex totality comprising economic, political-legal and ideological practices interrelated in a developing structure dominated by the economic ("in that it determines which of the instances of the social structure occupies the determinant place"<sup>9</sup> at a particular time). It is this movement of social formations that is, for the later Marx, the process that constitutes history. And it is this concept of the social formation in movement that we must attend to in our attempt to locate social ideology as a "reflection" of the life-process.

Hirst has declared that, for Marx, forms of consciousness are only "effects of the structure of the social formation".<sup>10</sup> This seems to me to be a faulty formulation. In trying to develop Althusser's Marxism he seems to have fallen foul of one of Althusser's weaknesses. At several points in his work, Althusser's attempt to smash humanism leads him to imply that ideology is not a determinant, and never can be, of the nature and form of a social formation, but simply an "effect" of it. Althusser's formulations usually carry the notion of ideology as a 'mirror reflection' or 'effect' of the social process. For example, in an essay on Brecht and Bertolozzi he says:

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8. Le Capital T.1. (1948 Paris: Editions Sociales) p.181, n. quoted by Althusser (1972) op. cit. p.185.

9. Althusser and Balibar (1970) op. cit. p.224.

10. (1972) op. cit. p.36.

"But what, concretely, is this uncriticized ideology if not simply the 'familiar', 'well-known', transparent myths in which society or an age can recognize itself (but not know itself), the mirror it looks into for self-recognition, precisely the mirror it must break if it is to know itself? What is the ideology of a society or a period if it is not that society's or period's consciousness of itself, that is, an immediate material which spontaneously implies, looks for and naturally finds its forms in the image of a consciousness of self living the totality of its world in the transparency of its own myths?"<sup>11</sup> (My emphases).

The relation between ideology and the social formation is thus conceived within the vague concept of The German Ideology - as a 'mechanical', automatic, photographic replication of the "life-process". Social life gives off ideology just as steam rises from boiling water and thus the agents of social life cannot see through the fog of ideology (or "mist" as Marx calls it) since it is the condition of their vision. Now this is true. But, having said that, Althusser has only metaphorically described the rise of ideology, he has not provided the precise concepts with which we can think its emergence or its effects. In Reading Capital Althusser argues that ideology

"... bends to the interest of the times, but without any apparent movement, being content to reflect the historical changes which it is its mission to assimilate and master by some imperceptible modification of its peculiar internal relations .... It is the immobile motion which, as Hegel said of philosophy itself, reflects and expresses what happens in history without ever running ahead of its own time, since it is merely that time caught in the trap of a mirror reflection, precisely so that men will be caught in it too."<sup>12</sup>

Again ideology is seen to "reflect" the social process and the agents of the process are trapped in the circularity of their time-bound vision. The temporal fog of social life is the only sight for men caught in the vice-like grip of the ideology of their period. Althusser's general impression, therefore, is that ideology rises off social formations like steam off boiling water and it is consequently, in his conception, no use the humanists praising the God of Praxis since praxis merely reproduces the clouded vision of a society's ideology. But there is something crucial in the above passage from Reading Capital that is an advance on the formulations of For Marx. Let us look at the nature of this

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11. (1969) op. cit. p.144.

12. (1970) op. cit. p.142.

advance in some detail.

For Marx contains an admixture of concepts of ideology. At first, when talking about theoretical ideology, Althusser declares that ideology has an "author", "a concrete individual", in truly Feuerbachian humanist style.<sup>13</sup> At another point he proclaims vaguely, quoting The German Ideology, that "real history explains" the "formations", "deformations" and "restructurations" of ideology, and that ideology thus has no history.<sup>14</sup> In the discussion of the levels of social practice he specifies the existence of "ideological practice" in conjunction with economic and political practice, urging us to take ideology "seriously as an existing practice", and then says that to recognize ideology as a practice is "an indispensable prior condition for any theory of ideology".<sup>15</sup> This passage perhaps does not owe much to Feuerbachian humanism but it certainly conflates ideology with 'ideological practice'. Althusser normally takes 'ideology' to be a form of consciousness and 'practice' to be a process of transformation of determinate raw material, through the agency of human labour and determinate means of production, into a social product. Thus when he talks of 'ideological practice' (he gives as examples: religion, politics, law, art) he is talking about that transformation process which has spontaneous thought as its object and instruments of production. Therefore to refer to ideology in itself as a practice is like defining coal as coal-mining or meat as butchery. Ideology is the object and instrument of ideological practice but it does not constitute the practice itself - it merely is the dominant element of that practice. He continues through the book with this conflation, and at another point argues that ideology is "one of the basic practices essential to the existence of the social whole".<sup>16</sup> Finally, later in the book, we are left with another confusion involving a conflation. This time it is spontaneous ideology that is confused with reflected or theoretical ideology. Thus ideology is defined as

"... a system (with its own logic and rigour) of representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts, depending on the case) endowed with a historical existence and role within a given society."<sup>17</sup>

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13. (1970) op. cit. p.142.

14. Ibid. p.83,fn.48.

15. Ibid. p.167.

16. Ibid. p.191.

17. Ibid. p.231.

In earlier remarks on Hegel, Althusser had specified the possibility of a theoretical ideology having a problematic and this later passage simply resurrects the point.<sup>18</sup> However, despite this problem that he is not offering a concept of ideology as a general social phenomenon but a concept of ideology in its theoretical form, this passage, like the one referenced previously,<sup>19</sup> emphasizes the possibility of ideology as an important determinant of the social formation. Althusser has thus developed further than his earlier 'German Ideology formulations' and, at this point, is beginning to see ideology as more than just an 'effect', and rather as an element in social formations which has determining power, and which under certain economic conditions, may be the key element of a social formation:

That is one useful development. There is, however, a second development of significance in For Marx. Following the passage quoted above, Althusser ventures:

"Without embarking on the problem of the relations between a science and its (ideological) past, we can say that ideology, as a system of representations, is distinguished from science in that in it the practico-social function is more important than the theoretical function (function as knowledge)."<sup>20</sup>

Ignoring the ideology/science issue since it does not concern us here, it is clear that Althusser is alluding to a concept of the close links between ideology and social practice. The concept is forged by the subsequent argument that ideology is "an organic part of every social totality", which includes any future communist society. He continues to confuse spontaneity with theory in arguing that ideology only exists in "specific formations",<sup>21</sup> but, most importantly, he advocates the view that ideology is largely unconscious and is "a matter of the lived relation between men and their world".<sup>22</sup> Ideology is itself "the lived relation between men and the world". This would lead one to think that ideology was at the same time both a "structure" or "a system of representations" and a "lived relation". Clearly ideology cannot be both

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18. Ibid. pp. 62, 63.

19. See fn. 16.

20. (1969) op. cit. p.231.

21. Ibid. p.232.

22. Ibid. p.233.

23. Ibid. pp. 233, 234.

chicken and egg. In other words, ideology cannot be at the same time a thought-structure and a social relation, for the two are different things. Althusser does not recognize this confusion and inadvertently solves the problem by continuing as follows:

"Ideology, then, is the expression of the relation between men and their 'world', that is, the (overdetermined) unity of the real relation and the imaginary relation between them and their real conditions of existence."<sup>23</sup>

Social ideology, then, in Althusser's furthest development in For Marx, is a system of representations (largely unconscious) whose determinations are: (1) the relation between their agents (men) and the social conditions in which those agents exist, (2) the 'view' of that relation contained within the "consciousness" (again largely unconscious) of those agents.

As I have said, Althusser need not argue that ideology is always found in "formations", "structures" or "systems". They are merely the forms it takes as 'humanism' (a theoretical, ideological formation), the object of Althusser's essay. With that reservation, we can say that Althusser has forged, albeit in highly indecisive fashion, a new concept of social ideology, a concept which breaks from the 'auteur' theory of his Feuerbachian formulations from The German Ideology and from the confusions in For Marx which argue that ideology is a practice. This new concept specifies social ideology, albeit unclearly and uncertainly, as: mental representations produced out of the unity of men's social relations and their images of those relations. Such a concept is obviously not satisfactory as a concept of ideology itself since it raises the problem: How can ideology be part of the determinations that produce it? How can Ideology and Social Relations equal Ideology? Thus, the concept is insufficient. Althusser's expression of it makes this more than clear:

"It is in this overdetermination of the real by the imaginary and of the imaginary by the real that ideology is active in principle, that it reinforces or modifies the relation between men and their conditions of existence, in the imaginary relation itself. It follows that this action can never be purely instrumental; the man who would use an ideology purely as a means of action, as a tool, find that they have been caught by it, implicated by it, just when they are using it and believe themselves to be absolute masters of it."<sup>24</sup>

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23. Ibid. pp.233, 234.

24. Ibid. p.234.

However, what we must not lose sight of is the fact that in his efforts Althusser has emphasized the importance of ideology as a social phenomenon and has conceptually tied ideology to the social relations within which men live. This was an important development and the take-off point for the statements in Reading Capital.

In the passage from Reading Capital quoted earlier,<sup>25</sup> Althusser makes a further advance. He conceived of ideology as being closely and rigidly connected to social practice and that the rigidity of the connection forces ideology into amorphous, adaptive and flexible forms. Ideology is "the immobile motion" that reflects the events of history. It is "immobile" in that it never leaves its master's side. It is "motion" in that its form is adaptive and moulds itself to its ever-active master. How can this be? How can ideology be immobile yet mobile? It is because the master always has a servant otherwise he would not be a master. Master and servant are two sides of the same relation. Moreover they interpenetrate. Their relationship is dialectical. The 'master' is a determination of the servant and the servant is a determination of the master. That is, the master is a part or aspect of the servant and vice versa. Similarly: ideology is part of social practice not exterior to it as a superstructure. That is why ideology is mobile and immobile at the same time. It is always moving because of its immobility as an aspect of determination of social practice, one of whose other aspects is movement or action. Previous Marxist conceptions have often seen ideology as external to social practice, as 'superstructure' separate from a 'base', as an image reflected in a mirror. Thus they have created the false problem of 'reflection'. What they have overlooked constantly is that the image is an aspect or part of the mirror, that is, that the superstructure constantly inhabits the related social practices constituting the base. In other words, the base/superstructure, material conditions/thought dichotomies were false as aspects of the social totality for the totality has no existence over and above its interrelated elements (social practices). Such distinctions only have

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25. See fn. 12.

any concrete determination if they are considered as related aspects of the elements of the totality, as aspects of social practice. Only social practices can be said to contain an infra- and super-structure and even then it is metaphysical - the only concrete thing being the structure and elements of the practice concerned.

To recap, Althusser's formulations in Reading Capital contain, in unrecognized form, a key development: the concept of ideology as an element of practice. Until now, orthodox Marxism has continuously failed to recognize this fact and has persisted in making the Positivist separation between materiality and ideology. What I have done is to bring out a concept, latent in Althusser, which dramatically confronts the traditional formulations of orthodox Marxism and which demonstrates that the orthodox Marxist problem of 'reflection' is false and Positivist. It is true that practice is a determination of ideology, but it is also true, and this is my main point, that ideology is a determination of practice. This latter determination has been concealed from the Marxist problematic in its own metaphor of the 'reflection' of the economic infrastructure in the superstructure of ideology. Marx's term 'reflection' has been interpreted in Positivistic fashion to mean that the economy is the factor, external to the superstructure, which determines its forms and contents. 'Reflection' has not been interpreted in its full dialectical sense as a relation between interpenetrating opposites. Thus the correct Marxian position, that ideology only exists in practice and that practice only exists through ideology, has been ignored with inevitably economistic effects: ideology has become the plaything of economic forces and its effectivity has been lost to debates over the falling rate of profit. It is little wonder that many activists continually think that the revolution is round the corner when their economism leads them to neglect racist, fascist, sexist and capitalist ideologies in the working classes. Political practice did of course teach great theorists such as Lenin, Lukacs and Gramsci that ideology could in fact be a powerful reactionary force. Hopefully the present work will restore that practical fact to its true theoretical significance; a significance that has somehow never been fully realised.

Althusser had only unconsciously produced this dialectical concept of social ideology in For Marx. In Reading Capital he threw a little more light on it but at no time did he ever explicitly develop the concept in the text. For example, during his critique of Gramsci's notion that science is part of the superstructure, he states:

"Science can no more be ranged within the category 'superstructure' than can language, which as Stalin showed escapes it. To make science a superstructure is to think of it as one of those 'organic' ideologies which form such a close bloc with the structure that they have the same history as it does!"<sup>26</sup> (My emphases.)

Here again he can only think the ideology-economy connection in terms of 'closeness' and the consequent lack of history on the part of ideology and not in terms of ideology's active presence as an aspect of practice. The nearest he gets to our concept, in Reading Capital, is during the discussion of legal and political social relations. Here it is pointed out that certain relations of production presuppose as a condition of their existence a certain type of law, politics and ideology. Althusser elaborates the effects of the concept of the dialectical relation between production relations and superstructural relations, it means that:

"they (relations of production - C.S.) relate to the superstructural forms they call for as so many conditions of their own existence. The relations of production cannot therefore be thought in their concept while abstracting from their specific superstructural conditions of existence. To take only one example, it is quite clear that the analysis of the buying and selling of labour power in which capitalist relations of production exist (the separation between the owners of the means of production on the one hand and the wage-workers on the other), directly presupposes, for an understanding of its object, a consideration of the formal legal relations which establish the buyer (the capitalist) as much as the seller (the wage-labourer) as legal subjects - as well as a whole political and ideological superstructure which maintains and contains the economic agents in the distribution of roles, which makes a minority of exploiters the owners of the means of production, and the majority of the population producers of surplus-value. The whole superstructure of the society considered is thus implicit and present in a specific way in the relations of production, i.e. in the fixed structure of the distribution of means of production and economic functions between determinate categories of economic agents."<sup>27</sup>

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26. (1970) op. cit. p.133.

27. Ibid. pp.177, 178.



Briefly, the point he is making about the social totality here is that the relations of production are present in the superstructure, and that the superstructural relations are present in production: "the whole superstructure.... is thus implicit and present .... in the relations of production". This specification of a dialectical relation between the "structure" (economy) and the superstructure (law, politics and ideological practice), dominated by the "structure", is the exact direction we require. Unfortunately, Althusser did not continue this discussion and develop its ramifications for the Marxist theory of ideology.

Basically, then, the concept of the ideology-social formation link as a connection between externals is a false one. Ideology cannot be analytically linked with society as an external phenomenon. (Any attempted link between ideology and society presupposes that ideology is external to society.) Clearly that is a metaphysical, religious conception. Yet orthodox Marxism, in its misplaced, Positivist materialism, has ironically been guilty of propagating this mystical notion that ideology is an "effect" of the social formation. Paul Hirst, despite the value of his other comments, fell into this trap. Ideology, however, is not merely a thought-mirror of the social formation but also an active aspect of social practice and hence an integral, determinant part of the social formation. However, at this juncture I must enter the caveat that the position I am developing here is not a humanist Marxist one. Ideology is part of practice - that is all I have said. I have not said that this is the case because of the essentially and eternally creative nature of practice's agents men. Ideology became an active part of practice when, through the development of their productive forces, the agents of animal or "instinctive" (Marx's term) practice developed the scope of their interrelation and the means of communication, language. Once language had developed, ideology could be realized concretely in practice and it was only when ideology materialized itself that it became a material part of practice: at that point instinctive labour became human, purposive and social. Men were not born 'essentially purposive', that facility developed historically. Also the nature and effects of ideology will vary with the society, and the level and class nature of the practice considered. In some conjunctures, for example, the structure of the society may be such as to make ideology a minimally effective element in it, in others ideology may be very effective. No doubt the latter conjunctures give rise to the impression that choice, purpose, creativity or human agency in general is the key element in social life. But that would be to take the transitional as eternal.

'Reflection', like all the other optical metaphors used by Marx to describe the dialectical relation, is often adopted by Marxists as a one-sided notion incapable of comprehending the two-sided nature of any relation. Until now it has been the major obstacle in the development of the Marxist theory of ideology in that it helped to conceal the 'interiority' of ideology in the social formation. Althusser's failure to remove it in his major texts has enabled critics to level charges of 'determinism' against him. Many complained (but rarely in writing) of his denial of the role of ideology and the consequent absence of some policy on the role of ideology in revolutionary political practice and an adequate theory of ideological domination. From my analysis, we can see that they found a weak spot - but most critics had no idea that they had done so. Althusser's position merely reinforced tendencies in humanism to support concepts of Praxis and Creativity. It did not encourage the solution of the problem of ideology in historical materialism. It seems to be true that Althusser's failure in his major works to destroy the one-sided notion of 'reflection' in orthodox Marxism with its clearly Positivist cause-effect implications, has not helped the development of a Marxist theory of ideology.

To put the matter entirely straight and to be accurate about Althusser, he did make some further developments in the later essay Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.<sup>28</sup> This essay has not received as much attention from his critics in this country as have For Marx or Reading Capital. It is amazing but it is necessary to register the fact that both orthodox and humanist Marxists have failed to produce so much as an extended commentary on this later essay. To the best of my knowledge this essay has been widely read, but its implications have either not been grasped or they have been accepted uncritically. Given my task, I am not going to engage in an exposition of a minute reading of the essay. What is necessary is to demonstrate the developments in the Marxist theory of ideology made by Althusser in this essay and to show their shortcomings. At the least, this qualifies as one reading of this very important essay.

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28. (1971) op. cit. pp.121-173.

"Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"

My reading of Althusser's discourse so far has indicated that Althusser has not yet 'discovered' the concept of the integral existence of ideology in practice. He has produced it, just as much as he has produced (but, in this case, discovered as well) the concept of the integral existence of law in economic practice; but he has not 'discovered' it. This precise absence is the key structuring mechanism in the essay considered now. The concept seems to appear in the essay but, in fact, the terms Althusser uses are actually referring to another concept, the one he explicitly develops in the text. However, it is necessary to explicate my reading before commenting further.

In "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" Althusser is attempting to put ideology back into orthodox Marxist theory. He notes its woeful absence and requires amends to be made; but amends which escape the Positivist formulations of Marx and Engels in The German Ideology.<sup>29</sup> The way Althusser chooses to conduct the rescue operation is via the theory of the state. Ideology is inserted back into society - and that is a development in Marxism which all anti-Positivists can only celebrate, along with the defeat of the 'reflection' debate - but, through the state, and not through its proper channel, social practice. Althusser does eventually link ideology with practice but that development contains an ideology connected to and produced by the state and hence ultimately the level of the economy. As a result his account is one-sided and Positivistic. This is illustrated by the fact that the ideology of the subordinate social classes is forgotten until the postscript. (His comments, in fact, would make a lot more sense about law than ideology, since that must be dealt with through the concept of the state).

Althusser makes it clear from the beginning that he believes that the infrastructure/superstructure dichotomy is still valuable, although descriptive.<sup>30</sup> What is of interest to him is to describe the relevance of the superstructure for the base or, as he puts it, "the

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29. Ibid. pp.149, 150.

30. Ibid. pp. 129, 130.

functioning of the Superstructure and its mode of intervention in the Infrastructure".<sup>31</sup> His basic argument is that this theoretical object must be thought from the point of view of the reproduction of the relations of production.<sup>32</sup> Thus ideology is an aspect of the reproduction process:

"... the reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they, too, will provide for the domination of the ruling class 'in words'."<sup>33</sup>

Now, of course, following classical Marxist theory, Althusser must turn to the state which is held to be the "machine" by which the ruling class of a society maintains its power and economic position.<sup>34</sup> And this is the nexus for the reintroduction of ideology into the social formation. He argues that the view that the state is just a repressive institution is simplistic and purely "descriptive". State apparatuses have ideological as well as repressive functions but, most importantly, Althusser formulates the existence of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) which appear as private institutions, e.g. the Church, the Media, the Schools, the Political Parties. These 'private' institutions are part of the state because of their functions for the state in reproducing ruling class power and they are called 'ideological' because they function primarily by ideology.<sup>35</sup> The function of the ISAs is described by Althusser as follows, they are said to

"... largely secure the reproduction specifically of the relations of production, behind a shield provided by the repressive"State apparatus."<sup>36</sup>

The ISAs can function like this because they are the strongholds of ruling class ideology. This ideology ensures a harmony between the various ISAs and between the ISAs and the repressive state apparatus. And, given this unity in ruling class ideology, the ISAs can have a reproductive function because of the subjection of other classes to their ideology.

31. Ibid. p. 170.

32. Ibid. p. 131.

33. Ibid. pp. 127, 128.

34. Ibid. p.131.

35. Ibid. pp. 137, 138.

36. Ibid. p. 142.

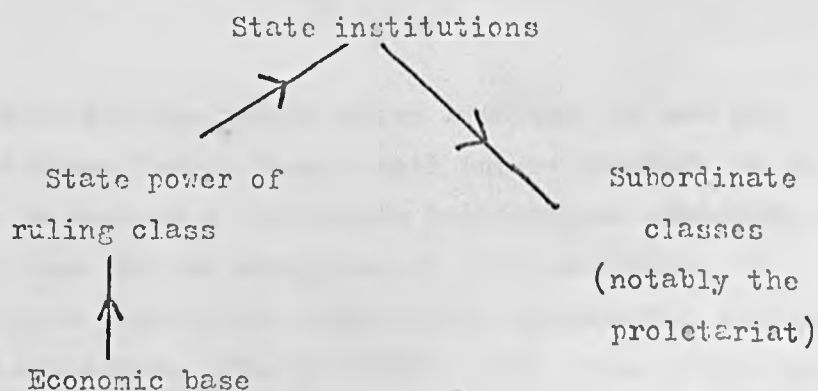
This subjection is uncontested and the proletariat are the playthings of this multiple propaganda symphony orchestrated by ruling class ideology.<sup>37</sup> Talking about education, Althusser argues:

"But it is by an apprenticeship in a variety of know-how wrapped up in the massive inculcation of the ideology of the ruling-class that the relations of production in a capitalist social formation, i.e. the relations of exploited to exploiters and exploiters to exploited, are largely reproduced"<sup>38</sup>

The only time before the postscript that there is any suggestion that the ruling class cannot just 'implant' its ideology on the subordinate classes at will is when Althusser mentions in passing that the former ruling classes and the proletarians "occasionally disturb" the concert of subjection.

Thus, from our discussion of Althusser's developments from For Marx up to this point, we can see that Althusser has not really escaped from the one-sided concept of 'reflection' and the concept of the integral existence of ideology in social practices is absent. The economic structure gives state power to the ruling class who control the ISAs and transmit ("cram") their ideology directly to the receivers, to the brains of the subordinates. Equipped with the right messages, the labour-power is fit for its role in the economy. Thus ideology is a reflection of the economic structure which travels via the state into the workers' brains. The concept can be diagrammatized as follows:

THE TRAVELS OF  
IDEOLOGY IN THE  
PROCESS OF  
REPRODUCTION



It is as though the position of having state power enables the ruling

37. See *ibid.* p. 146 for examples of Althusser's notion of easy subjection.  
38. *Ibid.* p.148.

class to bounce ideology off the state institutions into the subordinate classes just as a radio transmitter can bounce images off a satellite to a receiver in another part of the globe. This is Althusser's 'satellite concept' of ideological transmission. It is clearly highly Positivist and very similar in its mechanism to the concepts of cybernetics and information theories of mass communication.<sup>39</sup> What is disturbing is that Althusser seems to be employing structural-functionalist thought to develop the Marxist theory of ideology; it does look as though this system-function has been ascribed to these institutions simply because it appears to exist at the moment (because the French proletariat is not yet free from its domination by bourgeois thought). Certainly Althusser presents a very one-sided theory of 'ideological transmission', up to this point.

It has been necessary to register these deficiencies strongly because otherwise they would be concealed by the stealth of Althusser's subsequent formulations. He continues by arguing, in line with the position outlined, that ideology is merely a "pale, empty and inverted reflection of real history"<sup>40</sup> - thus taking the Marx of 1846 at his word. But how do these "phantoms", as Marx called them, find their way so easily into the sensible heads of the masses? Firstly, Althusser says, the ISAs are the realization of a "regional ideology" (e.g. religious, legal, ethical, aesthetic) in their constituent practices. He then makes a crucial statement:

"... an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice or practices."<sup>41</sup>

Remembering that the ISAs realize ruling class ideology, we can see that all ideology, bar those famous "occasional interruptions", is ruling class ideology. This is clearly a remarkable implication: remarkable for its one-sidedness and thus for its exclusion of the possibility of existence of working class ideologies supported by proletarian practices and institutions. He continues, now, by arguing that those people who live in ideology participate in regularized, ritual practices, which are those of the ISAs. These subjects, who are subjected to ideology, "derive"

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39. See later, ch.3 on information theory.

40. Ibid. p.151.

41. Ibid. p.156.

their ideas from participation in the practices of the ISAs because these ideas are inserted into those practices. Thus he implies two things:

1. There is no practice except within an Ideological State Apparatus;
2. That subjects participating in the practices of the ISAs are automatically doomed to ideological subjection.

To these implications we must put some questions:

- (a) Are there not practices outside the ISAs?
- (b) Are the practices which Althusser defines as elements of the ISAs necessarily so? Is not the definition of the ISAs so wide that it leaves no space for any other kind of practice (functional for the ruling class or not)?
- (c) How within this scheme of the territory of social practices can revolutionary, critical, liberal or mediated ('mixed') ideologies arise except from thin air? (This particular absence leaves a wide-open space for humanists to insert such ideologies into the scheme as the products of essential human creativity).

It is clear that the absent concept of the presence of ideology in practice and the present one-sided concept of the economic 'reflection' of ideology have produced a view of ideological domination which is one of transmission and implantation from above, and that, to enable his argument for the role of the state as the agent of ideological domination, Althusser has had to analytically deny any contradictions or practices which may give rise to non-ruling class ideologies. This is so far, then, a non-dialectical analysis of ideological domination, with highly Positivist underpinnings.

However we must recognize that Althusser does advance the proposition that

"...there is no practice except by and in an ideology ..."<sup>42</sup>

As I have said, this does not mean that he has produced the concept of the integral nature of ideology in practice, at this stage. For what he is arguing is that all non-economic practices belong to ideological State Apparatuses and therefore, since economic practices already have ruling class ideology inscribed in them, there cannot be any practice without ruling ideology. This is a different thing from saying that ideology is part of any social formation as an integral part of any

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42. Ibid. p. 159.

social practice - which is what I have been arguing. However, the terminology is the right terminology for my concept. Thus I am bound to say that Althusser has produced the terms of our concept but not the concept itself. Or, in other words, he has produced the correct concept but it is part of a discourse from another problematic - that of positivist, Feuerbachian materialism - and hence exists in the text to support other propositions than the ones it should do.

He makes a second important proposition:

"... there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects."<sup>43</sup>

This proposition expresses his subsequent description of the mechanism of intervention of ruling class ideology in the everyday practice of the ISAs. That mechanism is constituted by the dyad: (1) ideology "constitutes concrete individuals as subjects" and (2) concrete individuals are "sub-jected to the Subject". And so the "duplicate mirror-structure of ideology" ensures:

"... the mutual recognition of subjects and Subject, the subjects' recognition of each other, and finally the subject's recognition of himself ..."<sup>44</sup>

Althusser is arguing that "all ideology is centred" by the notion of the "Absolute Subject" and that, consequently, bearing in mind that everyone participates in the practice of the ISAs with its deadly effects, men live in "the trap of a mirror reflection" centred on themselves as subjects. Ideological domination of the masses by the ruling class is thus achieved through two mechanisms:

1. The involvement of men in the practices and ideology of the ISAs.
2. The recognition of themselves as subjects in ideology which is centred on the absolute power of the subject.

Men are caught in the spider's web of the ideology of the subject inscribed in the practices of the state's ubiquitous ideological apparatuses

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid. p.168.



" Result: caught in this quadruple system of interpellation as subjects, of subjection to the subject, of universal recognition and of absolute guarantee, the subjects 'work', they 'work by themselves' in the vast majority of cases, with the exception of the 'bad subjects' who on occasion provoke the intervention of one of the detachments of the (repressive) State apparatus. But the vast majority of 'good' subjects work all right 'all by themselves' i.e. by ideology (whose concrete forms are realized in the Ideological State Apparatuses). They are inserted into practices governed by the rituals of the ISAs."<sup>45</sup>

The above passage illustrates several elements of Althusser's discourse in this text. It demonstrates the one-sided nature of this concept of ideological domination thought the state and encapsulates its mechanism. It illustrates also that Althusser believes that the function of the process of domination is to reproduce the existing social relations of production.

All that remains now is to examine the remarkable postscript to the essay. But, before I turn to that, one thing can be said. The Feuerbachian Positivist shell can be discarded and the concept that practice only exists in and by ideology can be acknowledged as a correct one for Marxism, alongside its sister concept that ideology only exists in and by practice. Ideology is inextricably and dialectically linked with social practice.

At the end of his essay Althusser adds a passage written one year later. In it he mentions "several important unanswered problems", or, I would say, more honestly, he tries to correct two of his great mistakes. Firstly, he brings himself in line with Marx and states that the reproduction of the relations of production is only realized within the production and circulation process itself. Thus reminding himself of the fact that Balibar had argued this point in Reading Capital:

"The concept of reproduction is thus not only the concept of the 'consistency' of the structure, but also the concept of the necessary determination of the movement of production by the permanence of that structure; it is the concept of the permanence of that structure; it is the concept of the permanence of the initial elements in the very functioning of the system, hence the concept of the necessary conditions

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45. Ibid. p.169. In my view, Althusser overestimates the success of dominant ideology. In every factory I have worked in the workers do not "work by themselves": they need considerable supervision and control if they are going to produce any surplus value. On the other hand I think that Althusser underestimates the effects of economic practices (e.g. piece-work) in persuading the workers to work.

of production, conditions which are precisely not created by it. This is what Marx calls the eternity of the mode of production: 'This incessant reproduction or eternalization of the labourer, is the sine qua non of capitalist production' (Capital Vol. 1 p.571.)<sup>46</sup>

In other words, the dialectical concept, which Althusser and Balibar had developed in Reading Capital, of the necessary conditions of existence of a mode of production had been omitted in the essay on ideology. This was a key omission because it precluded the possibility of his determining the "mode of intervention" of ideology in the mode of production. The omission had left Althusser with a concept of the production process as simply a means of producing commodities and a concept of the IBAs as a means for reproducing the relations of production of commodities. Such a sociological 'pluralism' of course is alien to Marxian theory which locates the reproduction of the relations of production within the production sphere itself. If he had remembered his earlier notion (it seems I was right in concluding that it was very underdeveloped) he would have realized straight away that, of course, ideology, law, politics etc. all "intervene" directly in the mode of production and that therefore, their function in production is not an effect from without. That is, "intervene" is the wrong word and implies a Positivist infrastructure/superstructure notion. Instead we should say that determinate political, legal and ideological relations are an aspect of (or, are inscribed in) the social practices of economic production, just as the social relations of production are inscribed in the political, legal and ideological practices of a social formation. The infrastructure/superstructure metaphor is just that, a metaphor, but it lived on in Althusser's discourse in his essay, even though he explicitly tackles the sense of the metaphor.

Having corrected this error, a door opens reminding him of the class divisions within production and hence the class conflict necessarily involved in that sphere.<sup>47</sup> Once that is apparent the weighty importance of class conflict in ideology is felt:

"In fact, the State and its Apparatuses only have meaning from the point of view of the class struggle ensuring class aggression and guaranteeing the conditions of exploitation and its reproduction. But there is no class struggle without antagonistic classes, whoever says class struggle of the ruling class says resistance, revolt and class struggle of the ruled class."<sup>48</sup> (my emphases)

46. (1970) op. cit. p.272.

47. (1971) op. cit. p.171.

48. Ibid. pp. 171-172.

The use of the dialectical concept of the necessary conditions of existence as the integral aspect of a mode of production has enabled Althusser to return the sadly-neglected 'other side' to his exposition - the side of oppositional, class ideologies. And he now argues that the installation of the ISAs and the dominance of ruling class ideology "guaranteeing" the reproduction of the classes is only enabled and maintained by class struggle within the ISAs.

Further, Althusser makes an admission of his biggest error. In a convoluted last paragraph he agrees that:

"... ideologies are not 'born' in the ISAs but from the social classes at grips in the class struggle: from their conditions of existence, their practices, their experiences of the struggle, etc."<sup>49</sup>

So the record is finally put straight: ideologies are born in practices and, therefore, there are class ideologies based on class practices which exist outside the practices of the ISAs. Importantly, the lynchpin of my exposition is supported: ideology's existence is interior to the social formation - it exists as an integral element of social practices. Ideology is not an "effect" of the social formation but an element within it. Its place in the social formation lies in social practice and it is to that concept we must now turn.

#### The concept of social practice

The investigation into the social determinations of ideology leads us to the conclusion that ideology is the immediate, spontaneous mode of consciousness which exists as an integral part of social practice. All the time I have tried to hold constant in the background the notion that the social formation is a totality of social practices interconnected by relations of dominance and subordination and that there are different levels of social practice, each carrying its own mode of existence. It is now necessary to outline the internal determin-

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49. Ibid. p.173.

50. Althusser and Balibar (1970) op. cit. p.258.

ations of social practice in general. This task is also made necessary because of the dangers that occur when the concept of social practice is brought into the arena. These dangers relate to the possible reading of social practice as a concept which centres on the human subject. As Balibar has noted, it is too easy for the centring of practice on the human subject to occur.<sup>50</sup> Such an event can lead to the reduction of social practice to the 'chosen action' of its agents (which is how it appears to them). This tendency will hopefully be avoided.

Each practice in the social formation is relatively autonomous and must be analyzed according to its own nature. To enable any such analysis, however, it is necessary to specify the concept of social practice-in-itself which is to be operative.

Each social practice has its own internal structure composed of elements and relations. As Althusser has defined it, and as I mentioned earlier, social practice is a process of transformation of determinate raw material, through the agency of human labour and specific means of production, into a social product.<sup>51</sup> These elements are linked by social relations. Practice is therefore conceived as a labour process or as production. The internal determinations of social practice can be outlined as follows:<sup>52</sup>

- A The elements - (1) raw material,
- (2) human agents,
- (3) instruments of production.
- B The relations between the elements.

It may be asked where ideology has got to, or where it fits into this schema. This answer is simple. Ideology is the spontaneous mode of consciousness and, it must not be forgotten, is carried by human agents in their brains. Therefore ideology is part of social practice in that it is part of the human agency. I have said nothing about the effectivity of ideology within a practice but also I have said nothing about the effectivity of any of the elements or relations within the social practice. The effectivity of ideology will be dependent on the importance of the human agency for the effectivity of a practice

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50. Althusser and Balibar (1970) op. cit. p.258.

51. Ibid. p. 316.

52. Following Althusser and Balibar (1970) op. cit. pp. 165-181 and 209-225.

in producing its object. In other words, some practices will involve the instruments of production as the dominant element, others may contain the dominance of the human agency and its constituent powers. All that is necessary here is to outline the concept of social practice, and that I have done.

Implicitly the concept of social practice employed here is an active rejection of any 'praxis'-type concepts which substitute the concept 'human action' in one way or another for 'social practice'. Such concepts of 'human action' fail to recognize the importance of 'nature' in social practice: the raw material and instruments of production. They also fail to acknowledge the 'natural' aspect of the human agency as an agency of historically determinate, biological capacity. These concepts only allow for choice, purposiveness, the ability to grant meaning etc. (what I would want to call the spontaneous mode of consciousness or ideology) as the determination of human movement. Thus the concept of 'human action' is idealistic and humanistic in that the concrete determinations of social practice are reduced to an ontological abstraction: human nature in general (i.e. abstract 'purposiveness'). I reject such notions as purely ideological in the sense that they are products of spontaneous consciousness: in the everyday experience events are put down to people's choices and wills, thus if times are bad it is said that man has an 'evil' nature or that he has gone 'bad'. The concept of social practice breaks with the ideological humanism of the concept of 'human action' since it sees two things: (1) that all the elements to a process of production of a social object are determinant in some way, and (2) that the social relations of the production, the relations between the elements, are a condition of existence of the production process. The concept of creative human 'praxis' or 'action' tends either to relegate (what it calls) 'nature' to a position outside the process of production of the social object, or to reduce nature to an eternal position as the obedient object of ideal man's imagination. Furthermore, notions of 'human action' seem to involve viewing the social relations of production as an after-effect of production rather than as implicit in its existence - 'man creatively produced an evil society which now constrains his creative potential' .

In conclusion, I should just note that I have outlined the internal determinations of social practice but not the determinations of social practice-in-its-social-existence, the determinations of a specific social practice. Analysis of specific practices in particular historical

periods and societies is a task pertinent to another project - the empirical analysis of a specific social phenomenon. The present work is one in the realm of general concepts in order to pave the way for empirical studies of particular social ideologies. Hence the specifically social nature of an historically determinate practice is an empirical matter outside the scope of this present work. However it should never be forgotten that, although general concepts are vital, they have no realized value until they are put into practice in concrete historical research.

### Deviance and social practice

Given these formulations on ideology and social practice, it is necessary to mention briefly some implications for the concept of deviance. Deviance, we have said, is an ideological formation or an association of ideological elements which finds its unity in its social existence as an aspect of social practice. From our further remarks it is clear that deviance is an ideological product of social practice. A social practice may have several products - main ones and by-products - a deviation may be one of them. If deviance, then, is so tied to a social practice or a complex of social practices, it is clearly not simply a product of the thinking brain. If we take the simple example of one deviation emerging out of one practice, we could say that deviance is an outcome of, and a subsequent element in, a social process of production (of a social object) which involves men and nature in combination. Thus, deviation derives from the part played by the human agents in a specific production process of a social object taking place within specific social relations. It would be wrong to say that a deviation has nothing to do with human agents because its connection with the elements of a social practice lies in the function of the human agency in its structure. But it would also be wrong to say that a deviation or an ideological formation was a product purely of men's thought. Without the developed biological capacity of the human agency the substance (thought-matter) of ideology could not exist but the form of the ideology (the deviation) is determined by the social relations within which these human agents work.

Deviance in general, therefore, is a product of social practice and an element within it: both its states, as a 'product' and as an 'element', existing within the human agency. It is determined in form by the social relations or structure of the practice that produced it. It is the necessary condition of existence, (as an ideological formation), of a particular social practice or complex of social practices. Thus deviance becomes an internal part of any social practice which produces it. Of course, an ideological formation may enter and sustain a social practice which did not produce it or it may be produced by a social practice yet not be compatible with it, resulting in its expulsion from its structure and possible displacement into another practice. Deviance should be understood as an ideological formation sustained in a social practice. It should not be seen as a practice nor as simply a self-definition carried by a 'deviant subject'. Nor is it a phenomenon that is created "purposively" by subjects as a reaction against social conditions. A deviance, as an ideological formation, may be carried in the practices of the people who are treated as 'deviants' - it may not be - this possibility is not a defining characteristic of deviance. If it does so exist then it may be 'activated' by the nature and consequences of the social practices engaged in by those people. Most importantly, we should realize that it is not a case of deviants creating deviance but of deviance being a necessary condition for the existence of deviants. Thus it can not be the 'deviants' that are of primary interest to social scientists who want to continue work in this field but rather the emergence and sustenance of deviant ideological formations within the structures of social practices. Deviance is a quality of the social structure, not of "the act" as the 'new criminologists' would have it. Deviance is a form of ideology thrown up by the structure of social practice. Therefore, if we wish to understand deviance and its changing forms of existence and appearance, we must study the historical movement of the structures of specific social practices.

PART TWO

READING IDEOLOGIES



## 3 CONTENT ANALYSIS: PRAGMATIC AND SPECULATIVE

Introduction

From a specification of the concept of ideology and of its place in social formations I shall now move on to the development of a theory of reading ideology in social discourses. This theoretical work is vital. I cannot move immediately from a concept of ideology to a reading of ideology for that would leave a gap in my theoretical discourse which would be prey to ideology, in the form of the 'commonsense', everyday-ideological notion of 'reading'. Without anticipating what comes ahead, I shall just say that 'reading' is usually taken as simply a physical act that is obvious in the simplicity of its accomplishment - like reading a newspaper over breakfast in the hazy clouds of the early morning. But this 'obvious' mode of reading is spontaneous and bathed in everyday ideology - this must be so from our conclusions about ideology in the previous chapters. Now it may well be true that my ideological reading of the press, like that of many others, may well be a radical or critical one which involves certain rules regulating who and what is believed and which tries to extract 'the facts' from propaganda. As such the presentation of a series of such readings may enlighten or affirm the everyday ideological readings of other news consumers - or it may not. But that is all that could be accomplished by such a subjective, ideological reading: its only value would be at the level of the politico-ideological struggle with the ruling class and its agents for the minds of the people. Clearly this is not irrelevant and a task that can and must be continued by Marxist militants every day. The first, semiological, reading (of press discourse) that I did (described in chapter 5) could be used adequately for such purposes. However, after completion of this reading, something continually worried me about the subjectivity of ideological readings and the question arose: could one have an objective reading of ideology as well as a subjective one? The rest of this text

is devoted to the task of discovering the outlines of an objective mode of reading ideology.

What follows in this chapter and the following three is an exposition of the investigations involved in the process of achieving the object of the construction of a theory of the objective reading of ideology. The exposition is largely devoted to notes, commentaries and critiques on materials which are either directly about reading ideology or which present a reading of press reports of 'political demonstrations'. Within this section I include in chapter 5 an exposition and critique of the semiological reading that I accomplished in 1973. I must acknowledge that these four chapters do not present treatments of all theories and methods of reading ideology. For example, there is nothing said about Lukacs's work on the novel or Goldmann's 'sociology of literature' or the work of the Frankfurt Marxists. Nor is there any consideration of the ethnomethodologists' conversational analysis as exemplified in the work of Sacks, Schegloff and Woerman. I think that these omissions are excusable on the grounds that I was not attempting to review the field but to accomplish the urgently required task of constructing a theory of the objective reading of ideology. Therefore, although it was necessary to examine many existing materials from other theoretical positions which specified modes of reading ideology, it was not necessary to read everything in the original. The important thing to do was to isolate the main problematics in the reading of ideology and identify their weaknesses. These problematics cut across a number of different theoretical and political positions. From the critique of these problematics I developed a theory of the objective reading of ideology which corresponds to the Marxian theory of ideology.

My 'second-hand' readings of Lukacs and Goldmann led to the provisional position that their work is Hegelian and idealistic in founding itself on the view that ideological discourses are the representations of a class 'world-view'. This is tautologous and the tautology is symptomatic of an absent adequate theory of ideology. The work of the Frankfurt Marxists, for example Adorno and Marcuse, seems to suffer from the same defect, only in this instance the effect is pure speculation about the relations between superstructural forms and the social formation. And as for ethnomethodological readings they are very similar to semiological readings in that they take a text and search for its intrinsic

connotations, taken-for-granted meanings etc.. I think it is fair to say that the works commented on in the next four chapters contain all the defects of the works ignored. The speculative-critical readings of radical deviancy theorists echo the readings of Lukacs, Adorno and Habermas. The structuralist and semiological readings echo those of ethnomethodology. So, all in all, I feel that these chapters do tackle the central issues head on even if they ignore some of the exponents of the positions on these issues. It must be borne in mind throughout, if the reader feels that I have 'short-changed' some of the materials dealt with, that the object is to construct a theory of the objective reading of ideology for Marxism and not to create a scholastically-comprehensive review of the minutiae of the field.

There are three questions which guide the discourse in these four chapters. They all flow from the concepts developed so far:

- (1) How does the problematic of reading ideology in question discern the absence or presence of ideology in discursive materials? That is, what are its methods?
- (2) What does the problematic see as the nature of any absence or presence of ideology in discursive materials? That is, how does it think the mode of existence of ideology in discourse?
- (3) What does the problematic under consideration specify as the grounds on which the analyst can read the ideology in the discourse? That is, how does it justify its readings?

These questions should enable us to draw out the deficiencies of the theories of reading ideology examined. They will enable us to explore the whole question of reading ideology. To repeat again: this theoretical work is vital since our practice must be an application of our theory and since there are no privileges (e.g. because of a spirit of militancy or congenital Marxism) or guarantees for that connection - the mode of practice must be produced in theory before it can be consciously realized.

The particular problematic which is the object of this chapter is that which takes the content of ideological discourse as its object. This may seem a peculiar thing to say since one might think that all problematics of reading ideology took the content as their object. However that is not so. As we shall see in chapters 5 and 6 some problematics take the form of the content as their object. This distinction between form and content separates the modes of reading dealt with in this chapter and those in the following two chapters. All the modes of

reading dealt with in this chapter are variants of the problematic of the content and those of chapters 4, 5 and 6 are variants of the problematic of the form. Form and content are the two sides of discursive material and all discourse-analysts have concentrated on one side at the expense of the other. My intention in these four chapters is to bring out the consequent weaknesses of each one-sided focus. Thus my critique in this chapter will demonstrate the absence of a theory of form in content analysis and, in the next three chapters, the absence of a theory of content in the analysis of form. Both my critiques will attempt to spell out the ramifications and consequences of these deficiencies and to make some necessary developments toward a Marxist theory of reading ideological discourse. These developments, of course, will contain an appreciation of the fact that ideological discourse is two-sided.

#### Content Analysis - a case of pragmatic empiricism

Berelson, in a well-known passage, defines content analysis as follows:

"Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication." <sup>1</sup>  
 The "technique" is said to involve the invention of a set of analytic categories which should be applicable without any problem of interpretation (this is said to constitute its 'objectivity') and which can be used on the whole of the analysed item (e.g. a news report) to produce results of general application (this constitutes its 'systematicity'). Once the categories have been created, the key operation in content analysis takes place: the quantification of "the extent to which the analytic categories appear in the content". <sup>2</sup> If we investigate the definitions of the terms and look closely at the assumptions behind and inscribed in the "technique" we shall find that a theory of ideology and its reading predicates this ideological practice of taking appearances as reality and confirming the fact by counting their extent.

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1. "Content analysis in communication research" in M. Berelson and M. Janowitz Reader in Public Opinion and Communication (1966 New York: Free Press) p.263.
  2. Ibid.

Content analysis, argues Berelson, is concerned with what is communicated, not the intentions of the communicator.<sup>3</sup> So, what is the object of content analysis? According to Berelson, the answer is: a body of meanings. But, apparently, not all meanings are relevant. Only those meanings which are shared between the communicator, his audience and the analyst are to be investigated. Content analysis concerns itself with "denotive" rather than "connotative" materials, with the aspects of the text which are part of a "common universe of discourse".<sup>4</sup> But what are the grounds for this supposed distinction between denotative and connotative communications? Berelson replies that communications can be placed on a continuum of universal comprehensibility. At one end we find denotative materials which are understood by all, and, at the other, connotative materials intelligible to some groups or individuals but not to others, and there are various gradations in between.<sup>5</sup> Only denotative materials should be dealt with using content analysis: and, even then, the quantification of this supposed body of meanings should only take place when the frequency of occurrence is thought to be "an important factor in the communication process".

What is to be deduced from the findings of the count? Berelson declared that content analysis was a "technique" to enable "description" and did not say anything about its explanatory value. So nothing is to be deduced, but wait! It appears that the 'knowledge' of the denotative content can legitimately support inferences about the intentions of the communicators!<sup>6</sup> But Berelson had forewarned us that he was only interested in the "what?" of communication, not the "why?", on the grounds that any content analysis which took its object as the motives and intentions of the communicator had "low validity" (without "direct data" on the communicators), "low reliability" (owing to the likelihood of inter-coder differences in interpretation) and "circularity" (deducing 'cause' from 'effect' would be followed by inducing 'effect' from 'cause').<sup>7</sup>

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3. Ibid. p. 262.

4. Ibid. pp. 264-265.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid. p. 264.

7. Ibid. pp. 262-263.

From this contradiction I conclude that content analysis is not simply a 'neutral' "technique" but a device for producing and implementing a particular, practically useful 'knowledge' about communicators' consciousness where the analyst cannot or does not wish to study it directly.<sup>8</sup> The real object of the 'knowledge' involved in this ideological practice is not the "manifest content" of the communication but the 'consciousness of the communicator'. It is thus an implicit notion in the practice of content analysis that 'communication' is achieved by and through an individual human subject and that what he or she says is a simple outcome of his or her consciousness. To illustrate the strength of my critical explication, let me note Berelson's words:

"Content analysis is often done to reveal the purposes, motives, and other characteristics of the communicators as they are (presumably) 'reflected' in the content ..."

Having drawn out the nature of the assumption or ideology involved in the practice of content analysis, the next task is to examine the relation between the ideology (the "assumption") and the action involved in the practice. My main thesis here is that this relation involves a severe contradiction, which in many writings is often antagonistic. Fundamentally, content analysis is an ideological practice whose action is in contradiction with the object of its corresponding ideology. Why is this so? Because:

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8. This conclusion is supported by the fact that content analysis developed rapidly in World War II and in the U.S.A. in the McCarthy period and by the fact that many of the studies using content analysis attempt to demonstrate to the communication-receivers that the message is 'biased' and that the communicators intend to deceive the receivers. In other words the social conjuncture of its development required an apparently scientific method which enabled the legitimacy and the transmission of the message: "Take no notice of them. They are not objective. They are trying to subvert you." As Lasswell noted:  
 "... it may be pointed out that quantitative ways of describing attention may serve many practical, as well as scientific, purposes. Anticipating the enemy is one of the most crucial and tantalizing problems in the conduct of war. The intelligence branch of every staff or operations agency is matching wits with the enemy. The job is to out-guess the enemy, to foretell his military, diplomatic, economic and propaganda moves before he makes them, and to estimate where attack would do him the most harm. A principal source of information is what the enemy disseminates in his media of communication." H. Lasswell "Why be quantitative?" in Berelson and Janowitz (1965) op. cit. p.253.  
 9. Op. cit. p.253.

the action only becomes 'technically' feasible on the condition that it is directed towards a "shared universe of discourse", and, therefore, its products can only tell its practitioners something about the nature of that "universe of discourse", they can provide no information about the "purposes, motives and other characteristics of the communicators". The necessary object of the action of content analysis is denotative discourse, but the necessary object of the ideology of content analysis is the communicator's consciousness.<sup>10</sup> The research action of the practice of content analysis gives a knowledge of an object different to the object of its implicit ideology!

However I do not think that we can leave the matter there. The contradiction between the object of the 'communications theory' and the object of the action or method of the ideological practice of content analysis has as a necessary condition of its existence the concept of the significance of a denotative meaning. This concept is the site of the expression of that contradiction inasmuch as its function is to mediate between its opposing components. For how can one use a method aimed at denotative meanings to produce a knowledge of the communicator's consciousness unless the repetition of denotative meanings is thought to signify something about that consciousness? Thus the notion of the significance of repeated denotative materials lies in dialectical relation to the contradiction between the object of the action and the object of the ideology in which it operates. The contradictory relation between the method and its ideology involves the concept of the significance of repetition as the vital cohesive function which enables that relation to continue: that is why the quantitative aspect of content analysis is seen by commentators as its most distinctive feature - this aspect is in fact crucial to the coherence of the practice.

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10. Whether the ideological practice is adequate to its political function of "detecting political propaganda" (as Lasswell puts it (1966) op. cit. p.254) is another matter. At the political level of the social formation, power is more important than internal logic. The products of the practice can be declared scientific, and used to support the theory that they reflect the consciousness of the communicators, simply by fiat from a position of power. Thus it is that "propaganda" is "detected" from the findings of a method which can only produce knowledge about the frequency of appearance of pieces of denotative discourse. In fact then, the detection of propaganda disguises the production of propaganda: a nice piece of ideological inversion.

We can now deal with the questions posed in our introduction. The absence or presence of ideology for content analysis, as we have seen, lies in the consciousness of the communicator, and the frequency or omission of certain kinds of denotative category is taken to signify the presence or absence of some kind of ideological consciousness in the communicator.<sup>11</sup> In consequence the absence or presence of an ideology is detected in content analysis by the counting (or estimation of quantitative extent) of the occurrence of these denotative categories - a procedure justified for the analyst by the alleged shared, universal nature of denotative signification.

Having laid bare the main aspects and interrelations constituting the structure of the practice, it is possible to make a critique of content analysis. The central argument must be the nonsensicality of the key notion of the significance of repetition. However much a message is repeated, if the receiver does not know what it means then it is not communicated to him. Repetition itself is insignificant (literally). Significance, however, is significant and if repeated would undoubtedly raise some kind of attention from its receiver. It is not the significance of repetition that is important but rather the repetition of significance. In which case the first question to answer concerns significance and perhaps then there can be some counting. But content analysis has no theory of significance. It merely assumes the significant existence (or existence-as-significance) of what it counts. It may be counting illusions or a fragmentary part of a real significance, but without a theory of significance it would not know: its concept of the significance of repetition gives it no knowledge of the significance of what is being repeated. The absence of a theory of signs, signification and significance renders content analysis absurd because its key concept is left unsupported and that concept gives it no knowledge of its avowed object, the content! The concept that holds content analysis together,

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11. Whether ideology is conscious (e.g. 'prejudice') or unconscious (e.g. 'unwitting bias') varies with the version or variant of 'communications theory' employed in the analysis.



the significance of repetition, is in itself a nonsense. In fact, therefore, 'content analysis' is an incorrect label: 'repetition speculation' would be more accurate, since its practitioners are merely speculating about the significance of repetition.

Aaron Cicourel arrives at the same criticism from a different theoretical perspective:

"any field researcher is confronted with the task of deciding how meanings are assigned to events. But in content analysis the project cannot get off the ground without some preliminary specification of the linguistic problems involved and of the cultural definitions presupposed in each analysis."<sup>12</sup>

Cicourel agrees that a theory of signs is required.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately Cicourel's critique is immersed in a "differential" concept of culture;<sup>14</sup> which involves a view of 'society' or 'culture' as the product of the empirical interaction of a mass of psyches. Consequently he is more concerned to know about the definitions of the categories in content analysis than the logic of counting their repetition:

"Since the content analyst is dealing exclusively in meanings of verbal communications, the categories used obviously presuppose rules which define the provinces of meanings under which elements in communication are to be assumed. The assumption that a quantitative description of communication content in terms of the frequency of occurrence of some defined characteristics is possible requires that the categories employed stand in some specifiable correspondence with the characteristics and that equivalence classes exist among the characteristics thereby permitting counting to take place. But Berelson does not explicate the theoretical assumptions and methodological procedures for generating equivalence classes."<sup>15</sup>

Similarly Cicourel is more concerned with the "normative rules governing communicator, audience and analyst interpretations of the meanings of one another's communications"<sup>16</sup> than the social relations governing the production and consumption of mass messages which structure the normative rules of interpretation held by communicators and receivers.<sup>17</sup>

12. A.V. Cicourel Method and Measurement in Sociology (1964 N.Y.: Free Press) p. 150.

13. Ibid. p. 155.

14. Zygmunt Bauman's name for it. See Bauman (1973) op. cit. ch.1, esp. pp. 173-

15. Op. cit. p. 150.

16. Ibid. p. 151.

17. It is doubtful, in my view, whether 'communicator' and 'audience' represent valid theoretical concepts in any case.

My second, more peripheral, criticism of content analysis is short and simple. It is an ideological practice containing empiricist thought. The analytic categories, which it employs as elements of significance worth counting, are said to be intrinsic to the material, yet they are really the practical arm of the undeveloped concept of 'denotation'. Content analysis holds that its concept of denotation is by nature at one with, or in correspondence to, the real object, the discursive material and its categories, when, I would suggest, the concept is in fact an element of the structure of content analysis's ideology, 'communications theory', which holds ideology, or connotative significance, to be a distorted, sectional discourse or a perversion of the truth. This 'communication theory' claims that what is denotative or universal, and what is connotative or sectional ideology, is obvious or pre-given to the naked eye. No justification is ever given for this claim: an insidious one, too, since it enables its proponents to convert their ideological assumptions into 'the true meaning' of discourse and those of their opponents into partial and disputable interpretations of that 'true meaning'. The concept of denotation becomes particularly insidious when operational in a research practice which is commonly granted scientific status and is effected forgetful of its unclarified, undeveloped, theoretical support and possible origin in the political conjuncture of the Cold War. The 'truth' (sic) of the theory (that is, its concepts of denotation and ideology) becomes transformed into 'neutral', operational procedure and the analytic categories are thus selected from the discursive material as significant, denotative units. What begins as a vague concept of ideology as a distortion of truth or genuine discourse finally ends its life as a method of arbitrary selection. The ideology inscribed in the practice of content analysis thus transforms itself into the method of category-selection and disappears, so enabling the conclusion that the method or practice is "objective" or "scientific". Clearly with an unclarified notion of significance, or denotative discourse, the 'method' is arbitrary and unsystematic, and could not be anything else. Therefore, we can conclude that content analysis is based on empiricist thinking which provides that the 'truth' is self-evident and visible - a provision which conceals the operation of its own spontaneous concept of ideology.

This brings us right back to Berelson's definition of content analysis as a "research technique". He can see it as such since its corresponding ideology of ideology disappears in its practice which, therefore, renders that consequent practice a simple matter of efficac-

ious technique and arduous method. Content analysis can thus be presented as a scientific, neutral, objective, technical device for the analysis of content when in fact it is a ritualized ideological practice, based on a contradictory and unclarified structure of ideas, logically only enabling the description of repetition. Thus grasped as 'a technique for studying content', content analysis can act as a shield behind which the real activity of slandering the invented motives of the invented enemy can proceed.<sup>18</sup> Content analysis is social science's Cold War methodology.

The third criticism is that content analysis is a necessary condition of existence of a 'communications theory' and therefore reflects the weaknesses of 'communications theory'. It is the peculiarity of 'communications' theories that they are theories of 'communication', that is, that they attempt to attain a knowledge of 'communication'. The concept of 'communication' refers to a process whereby one human being emits a message which is received and comprehended in its (or some other) meaning by another human being. Given that reference point, it is obvious that the key aspect of 'communication' is that it involves 'meaning' as a central element. 'Communication' is thus purely an interpersonal, interactional process where meaning is transmitted, negotiated, or modified: meanings are held to be created and affirmed by reciprocal, conscious, interpretive subjects. And this is the whole problem. As a consequence of the structure of 'communications' theory, the question of ideology-transmission is reduced to the question of conscious/unconscious bias by the 'communicating' subjects and, therefore, to the identification of frequent themes which "reflect" that bias. I would prefer a view which held that the transmission of a particular ideology is an effect of the structure of the production process involved and the historically developed location of that structure in the totality of the social formation; and that the people carrying out this production are material, subjective elements in the structure of production. The 'communicators'' exact role in the process of production is specified by the structure of that production. This is not to say that the people involved are irrelevant machines, far from it. It is to say that they do have an important location in the process in that they carry conscious/unconscious ideology, but that the

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18. For examples of this see N. Leites and H. D. Lasswell The Language of Politics (1940 New York: Stewart) and the titles in the bibliography of Berelson and Janowitz (1966) op. cit..

precise form and effectivity of the ideologies they employ in the process of production is determined by the mode of production and its place in the social formation. Hence, in my view, 'bias' and its alleged quantitative indicators are merely superficial points of focus: more consequential and fundamental are social relations (which produce particular forms of ideology and consequent 'biases') and hierarchies of class power (which govern the effectivity of particular ideologies).

Content analysis is deficient as an operational research practice since it involves a communications theory which sees ideology as the product of the motivated human consciousness. The practical consequences of this theory for the method of content analysis are: (1) the strict limitation of the practice to the counting of denotative materials, because it is held that the majority share those meanings as rational human subjects in reciprocal interaction, and (2) the practice becomes a device for producing data about the communicator's consciousness when, as we have seen, it is only a device for telling us about repetitions. The problem with the view of ideological discourse as the product of human consciousness is the fact that all this view declares is that a person's beliefs as discerned in the text are a product of a person's beliefs. Ideology is human consciousness for communications theory (whether it is seen as all forms of consciousness or just certain particular forms); therefore it cannot be its own product. Again we find ourselves back to an earlier point: content analysis has no theory of signs or significance. It merely asserts 'signification' and 'symbol' as existing bits of reality. This absence of a developed theory of the sign constitutes its most damaging deficiency. For unless a theory of significance exists it is impossible to have a rational method for the analysis of signs. When the impossible is attempted, as one would expect, the result is an irrational method based on an everyday or commonsense ideology of ideology where the socially significant is an asocial product of the peculiarity of the individual psyche. And, alongside the homo economicus of political economy and homo sapiens of social anthropology, emerges homo significans of communications theory. He is ultimately the hidden hero and creator in content analysis: the human essence (albeit in its evil, demonic form) becomes the ultimate source of ideology.

Content analysis exists in a theoretical vacuum created by the absence of a theory of significance. Hence we must look elsewhere to discover a theoretically valid method for the reading of ideology. But before we do that, let us illustrate our theoretical critique with a brief look at the employment of content analysis in a major sociological

research project dealing, inter alia, with the press signification of a political demonstration.

Halloran, Elliott and Murdock in Demonstrations and Communication<sup>19</sup> provide an illustration of a sophisticated usage of content analysis. Their object is the "inferential structure" employed unconsciously by 'media men' in making news.<sup>20</sup> This "inferential structure" exists in the minds of newsmen but not at the conscious level; it is seen as an "underlying frame of mind":<sup>21</sup>

"the development of an 'inferential structure' is not the development of a pro or con bias but is a process of simplification and interpretation which structures the meaning given to the story around its original news value".<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, their view of the "limited" interpretation of the 1968 Grosvenor Square demonstration by the press and T.V. in the U.K. was that it was an effect of the communicators' consciousness, as it was externally determined by sociological factors, notably "professional socialization":

"However, the point has been made and enough has been said to indicate that the selection and presentation of news is not simply a function of conscious attitudes and deliberate policies. It springs from an underlying frame of mind which itself is related to occupational and institutional arrangements."<sup>23</sup>

19. (1970 Harmondsworth: Penguin Books). This text can be used to exemplify content analysis since the method is used. However it must be noted that Halloran et al. make several sociological developments from the basic communications theory implicit in the method. However these developments in no way reverse or modify the subjectivist core of the theory of communication implicit in the practice of content analysis. They merely build an edifice of sociological determinism upon it.

20. The term "inferential structure" was coined by Lang and Lang. See Halloran et al. (1970) op. cit. p.215.

21. J.Galtung's term. Quoted in Halloran et al. (1970) op. cit. p.26.

22. Halloran et al. (1970) op. cit. pp.215-216.

23. *ibid.* p.318. The concept of linear causation is clearly effected here. Elsewhere they divulge the Original Sin: professional socialization (pp.88-89). Professional socialization is the main "occupational" arrangement which causes men to transmit a bias of the truth or an ideology. This is a sociological version of homo significans: his evil was learned in his social interaction. When Halloran et al. refer to "structure" or to "occupational and institutional arrangements" they are referring only to relations between men, that is, conscious, signifying subjects - not to relations between men and nature. See the discussion later on (pp. 332-342) for a theorization of the emergence of 'news values' out of particular social relations which places 'news' ideologies within their specific production context.

"The point is that faced with a gap between what they knew about events in an area and what was necessary for a complete interpretation, there appears to have been a tendency for newsmen to accept the interpretation which was in line with their pre-conceptions. This emphasized features of the event relevant to the story's main news angle."<sup>24</sup>

The inferential structure of the communicators takes the form of shared "news angles" or "news values" and these angles structure the content. From here the task of our analysts is to "identify" the "relevant" news angles and transform them into coding categories for a quantitative analysis.<sup>25</sup> In this way they can count the "unwitting bias" of the communicators. This process is objective,<sup>26</sup> has "precision"<sup>27</sup> and provides a "partial explanation" "of the way in which various patterns of coverage developed".<sup>28</sup> The rest of the explanation of the coverage is provided for by an analysis of the "multiplicity of choices and decisions"<sup>29</sup> (my emphases) which constitute the organization of the mass media. Thus the whole explanation of the news presentation ultimately rests on the human consciousness: men make decisions, have attitudes, carry unconscious biases. A typical communications theory is involved here: ideology in the news is caused by human subjectivity which, in this case, is evil because of the hierarchy of intersubjective relations involved in news organizations and its relation to the whole national hierarchy of intersubjective relations.

Content analysis is used to count the effects of the 'unconscious framework'. Its use here is qualified in the usual way:

"Due to the restrictions imposed by the techniques available, the content analysis deals only with those aspects of the coverage which can be systematically identified and measured."<sup>30</sup>

From Berelson we could assume that the restrictions limit usage to denotative materials - materials that rate high on the alleged 'continuum of relative comprehensibility'. Halloran et al, in order "to maintain a

24. Ibid. p. 178.

25. Ibid. esp. pp. 92-96.

26. Ibid. p. 96 (implicit).

27. Ibid. p. 92.

28. Ibid. p. 125.

29. Ibid. Again we see an example of 'structure' as a hierarchy of human views and intersubjective relations: relations of ownership and control over the means of production are absent.

30. Ibid. p. 125.

balance between precision and insight",<sup>31</sup> are more ambitious and attempt to analyse the denotative system of a particular group. Their coding categories are based on the alleged importance of the two universally-shared news angles of 'negativity' and 'personality'<sup>32</sup> as they are applicable to the "pre-event" coverage. So the 'denotative system' used here, therefore, is one allegedly shared by a particular group of people, journalists. As in classical content analysis, the object of enquiry is said to be content that can be "systematically identified and measured". These two particular angles were suggested by Galtung and Ruge, in an oft-quoted article,<sup>33</sup> to be likely characteristics of a story that became news. Thus the categories employed by Halloran et al. emerged from the 'data' of Galtung and Ruge's study of news reports of military conflicts; this latter study derived its notion of the importance of these two angles from its 'data'. Thus the effects of the factors operational in the reporting of military conflicts are taken by Halloran et al. as the explanation of the question 'what is news?'. The thing-to-be-explained became the explanation for Galtung and Ruge and so too for Halloran et al.; the thing-to-be-explained, 'personality' and 'negativity' categories in the discourse of the news, are taken as the explanations. In consequence Halloran et al.'s analysis is enabled, by the application of these two explanatory categories to the items (press cuttings) in the "pre-event coverage", to produce corresponding coding categories for the analysis of the "event coverage". Thus what they take to be the real object, the "content" or the "event coverage", is nothing but the object of their ideological practice (the 'biased' parts of the discourse), an object which is created through the application of the coding categories derived from the pre-event coverage as examined in the light of the categories of "personality" and "negativity" (which include, for example, "violence", "splits and boycotts" and "external influences").

31. Ibid. p. 92.

32. Ibid. pp. 90-91.

33. J. Galtung and M. Ruge "The structure of foreign news: the presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus crises in four foreign newspapers" Jo. of International Peace Research (1965) pp. 64-90.

Before they start counting the frequency of these categories, then, the result is pre-given. 'Personality' and 'negativity' new values are assumed to be immanent in all news and must therefore appear in the content in some shape or form. 'News' has been declared, in a piece of classical communications theory, to be essentially a product of "news angles", perceptions by newsmen. In typical content analysis fashion, particular categories are arbitrarily said to have significance for the communicators under study. The effectivity of "news angles" in general, and of the two aforementioned ones in particular, is then 'planted' in the "event coverage" through the coding categories and is subsequently extracted as 'a discovery' after the application of science, that is, content analysis. Even the use of the term "event coverage" itself does not signify the real object but only describes an ideological element of news production, an "event" (the creation of 'news' within 24 hour cycles or, more conventionally, the concentration on "events"), and elevates it into a category of scientific analysis. Thus, all in all, the things-under-observation, the "news angles", are a product of the empiricism of the communications theory employed, and the concept of the effectivity of "news angles" is planted in the 'answer' in the form of the concept of the object, "the event coverage" and the coding categories. The very concepts and categories which Halloran et al. use to explain biases are, in fact, the very constituents of that bias - the explicandum not the explicans. Things that appear in practice as important (e.g. "event coverage", "news angles") are taken, in true empiricist fashion as facts which explain themselves. Apart from their idealist explanation in 'professional socialization', nowhere do Halloran et al. try to find the mechanism which produces these appearances: 'professional socialization' is only a part explanation of how 'news angles' are passed on - it does not specify the social relations which generate them. If it is found regularly in research practice that particular 'news angles' appear to be determinants of bias, the question is: why do these particular 'news angles' appear in this way?

It is these relations between their theory of communication and their method of content analysis which enables them to conclude that they had "shown" that:

"... the story was interpreted in terms of the same basic issue which



had originally made it news."<sup>34</sup>

In one sense it is right to deny that they had shown any such thing, but in a peculiar sense (not the sense they imply) they have. They displayed concepts, practices and their interconnexions which give birth to and structure such a statement. That statement is simply a precis of the operation of their concepts and practices, a summary of their 'display of mind' (Blum's phrase) in the book. All they are saying is: news is news because of the employment of news angles and these news angles structure the form of the news! My conclusion from all this is that the actual counting itself is absolutely irrelevant to their 'theorization' - its results simply illustrate the concepts driving it, they do not provide any 'truth' for them. Why is it irrelevant? Because their conclusion is given theoretically beforehand through their objects (the "event coverage" and "pre-event coverage") and their concepts ("news angles", "inferential structure").

What is actually wrong with the concepts of Halloran et al.? Answer: the whole edifice (such as it is) collapses when one asks the simple question - where do the "news values" come from, because the true answer is that they have been extracted from some news reports by Galtung and Ruge. The false answer given by Halloran et al. is that they originate from the shared professional socialization of journalists and hence journalists have them in their minds (unconsciously).<sup>35</sup> In other words, the apparent 'slants' or 'biases' from some selected news reports have been observed and called 'news angles' and, in the style of the political economist and the anthropologist,<sup>36</sup> Halloran et al. have concluded that, since 'news angles' existed, they must be a product of the human will (albeit its unconscious motor) as it is determined by some external, prior, causal factor. In fact, however, 'news angles' did not derive from this ultimate causal factor, professional socialization, they were extracted from news reports. Therefore 'news angles' derive from 'news angles'. They are an impression transformed into an unreasoned, simple theoretical assertion. My objection to that is that such a thin 'theory' has little

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34. Halloran et al. (1970) op. cit. p. 300.

35. Ibid. pp. 38-39.

36. See Althusser and Balibar (1970) op. cit. pp. 158-164.

chance of generating knowledge adequate to its object. 'News angles' are 'news angles' - that does not tell us very much about 'news angles'. In conclusion, to develop from the work of Halloran et al., we need to understand the social mechanism which produces 'news angles', we need to see 'news' as an objective function rather than a subjective inclination, we need the concept of the unconscious which is embarrassingly absent from their work, we need a theory of ideology as a product (and consequent component) of determinate social practices, and we need to conceptualize the place of particular ideologies within particular practices in order to get beyond the sociologist's ideological concept of professional socialization. As their work stands, it lacks a social theory of ideology and is thus forced into asserting that the presence of ideology ('prejudice', 'imbalance') in the news is a product of ideology ('news angles'). This is the same basic absence that characterizes the theory and practice of content analysis in general. In conclusion, Demonstrations and Communication illustrates the bankruptcy of content analysis by practising it.

### Information theory<sup>37</sup>

Like content analysis, information theory blossomed from wartime. It is an approach to communications studies deriving from physics and electronic engineering. Its proponents are rightly ambivalent about the transfer of a theory from one field, pure physics and electronic engineering, to another, communication studies, but that does not deter them. To explicate and illustrate the structure of information theory, I shall look at Brian Winston's Image of the Media.<sup>38</sup> Like other information theory supporters, Winston admits that:

"It is dangerous to extend a theory from pure physics into less discrete areas."<sup>39</sup>

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37. This will not be dealt with in great depth since its influence at this time remains limited.

38. (1973 London: Davis-Poynter).

39. Ibid. p. 32.

But nevertheless he goes on to claim that:

"It is because of this substantial extension to the mathematics that it is possible to see in information theory a classic attempt by Western man to find a system of interpreting the universe. Such systems are all now in jeopardy. Information theory and its child, cybernetics, possess perhaps more validity than some older universal keys because they are part of the theoretic basis of those machines which are most destroying our old categories and conceptual forms."<sup>40</sup>

This amazing claim alternates with more sober statements which suggest that, combined with sociological work, "information theory" could be very powerful. More specifically, the use of information theory is said to enable us to

"analyse on a statistical basis the words in which the various codes used by the media, note the differences that occur from society to society and gauge more accurately than by other means the relative informational content of different messages."<sup>41</sup>

These claims collapse when we realize that information theory in the communications field is simply the use of an analogy. What in fact happens is that the concepts of electronic engineering are taken as applicable, on the grounds of insightful analogy, to what is seen as 'human communication processes'. The problem lies in the fairly unmediated transformation of the concepts from one field into the concepts of the other without regard to their use as analogy. Consequently there is an absence of argument as to why these concepts are appropriate: the metaphor becomes the reality. Thus, although information theory in engineering is concerned with the quantity of 'information' that can pass through a particular channel, the reduction of interference ("noise") and the use of feedback devices to control the strength of the input, information theory in communications studies implicitly equates information (the "reduction of incertitude") with meaning (whilst explicitly denying that it does so), noise with misunderstanding and feedback with learning.<sup>42</sup> And consequently Winston is enabled to construct his statements about the ability of information theory to "quantify the content of the message".

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40. Ibid. p. 83.

41. Ibid. p. 82.

42. Ibid. ch. 4. Equations which, unsurprisingly, given the lack of a theory of signs or ideology, fail to provide information theory with a method of analysis; mere speculations are the only consequence.

But is this analogy insightful? No. The use of 'information', in the engineering sense, is inadequate for a theory of reading ideology. Why? Because the notion that any piece of discourse contains a certain number of "bits" of information<sup>43</sup> is based on several mechanical and untenable assumptions (or articles of faith): that the whole system is static and stable, that each "bit" of information is equal in strength, that there is universal sharing of the code constituted by the bits, that the communications system is totally autonomous and has no 'external' conditions of existence, that the relation between the communicator and receiver is non-antagonistic and non-contradictory, that this latter relation functions and therefore was created to that end. This mechanical, systems theory of communication is more suited to electrical processes than social processes and has many absent concepts, but, notably, it lacks a concept of significance. The "reduction of incertitude" is assumed to occur without the "receiver" actively reading the code which is said to structure the message and thus dictate the meaning. 'Certainty' is alleged to be intrinsic to the message whatever the mode of its production or the class of its consumer. 'Certainty' is not a product of class relations of production and consumption of mass messages over time but the intrinsic property of the message. The electrical engineer's concepts of redundancy, noise and feedback cannot be used as analogies unless there is some theory of significance. How could a message have a definite, large 'redundancy' score unless we assume that the receiver automatically receives the non-redundant bits of information? It is logically impossible for it to be otherwise. Hence a consensus of meaning is always assumed to be simply and automatically extant. Similarly it is logically impossible to have fixed redundancy scores if we argue that the specific historical changes in the elements of meaning can change their interrelations. (Consequently I would suggest that the concepts of information theory are compatible with structural linguistics and/or structuralist anthropology which also assume that changes in relations are independent of changes in the units of the structure.)<sup>44</sup> The elements of the code are fixed in information theory. All round the latter is very much an ahistorical,

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43. Ibid. pp. 83-85.

44. This seems to be supported by Smith's linking of information theory with and the linguistics of Chomsky and the anthropology of Pike, and by Slater's combination of the work of Levi-Strauss with that of Shannon and Weaver. See A.G. Smith (ed.) Communication and Culture (1966 N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston) and E. Slater Levi-Strauss in Fleet Street (Unpublished M.A. dissertation, 1970 University of Essex).

static, consensual, structural functionalism.

In conclusion, lacking a theory of ideology, information theory is unable to discern the absence or presence of ideology, nor even its efficiency. Thus, of course, neither can it inform us of the nature of ideology's effects or of the grounds for the analyst's ability to read them.

### Speculative criticism

Both the modes of reading discourse discussed so far are products of an empiricist problematic. The relation of the reader to the discourse has been denied its dialectical nature. Whereas, in reality, the reader constructs a reading out of the discourse which, in turn, is effective in the development of his 'means of reading', (his structures of significations or ideology), in content analysis and information theory the reader is a "scientific" analyst discovering the intrinsic, pre-given, characteristics of the content. The reader is subservient to the dictates of the truth of the text. His reading is innocent, it is the text that is found guilty. The third mode of reading ideological discourse I wish to consider is also non-dialectical. It is a mode frequently found in the sociology of deviance and bears remarkable similarity to the mode of literary criticism practised in 'English studies' for many a decade.

Traditional literary criticism has many variants, but has two basic, ideological elements dominating its practice. Firstly it involves a notion of the text as self-sufficient or self-enclosed. That is, the text is seen as intrinsically separate from its reading and its properties are to be found on the surface, readily available to a sensitive reader. Secondly, in connexion with this first point, the reader must be thorough, sensitive and critical. He must give himself to the discourse in all its richness. No 'model' or 'method' is adequate because a 'method' could not deal with the complexity of the text in all its variable wonder. We are reminded of the similarity to content analysis; Berelson's remarks illustrate the link:

"since the content represents the means through which one person or group communicates with another, it is important for communication research that it be described with accuracy and interpreted with insight. Communication content is so rich with human experience and its causes and effects so varied, that no single system of substantive categories can

be devised to describe it."<sup>45</sup>

This view is shared by many literary critics and is an index of the concept of knowledge as a 'model' against which the critic can juxtapose an ever pre-given reality; a concept found only in empiricist problematics.<sup>46</sup> This notion of the text's richness of meaning is also symptomatic of the substantive theory which corresponds to the empiricist epistemology, the theory of communication which views discourse as the chosen meanings of an intentional author. Both literary criticism and content analysis share this theory which specifies the text as the concretization of a complex of intended meanings; in other words, as a complex 'human communication'. Consequently both enterprises spend their time attempting to discover what the communicator 'really' or 'actually' communicated. In content analysis this activity is speculative in form and pragmatic in content. It is the reverse in literary criticism; here the form is pragmatic and the content speculative. The substance of its operation is speculation over the 'real meaning' of the text; an activity which produces a narcissistic esotericism in critics regarding the quantities of literary sensitivity they possess and a contemptuous hypercriticism which functions as a display of the magnitude of those quantities. Literary criticism is therefore basically the reading of texts in a speculative, empiricist manner which produces criticism as its corresponding mode of discourse. The form of the operation of literary criticism, its criticism, is pragmatic in that the speculation focusses randomly on the discourse, having renounced any possibility of method. Consequently any systematicity or coherence achieved by the speculative criticism is a random one with untheorized foundations. And this is, of course, why I describe the mode of reading as speculative. It cannot be anything else without a theory of ideology and its reading.

Speculative criticism, then, involves a critical reading of texts without any theory of reading. It is this mode of reading ideological discourse that is characteristic of studies of press reports in the sociology of deviance. The operation of this mode can be well illustrated by Cohen and Young's book, The Manufacture of News: Deviance, Social Problems and The Mass Media.<sup>47</sup> In producing a reading of this text, let

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45. (1966) op. cit. p. 260.

46. See Althusser and Balibar (1970) op. cit. pp. 117, 118.

47. (1973 London: Constable).

us look firstly at the effects of the structure of the problematic of speculative criticism on the book as a whole. Only one article in the book focusses on the question of the discernibility/transparency of ideology in its effects and that one is heavily edited.<sup>48</sup> The other articles that involve a reading are all 'critical' and are thoroughly devoid of any theory of reading ideology. Next we can also note that the 'linking' sections between the readings also effect the problematic. The introduction is classic in its terminology and its absences:

"The second Part (of the book) is the largest and consists of separate case studies - using diverse sources and methods - on the modes of presentation and underlying models of deviance and social problems employed in the media."<sup>49</sup> (my emphases)

Part Two is entitled "Modes and Models". In the preface to that part the editors comment that:

"The first set of readings describes the content of the images presented to the public by the mass media, contrasting this, where possible with evidence from alternative sources."<sup>50</sup> (My emphases.)

The transparency of the "models" structuring the content is given and thus unproblematic: they are assumed to be immediately readable. This elision of the concept of immediate readability is coupled with a political concern for the content of the models which, without its corresponding theory, exists as naked protest, a kind of Hobsbawmian "primitive rebellion" at the level of ideological practice.

Let us listen to the editors' own words, bearing in mind our comments on communication and literature studies:

"To stress the creative nature of journalism and the way it moulds events into particular world views is to narrow the distinction between fiction and non-fiction. From this point of view, neither form of writing is inherently 'superior': our critical evaluations do not relate to the actual use of an interpretative paradigm - this is inevitable - but to the content of the models and world views which shape such interpretations, whether by journalist, film producer or novelist."<sup>51</sup>

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48. S. Hall's paper "The determination of news photographs" in Cohen and Young (1973) op. cit. pp. 176-190.

49. Cohen and Young (1973) op. cit. p.11.

50. Ibid. pp. 93, 99.

51. Ibid. p. 97.

This passage illustrates our theory of speculative criticism very well. Its illustrative elements can be broken down into 7 sections as follows:

1. "the creative nature of journalism"
2. "it moulds events into particular world views"
3. "an interpretative paradigm - this is inevitable"
4. "the models and world views which shape such interpretations"

These four pieces of discourse reflect<sup>52</sup> the basic element of the "communication studies" problematic: the authorship of meaning lies in the human nature of the agents of communication. Thus Cohen and Young are, according to my theory of speculative criticism, arguing that 'subjectivity' in journalists' discourse is unavoidable and that therefore it cannot be criticized in itself. It is unavoidable because of the characteristic of journalism as an occupation which is necessarily carried out by human agents who can only act and think subjectively. All discourse is simply a product of human agency. Thus all practices producing a discourse are equivalent in this problematic:

5. "to narrow the distinction between fiction and non-fiction"
6. "neither form of writing is inherently superior"
7. "whether by journalist, film-producer or novelist"

These examples illustrate my theory of the continuity within "communications studies" as the product of their view of the 'origin' of a communication in its intentional author. All modes of discourse production are equal in that they involve human agency. Consequently, within this 'subjectivist' problematic, Cohen and Young can only protest against the "content" of the "authors" interpretations: analysts of ideology can only be critical, they can only make "critical evaluations" or subjective comments. Operating strictly within such a problematic, analysts are forbidden a scientific knowledge of the content by their own premises; all they can do is 'critically evaluate'.

I have shown that the discourse of a subjectivist problematic is reflected in Cohen and Young's theory of the 'human' nature of communication: 'bias' in press reports is held to be "inevitable". In this sense their work is similar to the theory of communications in content analysis. However there is a development in their work from the simple

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52. I use the term in its dialectical sense clarified in the discussion in chapter 2. Thus these "pieces of discourse" are a condition of existence of a certain theoretical problematic.



communications theory involved in the method of content analysis. Like Halloran, Elliott and Murdock, they view "news", sociologically, as a product of the necessities of the social organizations that produce newspapers, not as the simple necessity of a communicator's ideology.<sup>53</sup> "News" is still seen as a product of journalists' subjective interpretations but those interpretations are caused externally by the requirements of organizations for the production of newspapers. Journalists' interpretations are the effect of a prior cause:

"News, rather, is manufactured by journalists through interpreting and selecting events to fit pre-existing categories, themselves a product of the bureaucratic exigencies of news organizations and the particular concentration of media control and ownership ... distortion is not limited to the heavy hand of direct censorship but is a less obvious process - often unconscious and unstated - of interpreting the event in terms of an acceptable world view."<sup>54</sup>

Thus, as in Halloran et al.'s work, a sociological, linear cause-effect, determinism is added to the basic ideology of 'human communications' intrinsic to content analysis. In this fact, we have the grounds for stating that Cohen and Young have not repudiated the ideology of content analysis.

Part Two of Cohen and Young's text consequently consists largely of readings which, in themselves, do not repudiate the ideology of content analysis. In fact some of the readings are classic content analyses.<sup>55</sup> Part Three of the text is devoted to readings supporting Cohen and Young's new deviancy problematic which sees that images of deviance disseminated by the media fall into a narrow range around a "consensual image of society" and that the consumers can "rarely escape" the boundaries of these images of deviance. Consumers are highly "segregated" into "normative ghettos" and, therefore, know little about the nature of social

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53. Unlike Halloran et al., however, they do not explicitly adhere to the "technique" of counting categories. They, like the literary critics, reject the "objectivity of method" as a means of comprehending data which is seen as full of the richness of human experience. That is, their position is not a Weberian one as is that of Halloran et al..

54. Cohen and Young (1973) op. cit. p. 97.

55. Ibid. the articles by Berelson and Salter, Davis, Nunnally and Linsky.

deviance. Thus the media reinforce the "consensual image of society" already present in the consumer brain.<sup>56</sup> The methodological individualism or subjectivism of the new deviancy problematic in the sociology of deviance thus finds its natural theory of communications: 'deviant labels' are the interpretations of human subjects in interaction which are "reinforced" by the 'labels' or 'images' disseminated by other human subjects, also in interaction (the "social organization" of news). Deviance images in this problematic are simply constituted by the customary notions of right and wrong held by people and reinforced by other people in powerful positions, such as journalists. In this concept of deviance there is no sense of its 'concrete' base, that is, its material determinations. Deviance, according to my formulations, is indeed a mental composition carried by human agents, but it is not simply a "moral" notion grounded in a consensus of consciousness (whether 'authentic' or 'contrived'). Deviance is firmly grounded in the social practices of a social formation. The unity of an ideological formation is given by its integral location in a social practice which takes place under determinate material conditions and within determinate social relations. The subjectivist concept of deviance is one-sided and fails to grasp the objective, concrete side of deviance as an idea sustained, produced and effective within specific, social practices. Hence it fails to grasp the very reasons why deviance can be seen by observers as a moral notion grounded in custom or consensus. When social practice sustains an idea over time, it loses its character as a product and element of specific social practices and appears simply as a natural, pre-given, eternal, moral essence. The labour, from which a social conception of deviance emerges, disappears in the product and if the product survives long enough it becomes "customary", it takes on the appearance of a natural custom, the settled definitions of a people. Thus, 'political demonstration' is an idea which reflects long-standing political relations in capitalist societies and which is employed and sustained within various cultural or intellectual agencies, such as the press and novels. By now, its meaning is taken for granted and its practical grounding has disappeared from view. Subjectivist theories only grasp morality as it appears in its outward aspect as a given custom, as a peculiarity of a people, as the effect of a 'social contract' (either chosen or

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56. Ibid. pp. 337-349.

forced). They fail to understand that the character of deviance as a moral order is a merely transient impression or appearance (although a real one, nevertheless) supported by the stability of a social formation and the existence, within that formation, of social practices which maintain the particular deviation in question.

The fourth part of Cohen and Young's book is entitled "Do-it-yourself media sociology", implying that reading ideology requires no theory and is a pursuit Anyman and Everyman can take up. It is simply a matter of technique and the imaginative use of practical devices - just like putting up shelves. Under the heading "Suggested Projects" the following 'handy' advice is given:

"The project you pick depends on how ambitious you are. You might want to limit yourself to one form of mass media - for example, the press - and to one form of deviance - for example, vandalism - and you might want to confine yourself to a simple description of the dominant imagery through which this phenomenon is reported."<sup>57</sup> (my emphases)

"Simple description" only occurs as an effect of an empiricist problematic. Further on, our would-be, do-it-yourself, empiricist, speculative critic is advised to learn "something about content analysis and other techniques of collecting and classifying and coding your material."<sup>58</sup> Any old "technique" (note the use of the term) will do - as long as it 'works' - it's only 'a way in' to the 'data'. Coding categories are not theoretical issues - but merely materials in the handiwork: base them on the data, dress them up as explanatory and present as confirmation of your theory.

In conclusion, The Manufacture of News is a good illustration of speculative criticism. The transparency of ideology in its effects is given. The nature of the absence/presence of ideology, and the grounds enabling a reading of ideology are not seen as issues. Thus the book speculates with a criticism of the consensualism and conservatism of media products. But the critique is undermined by its nudity of theory (and consequent appearance as primitive protest) and the pragmatism of the abstraction formed lazily upon it. Again there is a gaping absence of an elaborated, adequate theory of ideology. Nowhere is this more evident than in this fourth part of the book. Here, theory and method are treated with contempt and as long as the approach is critical, any kind of speculation as to the nature of the discourse is permissible

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57. Ibid. p. 373.

58. Ibid. p. 377.

Nowhere is it clearer that the subjectivist problematic of communications is simply prepared to take the truth of its sense-impressions on trust.

Young's paper in the book "The myth of the drug taker in the mass media", is an excellent example of speculative reading in full flow.<sup>59</sup> Without any hesitation or doubt, Young immediately moves into a reading of the media. He fails to specify which "media" exactly, or precisely how much media he bases his speculations on. However, we need not worry too much about that, except to note that such methodological anarchism is typical of speculative criticism. Young soon suggests that 'news' is not just information and that "facts do not speak for themselves". He argues that the mass media offer "a consistent world view", "an amazingly systematic frame of reference".<sup>60</sup> It is interesting to note that he immediately assumes that the fact of this 'media world view' speaks for itself and can be heard by anyone who listens. He continues (using terms such as "model" and "mythology") with a series of speculations, which argue that media myths are "grounded in a particular view of society". This "world-view" contains contradictions and the media's myths are an attempted resolution of these contradictions. He gives no reasons why this should be the case. He cannot do that because he is simply speculating: a practice indexed by the regular use of the phrase "I wish to suggest". The paper continues with an imaginative (literally) description of the alleged "consensualist" "world-view" of "the media" and its contradictions which the myths attempt to solve. Young concludes the essay by making his final speculation:

"... the mass media portrayal of the drug taker is not a function of random ignorance but a coherent part of a consensual mythology"<sup>61</sup>

This totally speculative, atheoretical account of ideology in "the media" illustrates perfectly the practice I have explained in this section. The method is purely imaginative, containing not the slightest bit of theoretical guidance. Of course, we must register the fact that Young's practice in this article is also 'critical'. Implicitly he rejects the hypocrisy of those who propagate and support propaganda about 'deviants'.

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59. Ibid. pp. 314-322.

60. Ibid. p. 314.

61. Ibid. p. 322.

"For by fanning up moral panics over drug use, it (the mass media - C.S.) contributes enormously to public hostility to the drug taker and precludes any rational approach to the problem."<sup>62</sup>

Explicitly, he criticizes the media for helping to make 'deviants' the scapegoat for the problems of contemporary British capitalism.<sup>63</sup> Both these criticisms are surely to be welcomed by anyone concerned with liberating people from the oppression of capitalist societies. But, as they are, Young's arguments and comments are only counter-propaganda: that is, his work here remains at the level of practical, ideological-political struggle. As such they are valuable to a degree, but, without a basis in a precise, theoretical grasp of deviance as an ideological formation rooted firmly in social practice, and without a theory of reading ideology, political criticism in this field will be prone to opportunist and idealist diversions.

#### "World views" and the possibility of a science of ideology

The internal determinations of the subjectivist ideology of speculative criticism raise the central issue about all forms of "content analysis". It is necessary to confront this issue now, in the light of this ideology and in the light of my formulations in the previous chapters, because speculative criticism raises in a sharp form the question of the possibility of a scientific knowledge of ideological discourse. Thus a critique of a speculative criticism will now follow. It is a critique which follows naturally all that has gone before and naturally precedes all that comes later: it is not a digression.

The key concept in speculative criticism, behind which all its other concepts throw their weight, is the "world view". There is a great difference between the "world view" of a subjectivist-empiricist problematic and the concepts of "ideological formation" and "ideology" of a Marxist problematic.

Firstly, a "world view is defined as a total way of looking at the world. It is a "model" or a "paradigm" which produces "interpretations

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62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

Clearly implicit in this notion is that human subjects carry a total vision to all their practices. Thus it is different from the 'problematic', which only exists in theoretical practice, as a systematic body of concepts. It is also different from the 'ideological formation' which only exists in particular social practices and which is only a fragment or part of each human agent's mode of spontaneous consciousness.

I would say that the latter typically contains several ideological formations, some of which exist together in contradiction and some in harmony. The internal unity of an ideological form lies in its connection with human action and material conditions in the structure of a social practice. The unity of an ideology does not lie within itself. In the subjectivist notion of the "world view" the unity of an ideology is found internally. The human agent is said to have his "model" of the world which he carries to every practice and which is not governed by any particular practice. The determination of the "world view", therefore, is internal to itself as the product of the "creative" human agency. That is, the fact that humans have brains and senses governs the unity of their "world views". Clearly this is absurd and nothing to do with the Marxist concepts of ideology and ideological formation. In Marxist thought, the characteristic of humans as possessors of brains and senses is only a Natural condition of existence of ideology, a mechanism which enables an ideology to have a material existence, it is not the condition of existence of the social form of an ideology. Having a brain made nobody into a Fascist, a Moderate or a Marxist; to put it simply. The condition of existence of the form of an ideology, or a spontaneous mode of consciousness, is the presence of that ideology in historically determinate social practices. Note two key differences, therefore, between a "world-view" and an ideology: (1) an ideology is produced, sustained and effective within particular social practices, not simply within a human brain in itself; (2) even a theoretical ideology is fragmentary, containing a mixture of ideological formations (clusters of thoughts, perceptions, reflections, etc.) pertaining to a variety of social practices.

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64. It can only attain systematicity in ideological practice, where ideology is the object of its own operation, and where ideological problematics are produced. See supra pp. 54, 55. For a good example of theoretical ideology see any of Talcott Parsons' major works.

Secondly, one "world view", in the subjectivist problematic, is as valid as any other "world view". Neither are scientific, for all science is underpinned by a "world-view" or "values" dependent upon a "world-view." No truth is possible, everything is relative to the particular "world-view" of the subject: or, what is the same thing, everything is true relative to the subject's world view. Now it is true that the Marxist problematic would hold that one subject's ideology is as 'valid' as any other. Neither are scientific knowledges. However Marxism does hold that ideological formations are inferior to scientific formations, since the latter, produced in scientific practice,<sup>65</sup> grasp in theory the determinations of an object which (a) produce its impressions in ideological formations and (b) constitute the other side, the "inner connexions", the 'invisible' aspects of those impressions. So, for example, Marx's theory of value in Capital not only constitutes the determinations of value but also explains that these determinations necessarily produce a tendency to a particular spontaneous mode of consciousness of value. That is, the scientific laws of value specify that value has a definite form of appearance, exchange-value, and that, consequently, it appears to people in practice that the exchange-value of a commodity is determined by the utility of that commodity, i.e. by its internal characteristics. Like any science, basically Marxian theory explains (literally) why things appear as they do.

Now this does not mean that the nature of value involves a particular, 'empirical' mode of 'appearance' or 'manifestation' which is the only, 'visible' thing, 'out there', for human subjects to see, if they so wish. That is, it does not mean that value's 'mode of appearance' in given social relationships is absolutely true in the philosophic sense.

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65. Scientific practice: the application of a developed theoretical science or ideology to previous theoretical ideologies, or to simple ideological impressions, producing a scientific knowledge or developments in such a knowledge. Science is defined in the text. The scientificity of a social knowledge is provable within modes of social practice (either economic, political or ideological) specified by the knowledge of the theoretical object. That is, like Althusser, I propose that the criterion of truth for a science is internal, but, unlike Althusser, I would argue that the criterion of proof in Marxist science is not always scientific practice in experimental conditions but rather a mode of practice (economic, political, ideological or scientific) specified by the knowledge of the theoretical object. I shall return to the question of science and ideology in Althusser's work, and in my own conception, in ch. 7.

Nor does it mean that value's 'mode of appearance' in given social relationships is absolutely false, in the philosophic sense. Some observers may wish to read Marx to say that his account of commodity fetishism in Capital is the basis of a theory of ideological mystification. It may be said that Marx is arguing that the 'mode of appearance' of value is illusory and conceals the hidden truth, that men can only see the visible, absolutely false impressions of value and that the absolutely true "inner connexions" go unnoticed. And there are phrases in Capital which lend strength to this reading.<sup>66</sup> (However if one reads phrases out of context as the indicators of the theoretical discourse, there are other phrases in Capital which do not support this reading.<sup>67</sup>) This reading, however, is wrong. Marx's discourse specifies that the mode of appearance of value is neither absolutely true or absolutely false: it is simply true in historically specific economic practice. That is, value will tend to be seen by the agents of economic practice in the only way that they can see it: as it is, in economic practice. The key passage in Capital, where Marx's theoretical discourse 'breaks the surface', is as follows:

"The two-fold social characters of the labour of the individual appears to him, when reflected in his brain, only under those forms which are impressed upon that labour in everyday practice by the exchange of products."<sup>68</sup>

The producers and exchangers can only see value as it exists in historical, social practice, as commodities which can be sold at certain prices.

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66. For example, (1974) op. cit. p.77. "the fantastic form", p. 79 "the mist through which the social character of labour appears to us" and, of course the general argument that Political Economy failed to grasp the labour theory of value because of the "mystical" form of commodities.

67. For example, *ibid.* p. 77. "... commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses", p. 78 "... the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things", and p. 79 "... this fact appears to the producers, notwithstanding the discovery above referred to, to be just as real and final, as the fact, that, after the discovery by science of the component gases of air, the atmosphere itself remained unaltered."

68. *Ibid.* p. 78.



Value has its internal and external determinations.<sup>69</sup> In its external determinations, value is commodities. It does not just take the 'form' or 'shape' or commodities (this is why 'mode of appearance' and 'manifestation' are strictly speaking misleading terms). Value exists socially in its favourite mode of production, capitalism, as commodities. That is value does not exist socially in disguise. In its external determinations, that is, in its social existence, value is commodities. Commodities are not just values, but value is only concrete in commodities, of which money is also a form.

Therefore, the producers are neither living under delusions nor celebrating eternal truth when they see value in commodities. Commodities have value: that can be found to be true in economic practice. That is how things actually are in economic practice. Many Marxist militants have arrogantly proclaimed that they know the 'inner truth', that value is simply congealed, human labour and that the opinion of the worker or the bourgeois, which says value is money or goods, is an ideological mystification. This is a mistaken reading of Marx, who, in effect, is saying that both aspects of value are true - one in theory and one in practice. The vision of the worker or bourgeois is one connected with economic practice, the vision of the Marxist is connected with the political-ideological practice of 'demystification' and education. Both producers and Marxists only see from the viewpoint integral to their respective economic and political-ideological practices. Thus the producers see value in its economic, practical existence and the Marxists see value in its non-economic theoretical existence. Both see accurately, for value is both an abstract form and a practical matter. The producers tend to see it as a practical matter or substance, i.e. as a good or as money. The Marxists tend to see it as an abstract form, i.e., as a quantity of congealed human labour. Both are right but both unscientific. As Marx explained, value is both of these things. Its concrete aspect can be proved true in economic practice and its abstract aspect can be proved true in theoretical practice.

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69. In its internal determinations, value is congealed, general, human labour and is abstract or ideal in form.

Hence Marx's discourse is not a theory of mystification but a theory of value in its two-sidedness, as a thing-in-itself which is reflected in its form as a social thing, a thing-in-its-otherness. The passage in Capital on commodity fetishism<sup>70</sup> cannot be read on its own, it must be read in the context of Marx's method of working and the many other passages in Capital on things and their social existence.

In conclusion, the subjectivist concept of the "world-view" is radically different from the Marxist concepts of ideology and science. The "world-view" concept pronounces nothing to be true, except for the human subject in question. This concept clearly fails to grasp the "this-sidedness" of ideology which is 'true' inasmuch as it can be shown to be true in a particular social practice. It fails to grasp that all ideology has its 'blind side': the truth it cannot grasp, inasmuch as that side 'makes no sense' (literally) in the particular social practice ideology is attached to. And, crucially, the concept of the "world view" cannot grasp the truth of a science which explains the inner determinations of things, their outer determinations and the relation between the two. It cannot see that science explains the two-sidedness of things and how each side is provable in a mode peculiar to itself. Consequently, a scientific knowledge of ideology is possible, but not within the subjectivist ideologies of pragmatic content analysis, information theory and speculative criticism which can only see ideology in its form of appearance as the expression of a human consciousness, and which fail to see that ideology is an aspect of historically determinate social practices, the practices that are the sine qua non for the expression of human consciousness. Just as value only appears in utilities and as exchange value and is thus seen in practice as exchange-value intrinsic to a utility, so, too, ideology only appears through human subjects in social practice and as a chosen system of thought and is thus seen in social practice as a systematic prejudice invented by a capricious human consciousness. The problematic of reading ideology dealt with in this chapter failed to see beyond the form of appearance of ideology and took it at its word. But then how could the ideology of ideology see its own material conditions of existence?

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70. (1974) op. cit. pp. 76-87

We have found that the problematic of the analysis of the content of ideological discourse has no theory of ideological discourse. That is, the problematic seeks to analyse the content of an unknown or unrecognized form. It is, in consequence, intrinsically random and, therefore, irrational. As such it cannot possibly achieve scientific status. How can one analyse the content of a form if one has no theory of that form, of its mode of existence in the content, or of the way that the analyst can recognize it? We have learned, however, that this problematic of the content sees ideological discourse as the systematic expression of the human consciousness. Is this not a theory of ideological discourse? No - because all this view says to us is that the immediately prior cause of the content was the will or expression of the human mind. That statement does not tell us anything about the form of the content, since it is not a theory of ideological discourse-in-itself but rather a description of the form of appearance of ideological discourse. It tells us nothing of the inner determinations of ideological discourse; that is, the nature of its form. Such a statement is a classical example of the ideological notions of linear causation, methodological individualism (or subjectivism) and empiricism. It is the type or form of statement that corresponds neatly with the absent concept of the form of ideological discourse. With no concept of its form, ideological discourse must present itself spontaneously and therefore as a unity of meaning, set into action by human agency. Thus, as the reader will remember, Berelson observed that "communication content" was "so rich with human experience" that no theoretical set of categories could grasp it.<sup>71</sup> The spontaneous, theory-free view of ideological discourse can only see its unity as an expression of human authorship and can only fix this aspect as a product of the creativity of the human mind. This is the law of the appearance of ideological discourse in social practice. It is illustrated clearly in all the spontaneous readings discussed in this chapter. The sociological versions also involve this mode of reading, but add some social limits to mental creativity - human interpretation is still the producing agency but its scope is narrowed by the prior, external limits

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71. See supra p. 104 fn. 45.

imposed by other, more powerful, interpretative creatures. This law of the appearances of discourse in social practice is also illustrated clearly in common parlance. Northerners have the saying: 'There's nowt so funny as folk'. This saying appears in different forms all over the country and, I would guess, across different social classes. However another common saying amongst the Northern working class (I do not know how widespread this saying is) is that 'actions speak louder than words'. So although ideological discourse presents itself to people in practice as a necessary and systematic outcome of human peculiarity, it is not necessarily taken too seriously by some sections of the English working class at least. I would speculate that the saying of the Northern workers reflects the long history of double-dealing, hypocrisy and false promises by factory management in the course of the class struggle. At least they have come to recognize, to some extent, through the economic and political struggle of the classes, that ideology is inextricably a part of practice. However, at the level of spontaneous observation, ideological discourse remains a form of the peculiarity of people. Thus the ideological problematic of content analysis in all its variants, must necessarily continue to combine notions of linear causation, subjectivism and empiricism until it develops a theory of the form of ideological discourse and its mode of appearance in the content.

Without a theory of the form this problematic can never know (literally) the shape of the content. The problematic of content analysis is therefore doomed to uncertainty, an uncertainty which is completely intrinsic to itself. This is clearly reflected in all three variants examined in this chapter. Pragmatic content analysis is seen by its practitioners as simply a mechanical 'technique' which needs to be complemented by 'imaginative' use of the resulting 'data' in order to provide 'insight' into the 'complexity' of discourse. Information theory depends precariously on the application of an analogy which its practitioners see only (again) as an 'insight' into a 'complex' object. Speculative criticism abandons all method, submitting its subjects, the subjective critics, to the task of utilizing their 'imagination' 'insightfully', and, thus, reduces them to the insecurity of 'suggestion' and speculation. From the plaintive remarks in their texts, it seems that the agents of this problematic of content do not bear its oppressive weight without some discomfort. This marks a nice, dialectical contrast to the extravagant exuberance of the explorers of form to whom we now turn.

#### 4 THE ANALYSIS OF FORM: STRUCTURALISM

##### Introduction

From the problematic of content we have arrived at the problematic of form. The object here is the structure of the content. All kinds of phenomena are taken as illustrations of form within this problematic. Structuralist researchers have studied myth, fashion, literature and many other areas. The common thread is the search for the form of things. As opposed to the problematic of content, this problematic is not so much interested in the immediately apparent, concrete aspect of the artefacts of social life but rather in their latent, abstract countenance. Things are of interest inasmuch as they are the manifestations in the concrete-real of the abstract form. It is in this sense that this problematic can be described as Structuralist. This term is actually one in common usage that refers to a modern variant of the problematic of form. That variant has been carried forward by many French intellectuals in the fields of anthropology (e.g. Levi-Strauss), economics (e.g. Godelier), literary criticism (e.g. Barthes) and psychoanalysis (e.g. Lacan). However the term is of wider value than as a specific reference, for it indicates that the interest in social phenomena within this problematic is a focussed interest in their structure. Form is only the form of the content; hence this problematic can be said to focus on the form, or structure, of the content. The content itself is seen simply as an effect of the form or structure of the thing, as merely an immediate, empirical expression of an inner connexion. It is in this sense that the problematic under attention could also correctly be called the semiological problematic - because content is seen as a sign of the inner form or

structure. Semiology, in general, is the study of signs and, in modern parlance, also usually refers to the branch of the French structuralist movement which concentrates on the analysis of mass media products and literature. In this chapter I shall examine the theoretical problematic of structuralism (or semiology) in the abstract and make a critique, illustrating my points with reference to a work which 'applies' the problematic. In the following chapter I shall outline the 'applied' concepts of semiology, and apply the critique developed in the present chapter.<sup>1</sup>

The structuralist problematic of forms, signs or structures presents itself as full of promise. It appears to be anti-empiricist since it makes the clear distinction between the outward appearance with its transitional character and the inner connexion or law which drives the surface movement yet is not external to the content. It appears to be dialectical, again because of its use of the form/content distinction, and also because, as we shall see, it does raise the question of the relation between the reader and the text. But not only are there these appearances; the structuralists make other claims. Most importantly they claim that their work is scientific and that it is Marxist. All these appearances and claims will be investigated in the next two chapters.

As in the preceding chapter, I shall pose the problematic the three questions on its mode of reading ideology.<sup>2</sup> This interrogation will be the dominant element in the structure of this chapter - the following chapter is more expository. Again, I shall use a reading of press accounts of political demonstrations for illustration. One final note of introduction is that Althusser's lecture symptomale (symptomatic reading) is held back until chapter 6 because it is an especially complex and important mode of reading and because its nature can only be comprehended fully in the light of an extended discussion of the structuralist problematic.

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1. The position, that 'structuralism' and 'semiology' refer to the same problematic, is one adopted by Jonathan Culler. He feels that the fact that there are two terms is purely accidental. See J. Culler Structuralist Poetics (1975 London: Routledge and Kegan Paul) p. 6.  
2. *Supra* p. 86.

The object of the structuralist problematic

Roland Barthes's definition of contemporary structuralism as a "mode of analysis of cultural artefacts which originates in the methods of contemporary linguistics" is a good one since it brings out the key point that linguistics has a central role in the structuralist problematic.<sup>3</sup> Structuralism has made many analogies from the concepts of linguistics - not the least being that the structure of a discursive content is a coded ideological language. As Barthes says,

"I have been engaged in a series of structural analyses which all aim at defining a number of non-linguistic 'languages'"<sup>4</sup>

I do not intend to investigate the technical weaknesses of the linguistic analogy in structuralism. That would be beyond my competence. However there is one important thing to say: linguistics already contained a structuralist problematic, modern structuralism did not just lift elements from linguistics and make them its own. Language in general was already conceived within structural linguistics as composed of a temporal content and a law-like structure.<sup>5</sup> Structuralism, in its recent attempts to understand myths and other cultural artefacts, naturally applied the concepts it had developed in the field of linguistics. Thus cultural artefacts were seen as arbitrary contents governed by the language of myth.

The concept of the language of myth (or ideology) can be better understood if we look at 'language' in linguistics (structuralist variant):

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3. From "Science versus literature" Times Literary Supplement, 28th Sept. 1967 pp. 397-8, paraphrased by Culler (1975) op. cit. p. 3.

4. From Essais Critiques (1964 Paris: Seuil), quoted in Culler (1975) op. cit. p. 4.

5. See J. Lyons "Structuralism and Linguistics" and J. Culler "The Linguistic basis of structuralism", both in D. Robey (ed.) Structuralism (1973 London: Oxford University Press) pp. 5-19 and 20-36 respectively.

"What, then, is the central thesis of Saussurean structuralism as far as language is concerned? To put it first at its most general, it is this: that every language is cut to a unique pattern and that the units out of which utterances are composed - more carefully, the units which we identify (or postulate as theoretical constructs) in the analysis of utterances - can be identified only in the terms of their relationships with other units in the same language. We cannot first determine what these units are and then, at a subsequent stage of the investigation, inquire what structural relationships hold between them. Linguistic units derive both their existence and their essence from their interrelations. Every distinct language is a unique relational structure; and the units which we identify in describing a particular language - sounds, words, meanings etc. - are but points in the structure, or network, of relations".<sup>6</sup>

Language, in both linguistics and 'cultural analysis', is from the point of view of structuralism best seen in terms of units or functions and relations between them. The elements of the system only get their content from their formal position, their location in the structure. This was the main thesis of Saussure, the founder of the analysis of signs (semiology) and the founder of the structuralist school of linguistics. It is the central aspect of the structuralist problematic; the point at which its historical existence in linguistics meets its contemporary form in cultural analysis. In the latter form, all aspects of 'culture' (including economic production) are to be seen as languages. Every cultural artefact has its outer, transitional, concrete shell which is the reality of its structure. Units of culture "derive their existence and essence from their interrelations" - to transpose Lyons' dictum. Units or elements are concrete only because of the relations between them.

Given this concept of the phenomenon, the structuralist problematic has as its object the structure, the relations between the elements which produce those elements. For, in this problematic, to focus on the elements themselves without examining their internal relations is madness, since to do so would be to avoid the source of explanation and would thus be to produce mere speculation or meaningless abstraction. Structuralism therefore derides empiricism which sees the 'given' as the product of some outer external force and not as a product of the relations

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6. Lyons (1973) op. cit. p. 6.

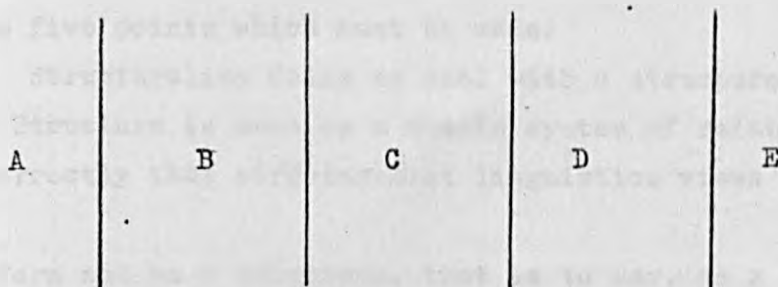


between itself and other elements of the structure in question.

The structure is so important for structuralism as its object that we must grasp precisely what is meant by it. It is absolutely wrong to think that, in structuralism, the elements are anything but the creations of the relations. They have no 'relative autonomy'. This point can be expressed by drawing four lines on the page as follows:



By making these four marks, I have created five spaces on this particular horizontal, which can be termed as follows:



Now, A, B, C, D, E, are all internally 'blank'. They have been created in "their essence and existence" by my act of imposing a vertical structure of lines upon an undifferentiated horizontal space. They only exist as aspects of the relations between them. They exist only as "points in the structure". It is vitally necessary to comprehend this fact in order to understand the object of structuralism. The units of a system are not determined within themselves for they only exist as places, locations or "points" in the structure. The structure is all. Elements are arbitrary: they are mere places in the structure, products of its existence - they have no internal determinations. The passage from Lyons, quoted above, illustrates this clearly. Lyons illustrates the point that the elements of language are purely arbitrary "points in the structure", just as the

elements of any structure considered by the structuralist problematic are purely and simply constituted by that structure. In conclusion, then, the object of the structuralist problematic is structure, the total network of relations or systems of differences, which determines the limits of variation of its units or elements, as they appear at the empirical level as the content.

### A critique of structuralism

Having outlined the object of the structuralist problematic and the concepts that constitute it, let us turn to a critique of the problematic. As with the critiques in the previous chapter, this critique involves developing the theory of reading ideology that Marxism requires. There are five points which must be made:

1            Structuralism fails to deal with a structure in its 'historical' aspect. Structure is seen as a static system of relations. Thus Burgelin states correctly that structuralist linguistics views language as

" ... a form not as a substance, that is to say, as a pure system of differences, in which what determines the value of each linguistic unity is not a relation of absolute character which may be maintained with some non-linguistic entity, but its situation within the system of language."<sup>7</sup>

Structure is a form, a "pure system of differences", which produces the content. But how does a structure change and develop? And how did it form in the first place? Structuralism cannot answer these questions, except speculatively, since elements have no lives-in-themselves (they have no internal determinations) and hence no movement. The relations (or structure itself) have no movement either, for that would entail some causative factor outside the structure itself. Clearly, in structuralism, a structure cannot be the cause of its own movement because the relations

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7. Olivier Burgelin Structuralist analysis and mass communications (1968 Radio and T.V. Culture Research Institute: Nippon Hoso Kyokai) p. 154.

constituting the structure have no internal determinations (just like the elements or units). The structure is simply a system of differences or relations between the elements or content, that is, relations only exist as links between elements. Therefore, just as elements exist only as poles in the relations, or points in the structure, and therefore lack internal determination, so, too, the relations exist only as links between the poles or the connections between the elements and lack internal determination. All together, then, real movement is impossible within a structure. Neither the elements nor the relations can change their nature - they are conjoined for ever in a static phenomenon.

The absence of this concept of movement or history is one which can easily be filled with ideological formations (or assumptions) such as the Absolute Logos or the Absolute Telos. Some external body can easily be taken as the ultimate cause or the ultimate goal, and hence as the cause of a posited movement. A good example of the realization of this possibility, a possibility created by the absence of a concept of history in structuralism, is provided by Levi-Strauss. He declares structuralist linguistics to be a science, because it has

"... reached beyond the superficial conscious and historical expression of linguistic phenomena to attain fundamental and objective realities, consisting of systems of relations which are products of unconscious thought processes."

In registering this point, he has partly provided an example of my criticism in that he praises structuralism for having got beyond the "historical expression of linguistic phenomena". By this stroke he excludes from structuralist 'science' the possibility of a theory of history. He provides full example of my criticism when he goes on to ask:

"Is it possible to effect a similar reduction in the analysis of other forms of social phenomena? If so, would this analysis lead to the same result? And if the answer to this last question is in the affirmative, can we conclude that all forms of social life are substantially of the

same nature - that is, do they consist of systems of behaviour that represent the projection, on the level of conscious and socialized thought, of universal laws which regulate the unconscious activities of the mind?"<sup>9</sup>

The exclusion of history goes hand in hand with the provision of an Absolute Logos. Thus Levi-Strauss can attempt to locate or "reduce" all social phenomena to forms of representation of the absolute laws regulating the operation of the unconscious mind. In structuralism, the comprehension of history becomes reduced to the comprehension of historical forms, and, even then, these historical forms are only variants of the possible elements of the Absolute Form or Structuring Structure. History, as a structuralist discipline, requires a knowledge of forms, as forms of the Absolute Telos or Logos, but no knowledge of real history.

Against structuralism's static structures, I would argue that elements and relations have their own internal determinations and histories. That is, a phenomenon has its own laws of movement which are inscribed in both form and content. These laws may not be the same for both form and content and thus there is the possibility of explosive contradiction between form and content (relations and elements) and the dissolution of the phenomenon. The realization of this dissolution is conditional upon elements related to the phenomenon in question: the autonomy of a phenomenon is literally only 'relative' i. e. the relatedness of the phenomenon to other phenomena is the necessary condition of its generalized or social existence and hence its general dissolution. Structuralism's lack of a sense of history is conditional upon its concept of one-sided structural determination. Once we conceive of a concept of the determination of the content and a concept of the existence of the whole phenomenon within a system of other phenomena, the possibility of a theory of history arises. If we take as an example structure, the capitalist mode of production, it has a possibility of dissolution because its elements have one history (i.e. the history of the development of the forces of production) and its relations have another (i.e. the history of class relations, class struggle). The elements and relations are, of course,

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9. Ibid. pp. 58, 59.

interconnected, but that does not of itself ensure non-contradiction and stability. However structuralism's lack of a concept of history is also conditional on other elements and absences within its problematic. This leads us to the second criticism.<sup>10</sup> But let me first briefly summarize this first and crucial one.

Structuralism cannot account for the genesis of the particular form of a thing. It has no concept of history. This entails the absence of a theory of the genesis of forms or sets of relations. Such a theory is logically impossible within the structuralist problematic, since the form is the causative element. Just as the form or structure cannot cause its own movement neither can it cause its own genesis. And, given that the content or elements of the structure are just determined products of the structure, the content cannot logically be said to generate the form. Structuralism cannot conceive of the emergence of a structure as a product of the inability of a prior structure to organize its content or elements, its inability to 'structure' its elements. That is because structuralism cannot conceive of a situation where the form and the content are in antagonistic contradiction. It cannot allow for the relatively autonomous development of the elements of a phenomenon.

2. Structuralism is a functionalism. The problematic by the very nature of its concepts and object grants every relation of the structure a function or element (or unit). There is no sense of uneven development of a phenomenon or set of phenomena. There is no concept that relations and elements exist within their own time and space, that each aspect of the phenomenon has its own integrity or internal determinations. Consequently there is no concept of relations existing in contradiction to elements, nor of the difference between antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions.<sup>11</sup> For example, structuralism could not account for the possibility of an ideological formation, born within the structure of one social practice, being active within the structure of another social

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10. All these criticisms will be developed further on in this chapter with reference to ideology.

11. See Mao Tse Tung "On contradiction" in Anne Frementle (ed.) Mao Tse Tung: An anthology of his writings (1962 New York: Mentor Books) pp. 214-241

practice and losing its place within the original practice. In structuralism every element of the system has its function within the system and that system is the life-blood of its functions: the two are inseparable. Relations and functions (or elements) exist simultaneously in structuralism in a state of mutual 'causation'. This explains why a structuralist can point to the conservative functionalism of Parsons' sociological theory as an example of structuralist thinking.<sup>12</sup> In Parsons' social system all the roles, institutions and norms (the elements) have a function for that system and are thus harmoniously integrated (the relations). There is no sense of contradictory coexistence in structuralism. For example, structuralism could not explain that, within a system (the capitalist mode of production), two elements (the capitalist and proletarian classes) can exist in contradiction or conflict. Furthermore, it could not explain why the contradictory relation between those two classes could continue without the dissolution of the system. This is because it has no concept of the specificity of the conditions which maintain the system despite the antagonism of two of its elements. These absences involve another central absence: the concept of the dominance of some relations and elements of the phenomenon at the expense of others. This connects with my third point.

3. Structuralism is an idealism. In any phenomenon, for structuralism, the concrete units are arbitrary and the relations between them are all important. Thus the concrete is arbitrary and transient and the abstract totally determinant. But if a system of units had a given object then surely certain units are necessary to that system? It is impossible to build a brick wall without bricks. Thus, in some circumstances, we could argue, the elements are as important as the relations within a phenomenon - and, in others, perhaps the elements may be more determinant than the relations between them. A passage from Culler illustrates my criticism:

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12. See Burgelin (1968) op. cit. p. 168.

"In separating the functional from the non-functional in order to reconstruct the underlying system, one is interested not so much in the properties of individual objects or actions as in the differences between them which the system employs and endows with significance."<sup>13</sup>

In structuralism, intrinsic properties disappear and are replaced by systems functions. Apart from showing that the structuralist disposes of the "non-functional" aspects of a phenomenon (these aspects play no part in an adequate description or explanation of phenomena in this problematic), this passage shows that structuralism excludes internal determinations from its system (even if it recognises that they could exist somehow) and thus leaves a causative residue of relations. Clearly the internal qualities of bricks are not important for the structuralist's house-building practice - only the relations between the bricks, the land and the builder.

Structuralism cannot remedy its blindness to the 'materiality of elements', to their existence as things with properties, since the power of the relations in creating the content is the central concept of the problematic. Thus it could not conceive of the possibility, in some conditions, of the elements' peculiar properties determining the relations between them in some way. For example, given that they have developed in practice certain abilities, human beings are able to have relations of 'communication' with each other and, given that they have certain internal properties, rocks are unable to have communicative relations.

To develop this argument further, and in a crucial fashion, we have to raise the question of the primacy of the form or content (relations or elements) of a phenomenon. In structuralism, the forms or relations are solely determinant and therefore have primacy. In Marxism, however, there is a dialectic of determination between form and content, moreover a dialectic dependent for its final specificity on other conditions. The content determines the limits or 'expression' of the form and vice versa. But does this mean that content and form are equal aspects of a phenomenon? Yes. Neither comes first. They are both aspects of a thing. If a thing exists in content then it must have a form, however transitory,

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13. Culler (1975) op. cit. pp. 10,11.

mobile or loose. A thing has form and content - that is its nature. If a thing has form then it must have content. Neither form nor content are necessarily visible but they are always there in some way or another. Marxism does not neglect content like structuralism. Marxism, in this precise sense, is a materialism and structuralism an idealism. Of course, the terms 'materialist' and 'idealist' are misleading because they are often used as synonymous for truth/falsehood and reality/illusion. Clearly I do not use the terms in these empiricist senses. Materialism describes a problematic which notes that content is as much a part of a thing as form. Idealism describes a problematic which forgets that fact. One structuralist, at least, is aware of this idealism:

"Structure, we are repeatedly told, is not an abstract form but content itself, grasped in its logical organization, but seldom is this article of faith more blatantly flouted than in general discussions of structuralism ..."<sup>14</sup>

This awareness runs against the structuralist grain however since the basic concept of the problematic grants an arbitrary status and character to the content.

4. Structuralism is descriptive and not explanatory. Because of its inability to talk of movement, contradiction and the specificity of the elements, structuralism produces descriptions of relations or forms as they exist in the given elements or content. As we have noted, the specificity of the content cannot be fully explained by its form: a full explanation requires a knowledge of the movement of the content and the forms which it adopts. Thus structuralism produces a description of one side of a phenomenon as it exists at a given point in time and remains blind to the historical specificity of that time for the development of the phenomenon. It cannot produce a description of the internal determinations of both sides nor of the conditionality of the determining power of either, given its concepts. Therefore its description is of a limited, static aspect and cannot be the full historical description and,

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14. Culler, in Robey (1973) op. cit. p. 20.



therefore, explanation of the phenomenon-in-itself and in-its-otherness.

5. Structuralism speaks of closed systems. This flows from all that I have said so far. However it is worth emphasizing. Because of its central concept of immanent causation - the outward formation of a totality being an expression of its immanent organization or inner structure - it is impossible for structuralism to specify the 'causative' effects of the location of a set of phenomena within a wider set for either the relations or elements of the narrower set. That is not to say that structuralists do not do such a thing. But it is to say that, logically, they cannot do it within their own problematic. Each system, for structuralism, is closed unto itself as a totality and has no effectivity on the relations or elements of any other totality. It cannot provide for this, for to say that a totality acts as a determining element in another set of totalities is impossible since only the internal relations of a totality can determine its nature. Nor can it logically say that the elements of one system are constituted by the relations of another. Nor can it say that the relations of one system are constituted by the elements of another. Yet it would have to say these things if it placed one system (A) in its place within a system (B) of systems. In such a case, system A would have to be seen as an element constituted by the relations of system B. But that view would contradict the concept of the constitution of system A by the relations between its elements! And thus structuralism would have to speak of A as simply an arbitrary point in B, or of B as an anarchic aggregate of sub-systems A, C, D, E, F etc.. The first alternative, when applied to human history, would give a view of society which denied autonomy to its elements (e.g. industry, classes, ideology) and made them simple reflections of some master structure. Levi-Strauss tends to this alternative. The second alternative would give a view of society which denied any effectivity to the relations between the elements and which made the latter totally autonomous. No structuralist could hold such a view.

In short, structuralism cannot logically envisage a society as the conjoint existence of a set of related, autonomous elements. So if we consider a number of systems together the structuralist problematic breaks down: it cannot conceive of a determinant system of systems. It can only deal with one system at a time, as a discrete entity.

Clearly the inability of the structuralist problematic to think of the social totality as a system with a structure and relatively autonomous elements is a very serious defect. Consequently some structuralists have imported ideological notions to cover the gap. The only way the structuralist can have a concept of the structure of structures (e.g. society) is to abandon immanent structural causation. The common standby is an Absolute Logos or an Absolute Telos. Hence, as we have seen, Levi-Strauss adopts the 'universal structure of the human mind' as the Absolute Logos riding through history. Levi-Strauss's 'mind-structure' is the form of which all social life is the concrete manifestation: it is the absolute structure. Clearly this is a religious concept of 'social causation' in that an external metaphysical thing is made responsible for social phenomena and their interconnections. Structuralism cannot think the internal determinations of the 'social', the conjoint existence of things. Zygmunt Bauman provides us with another example:

"Nothing but the formal universals of praxis, its 'generative rules', constitutes the tough, invariant core of human history; and perhaps even this can be reasonably claimed insofar as we deliberately confine vision to the life span of our species, which is, in itself, a historical event within a wider context ... the culture-social structure controversy belongs organically with the family of issues stemming from the basic experience of the dual nature of the human existential status."

"It (culture - C.S.) is, simultaneously, the objective foundation of the subjectively meaningful experience and the subjective 'appropriation' of the otherwise inhumanly alien world"

"Marx picked a number of universal, species-anchored features as the precondition of social praxis .. "

"Human praxis, viewed in its most universal and general features, consists in turning chaos into order, or substituting one order for another - order being synonymous with the intelligible and meaningful"

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15. (1973) op. cit. pp. 146, 110, 117, 118 and 119 respectively. It is interesting, in passing, to note the normative functionalism of Bauman's structuralism. Social life moves teleologically towards an ever greater order. This is not dissimilar to many statements in the work of Radcliffe-Brown and Parsons.

For Bauman, the Absolute Logos is the universal structure of Human Praxis and the absolute Telos is order, and thus all social phenomena are reduced to the concrete manifestations of this abstract, transcendental, innately human capacity to 'order' the world. To put the criticism of this in terms of my own concept of social practice: just because the formal aspect of social practice is constituted by its elements and relations does not mean that specific social practices and their specific products are immediately comprehended. To comprehend a social practice in its exact specificity we would need to know its formal and its material aspects, we would need to know both. We could not understand journalism simply by knowing that social practice in general requires raw materials, objects, labourers, non-labourers and relations of production, we would need to know what those formal aspects of journalism were in concrete actuality. That is, we would need to know what journalism's raw materials were, what its objects were, what were its relations of production etc.. As I said before, one formal aspect of the human agency is that humans, physiologically speaking, have brains, but having a brain did not make a man into a Fascist or a Marxist. The exact forms of thought adopted by men can only be understood when we know the concrete social relations within which these men act as elements of a definite social formation. Structuralism will tend to look for Universal Structures which are immanent in all phenomena considered in their conjoint existence since, because, in its very nature, it lacks a concept of the 'social', the effectivity of conjoint existence. This tendency is the necessary effect of the very working principle of structuralism: immanent causation.

#### Consequences of the critique for a theory of reading ideology

I have shown that structuralism is seriously deficient and contains great limitations on its ability to generate a knowledge. I shall now turn to the consequences of these weaknesses for a theory of reading ideology.

Significance in the structuralist problematic is given by the location of a unit of significance in a system of sign-units. A unit or

sign only has any 'meaning' or substance inasmuch as it is a point in the structure of signs, the system of significance. Thus to decipher a sign, the structuralist argues that the analyst must know the code, or the relations of the sign-system which give the signs their meaning. Significance only arrives therefore with a system of differences or relations between signs and can only be created through the use of that system. Significance is only possible for those who understand the code behind the message.

Consequently, structuralist analysis of ideology is concerned to decode signs in order to construct the code which produces the meaning. In doing this it is acting strictly in accord with the general principles of the structuralist problematic. The process of decoding signs involves an analysis of the empirical articulation of signs in conjunction which aims to bring out the logical interconnections that are said to produce their significance. Immanent, or structural, analysis, of course, specifies that no outside elements are to be taken into account when determining the logical relations of significance. The analyst can only take into account the signs as they appear in the text. Hence the structuralist analyst should ideally be a Trappist monk, avoiding all contact with his social world. As Barthes puts it:

"But when a myth reaches the entire community, it is from the latter that the mythologist must become estranged if he wants to liberate the myth."<sup>16</sup>

It is interesting to note that the absent concept of 'the social' in structuralism leads structuralists to take shelter in an imaginary hermetic isolation to protect them from the feared, yet unknown, effects of their social existence. Burgelin provides an illustration of an explicitly asocial analysis:

"The essential moment of the linguistic work is, therefore, that of 'immanent analysis' of language, in the course of which, one considers only the interior relations in the system, by excluding all that have to do with the relations of the system with man, culture, society, in short, with the outer world, where one makes efforts to establish a 'code', only through analysis of the structure of the 'message' without being guided by any other considerations whether it be physiologic, psychologic, sociologic or historic."<sup>17</sup>

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16. R. Barthes *Mythologies* (1973 St. Albans: Paladin) p. 157.  
 17. (1963) op. cit. p. 154.

The hard, concrete content of the real-world-appearance of the magic 'structure' must be swept aside. All the structuralist wants in his analysis is a clear sight of the inner, abstract relations which produce significance. There is no sense that the full specificity of a thing can only be grasped by viewing its inner structure in its specific content, a content which can only be understood, in itself, in its social and historical context. I think it is clear that the relations of signification sought by the structuralists in their analyses are purely transcendental, abstract, asocial and ahistorical. Structuralist idealism produces a structure which appears as magic and as if by magic. It has no history nor social existence, no physiological or psychological determinations - nothing but itself in its purity as the "systems of pure differences". Thus, to the critic of structuralist analysis it appears that the structure is magical in quality and is produced out of the analyst's hat by magic. Structuralism makes the structure appear by magic in its research practice since it exists as a magical form within its problematic.

If we pose structuralist reading the question of the observation of the absence or presence of ideology, the answer is clear. Ideology, or (in structuralist terminology) the relations of signification, can be discerned immediately in its effects and, thus, the analyst must observe the effects and deduce the relations from them. Ideology for structuralism is a structure, code or system of relations of signification which produces the units of significance and is immanent in them. Ideology is therefore readable in its elements or effects: ideology is transparent in its effects. Therefore all the structuralist analyst of ideology has to do is to read the content to see immediately its form of existence. In other words, since the content is arbitrary and only constitutes the points of the structure with no internal determinations of its own, the structuralist can read ideology as it exists on the surface, immediately present in its elements.

How could it be otherwise? The reader must not forget that structuralism has no concepts of history, sociality, the uneven development of elements or relations, the internal determinations of elements and relations and of contradictions within phenomena. The elements of a phenomenon are directly the product of its relations or form. Therefore the form is directly visible in its content: ideology is transparent in signs.

In structuralism it would appear that ideology, with one fell swoop of its assumed sharp blade, cuts through an assumed primeval continuum of insignificance and effects itself in its creation and creates itself in its effects. Thus, in this Garden of Eden concept of the emergence of ideology, the magical appearance of ideology in "its existence and essence" takes place in the "existence and essence" of its content. Just as God made man in his own image so does ideology make its effects in its own image. The absence of a theory of the genesis of forms in structuralism is filled by the presence of a magical, quasi-religious original creation at the beginning of history. This notion is a condition of existence of Leach's account of signification:

"I postulate that the physical and social environment of a young child is perceived as a continuum. It does not contain any intrinsically separate 'things'. The child, in due course, is taught to impose upon this environment a kind of discriminatory grid which serves to distinguish the world as being composed of a large number of separate things, each labelled with a name. The world is a representative of our language categories, not vice versa. Because my mother tongue is English, it seems self-evident that bushes and trees are different kinds of things.<sup>18</sup> I would not think this unless I had been taught that it was the case."

How similar this passage is to Halloran, Elliott and Murdock's tabula rasa journalist who learns ideology in his professional socialization and Parsons' concept of the emergence of norms in the interaction between the tabula rasa Ego and Alter! All three accounts share the same gap created by the absence of a theory of the genesis of forms of ideology. All three fill that gap by making the emergence of the ideological form the product of an act of creation by factors external to the human agents at the beginning of their relevant history. If the outside Creator is not posited as God, that is not important. The point is that the creation is external to the carriers of ideology and is the act of others whether they be teaching parents (Leach), guiding senior newsmen (Halloran et al.) or negotiating fellow interactors (Parsons). Structuralism cannot produce a structuralist theory of the genesis of forms and has to import other theories to fill the gap. These imported theories posit an external creator who creates ideology suddenly in its effects and effects it in

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18. E. Leach "Anthropological aspects of language: animal categories and verbal abuse" in P. Maranda (ed.) Mythology (1972 Harmondsworth: Penguin)

its creation. The above passage from Leach illustrates this well. It also illustrates the ahistorical, asocial, universalist concept of homo significans who, by his very nature, has the need and the power to signify the natural world; and it shows how structuralism grants form a dominance over content ( a child only perceives things when it is carrying some knowledge of their forms).

Our previous critique had made it abundantly clear, although always implicitly, that structuralism was incompatible with dialectical materialism. The present applied criticism shows how undialectical structuralism is since it demonstrates the one-sided determination of a content by form. It also shows how empiricist the structuralist problematic is in assuming that the content (the effect of the form) is immediately visible outside any given social practice (literally). Reading ideology in its effects à la structuralism is hardly any different from the readings of the content analysts - the only difference is that whereas ideology is external to the content in the work of the problematic of content, in the problematic of form ideology is immanent in its content. In content analysis, the ideology of the communicator produces repetitions of significance which are said to be an index of his ideology. In structuralism, ideology is intrinsic to the text and not the product of an intentional communicator. In both problematics, however, ideology is immediately read from the text's appearances.

What enables the analyst to read that transparency of ideology in its contents, according to the structuralist problematic? The usual answer given is that the relations constituting ideology are universally recognizable.<sup>19</sup> As Burgelin points out:

"In short there is none exterior to the message which can tell us the significance of one of the elements. Thus we are forced to go back to the message itself and to admit that the only strict definition of the significance of an element of 'vocabulary'<sup>20</sup> of the mass media is the one involved in the context (or the phrases)."

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19. See, for example U. Eco "Rhetoric and ideology in Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris*". *International Soc. Sci. Jo.* XIX No. 4 (1967) pp. 551-569 and E. Veron "Ideology and social sciences: a communicational approach" *Semiotica* 3(1) (1971) pp. 59-76.

20. (1968) op. cit. p. 157.

As in content analysis, the significances of the text are obvious, they are easily and readily available to Anyman. Both the analysts of form and the analysts of content assume that the discourse of the ideology is obvious and readable at the surface level of the text. Content analysts embellish their assumption with a count of the significant repetitions and the structuralists embellish theirs with an emphasis on their rigorous extraction of the logic of the discourse. But both only provide 'coverage' for their assumption that the true ideological discourse is spontaneously readable from a text. This is reflected in an interesting fashion in Burgelin's article where she sees structuralist analysis and content analysis as different modes of tackling the same object.<sup>21</sup> Content analysis is seen as the mode of reading "manifest content" (Berelson's phrase) and structuralist analysis as the mode of reading "latent content" (Berelson's phrase) or form, or "style" (as Burgelin calls it). Both forms of analysis have the same object in a sense, but they each concentrate on a particular aspect of it: one takes its form, the other examines its content. The 'it' is the same in both cases: the visible writing of the text. Both forms of analysis take as their object, ultimately, the apparent discourse: the discourse that is apparent in the spontaneous practice of reading a text. In this sense both content analysis and structuralism are thoroughly empiricist: all they can see is the 'visible' discourse of a visible text. Neither problematic can conceive of aspects of the textual 'discourse' which are not immediately readable in their effects. For all its apparently theoretical nature, then, structuralism belongs to an empiricist problematic just as much as content analysis. Each mode of reading ideology is a wing of another entity: the problematic of empiricist epistemology. This problematic has as its dominant aspect the concept of the immediate identifiability of the essence of a thing in its visible impression. As one wing, structuralism thinks it can identify the essential form of the thing in its visible impression, and on the other wing, content analysis thinks it can identify the essential content of the thing in its visible impression.

Consequently the structuralist reading of ideology is undisputedly non-dialectical, idealist and empiricist in nature. These deficiencies have several consequences. They can be listed as follows:

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21. (1968) op. cit.



1           Structuralism cannot comprehend the possibility of an ideological formation which is born within one social practice yet lives on in another practice (perhaps even a practice within a different mode of production). Within structuralist theory there can be no concept of the historical fragmentation, overlap, lag or prematurity of ideological formations: ideology for structuralism is a contemporaneous system of elements without a historical dimension. Similarly structuralism cannot comprehend an ideological formation with internal discontinuity, fragmentation and looseness: all its ideologies are neat, fully-functional, cybernetic systems.

2           Some relations of signification in a system may beget units which are repressed by other units or relations with whom they co-exist in contradiction. Such repressed units may therefore be absent on the surface text. Similarly, some units of significance may be the products of historically prior relations of signification, thus the units may appear at the level of the text without their original constituent relations. Again, an ideology's relations with another ideology may no longer be effective in different social conditions. Some units of significance may be more dominant in one period than another. Structuralism cannot allow for any of these possibilities within the strict terms of its problematic. With its mode of reading ideology as a total system present at the level of the text it cannot detect the absence or presence of these possibilities and hence it cannot guard against their harmful consequences for its method.

3           The relation with, or function for, society of an ideological formation in a particular conjuncture may demand, of necessity, particular relations of signification or particular units of significance. Particular units of significance may be socially necessary conditions of a mode of production and yet their allegedly constitutive significant structure or relations may not yet exist; in fact, the relations in such a situation could be produced by the units! In some social conditions an ideological formation may find itself in rupture through no internal contradiction of its own. Structuralism's inability to conceptualize the social determinations of ideology results in its oversight of the possibilities of the dissolution of an ideology, and of the determining effect of the significant units. Thus, structuralism is weak in that it relegates units of significance to a passive, subordinate role. The task of investigating the relations between particular units of significance and particular social practices is one that structuralism has neglected and,

from my formulations here and in previous chapters, seems to be the key direction for a Marxist reading of ideology.

In chapter two, in agreement with Althusser, I posited that the general nature of ideology was that it was always an aspect of a social practice (after man had ceased to be an animal) and, therefore, always mobile in its materializations or content. Structuralism cannot see that the content of ideology must be grasped in its social, historical significance and that this significance of ideology must be grasped in its content. Without this dialectical, historical, analysis of ideology, any reading must become either the production of systems of abstracted and abstract forms, lacking in content, à la structuralism, or the production of random samples of formless contents à la content analysis.

4 Structuralist readings of ideology can only result in limited descriptions of apparent relations of signification and cannot explain the existence of changing, socially-situated, ideological formations. This explanatory absence is built into its practice of reading which is a method for producing a description of the spontaneous impressions of a static form. Spontaneous impressions of a temporary, static form can never pose as theoretical explanations of a moving content. Structuralist practice has no concept of the dialectic of significance and hence its significations have no dynamic nor any mechanism of development. In other words, structuralism lacks a concept of the mode of production of ideology and its social and historical location.

5 Structuralism's emphasis on closed systems produces, out of its practice, ideologies which are discrete, isolated and asocial phenomena. Ironically, it is true to say that the structuralist problematic takes the sign out of the "heart of social life" and the society out of "the science that studies the life of signs within society".<sup>22</sup> This crucial absent concept of the social aspect of the significance of signs, in the heart of its science, its problematic, leaves a space which can only be occupied by non-social concepts of the social. As we have seen, homo significans and the Universal Mind have appeared as substitutes. Thus

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22. Saussure's phrases. See F. de Saussure Course in General Linguistics (1974 London: Fontana) p. 15.

structuralism has no tools to provide a reading of social and historical significance, merely the limited equipment for a reading of non-social, temporary relations of signification.

### Structuralism at work

The operation of structuralism in the practice of reading ideology can be illustrated by Melvyn Slater's otherwise excellent dissertation Levi-Strauss in Fleet Street.<sup>23</sup> This text is suitable for such an exercise since it is structuralist whilst not being concerned with developments in French semiology and since the reading it contains is of the English press reports of political demonstrations in the same period (September and October 1968) as that used in Halloran et al.'s Demonstrations and Communication. I shall not make a direct comparison between Slater and Halloran et al. but will proceed straightaway to an investigation of the effects of structuralism on Slater's reading practice.

Slater claims to show "that the structuralist method of myth analysis can potentially be used in the Marxian critique of ideology".<sup>24</sup> His specific project is to demonstrate that the "Great Student Plot" of 1968 (elaborated in the mass media) is a myth in the sense that myth integrates langue (language) and parole (speech) into an inclusive totality. This intention immediately alerts us to a structuralist display of functionalism. The 'integrative' functions of the relations or form in the myth, and the theme of closed systems in the notion of the inclusive totality are classic aspects of the structuralist problematic.

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23. (1970) op. cit..

24. Ibid. Preface.

" ... an attempt will be made to demonstrate that the structure (of the myth - C.S. ) is generated by a small set of logical (and practical) contradictions embedded deep in the centre of the ruling ideology of capitalist society: and hence its relation of transformation to many other 'structures' of this society."<sup>25</sup>

Slater wishes to demonstrate further that this myth is transmitted by all the newspapers of the "established" press in this period and that its generative relations are effective in the reports of other kinds of militant action and protest.<sup>26</sup> This is a classically structuralist object - to show the one-sided determinism of a system of relations.

In an early discussion of ideology, Slater slides into the structuralist notion of the mode of appearance of the structure in its effects: immanence. He is considering the relation between "praxis" and "representations" and produces a schema which allows for two modes, homology and inversion. Within the structuralist problematic, with its concept of immanence, of course, only these two relations are possible. The early Marx would have described them as the mirror-image and the camera obscura.<sup>27</sup> These modes of appearance are the double articulation of the central structuralist concept of immanence: the governing role of the code, the langue, the relations, or the system of difference and the arbitrariness of the units of significance as 'reflections' of the 'deep structures', as the discourse of the generative grammar. Thus, armed with the concept of immanence, Slater sets out in search of the inevitable homologies and isomorphisms (transparencies).

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25. Ibid. P. 88. This particular quote is also heavy with a notion of the Absolute Source. Unable to relate closed systems, structuralists must specify one source for all the systems, which is usually 'external' to them. Here the deep structures of ruling class ideology performs this originating role they are a direct product of the deep structure of bourgeois society: the capital/labour dialectic. See pp. 116-175.

26. Ibid. p. 88.

27. It is curious to note, in passing, that Levi-Strauss says that Marx noted other transformations beyond the 'mirror-image' and cites the Introduction to the Grundrisse (1957) and the Eighteenth Brumaire (1852) (two of Marx's "works of the break") which indicate the developing concept of the relative autonomy of levels of the superstructure (the "artistic" and the politico-legal, respectively). He states that Marx went to great lengths to discover these complex transformations. And then, with amazing blindness to the effect of his own problematic, he goes on to allow the possibility of ignoring content and argues for proceeding to unravel the forms, and their transformations, until we "uncover ... an ideal homologous relationship between the different structural levels". See Levi-Strauss (1972) op. cit. pp. 333, 334.

He begins by applying structural linguistics and declares that the "surface meaning" of the myth is not "the" meaning of the myth. Instead, he argues, the meaning of a section or "episode" of the myth must be sought at a deeper level:

"Rather the episode should be thought of at first as a content-neutral (in a sense, mathematical) structure, the meaning of which is discovered by its relationship to other structures within the same myth (or other myths in the same culture)".<sup>28</sup>

Thus it is that he outlines par excellence the basic principles of the structuralist reading of ideology.

Methodologically, the immanentist imperative is taken up in Levi-Straussian style. This requires the delineation of the functions of the system, in Levi-Straussian terms, the "gross constituent units", which in the terms I am using, are groups or classes of elements. The grounds for classification are unclear, except that there are "similarities" among the units or functions of a class. Versions or variants of the myth must then be analyzed to discover the laws of their permutation which leads to the discovery of the myth's "deep structure" or, again in my terms, the form of the ideology. Classical structuralism this! The relations are read off from the units on the principle of transparency derived from the concept of immanent causation. The meaning or social significance of the units is assumed in order to put them into classes: of course, presupposing a knowledge of the relations of the code which the structuralist is supposed to be 'discovering'.

To his credit, Slater critically notes that the analyst must have some notion of the structure he is looking for from the beginning, otherwise he could not group functions or units.<sup>29</sup> He declares this to be a weakness of the structuralist method and thereby commits an error, in my view, because, from my analysis earlier, it is clear that the structuralist theory of ideology grants no significance to the units outside their constituent relations and that historical, social or extra-systemic signif-

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28. (1970) op. cit. p. 20.

29. Ibid. pp. 33-36.

icance is an absent concept. Structuralist theory holds to a closed system with a functionalist concept of its nature and cannot, strictly speaking, recognize the social significance of the functions. Hence the methodological "flaws" are a necessary aspect of the theory in action - they are not simply a defect in its application. The theory could 'work' no other way. The analyses of Levi-Strauss and Slater could not be done without an imported 'knowledge' of the social significance of the functions which enables the production of social theory of the relations. Unfortunately for the structuralists, this does not mean that the theory is wrong and the method right. It means that the critique of structuralism advanced here is illustrated by their practice. Even their method is not 'right'; since the 'knowledge' of the socially significant functions is ex cathedra, unexplicated. The method of structuralism thus lapses into empiricism because it allows the social significance of the functions a privileged position as pre-given, 'raw data'. Structuralist theory is empiricist in its concepts and this predicates a method which is empiricist in practice. "Transcendence" of the "flaws" in the "technique" is not the solution to structuralism's problems. Only the provision of a theory of reading which takes into account the social significance of the functions could be that: a provision that is impossible for a rigorous structuralism. Without such a theory we can only say that the social significance of the units, postulated ex cathedra by the structuralists, is spontaneously read and hence conceals the laws of the production of social significance in its visible impressions.<sup>30</sup>

In passing, we should note (since it later develops an importance) that Slater at least doubts Levi-Strauss's view that the structuralist

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30. From his analysis of Levi-Strauss's analysis, Slater concludes that Levi-Strauss actually has a theory of myths up his sleeve anyway, based on his use of "sequences" and "schemata" which represent the synchronic and diachronic "axes" of the myth. Levi-Strauss has stated earlier that myth integrates synchronic and diachronic time referents. Slater is analyzing Levi-Strauss's "The story of Asdiwal" in E. Leach (ed.) The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism (1968 London: Tavistock) pp. 1-48. This, however, is not an answer to my criticism since that theory of myth is unexplicated, and, in any case, significance is still granted to the functions prior to analytic categorization into "sequences" and "schemata". Slater senses this and weakly argues that "we do have to start somewhere" (p.52).

analysis of myth (ideology) tells us something about the universal structures of the human mind. For Slater, "structural analysis" attempts

"... to discover the relation between the myth as an aspect of the superstructure of a society, and its material infrastructure. It is also concerned with mythic thought as a 'relatively autonomous' superstructure, and thus with formal mythic structures, transformations, and various logical operations."<sup>31</sup>

The object of Marxist structural analysis seems to be combined with the object of structuralist analysis in an unholy alliance. The dominant problematic is the structuralist one because the relation between 'base' and 'superstructure' in Slater's conception is somewhat direct and one-sided, involving a non-dialectical, immanent causation. Thus the combination of structuralism with the "Marxism critique of ideology" he mentioned in the beginning only leads to a structuralist revision rather than a development of Marxism.<sup>32</sup> Consequently Slater's many passing references to the relation between myths and social practices fail to take any 'grip' or 'bite' in the analysis - his own problematic provides us with a good example of an antagonistic contradiction between relations of signification involving the repression of some significant functions!

When we arrive at Slater's analysis, the scene is set by his announcement that he will amalgamate information theory, Lukacs' notion of the totality and structuralist analysis of myth. He wonders whether they are compatible and decides that the task of explicating the grounds for their compatibility would require a "philosophic, and necessarily massive debate" and is therefore outside the scope of his dissertation. Under the weight of that task, I am inclined to say that he was right to continue with the problem unsolved, because the three theories are compatible. Information theory involves a concept of a static system of

31. (1970) op. cit. p. 68.

32. This can be illustrated by Slater's ambivalence over Levi-Strauss's "universal structures of the human mind". The struggle between Slater's orthodox Marxism and Levi-Strauss's idealism is explosive. Marxism loses: see pp. 73, 74. A more direct illustration is the whole of Ch. 3 which revises Marxist theory by formulations which implicitly deny the 'feedback' role and relative autonomy of ideology in structuralist fashion, while in true Marxist fashion constructing, at a minimal level, a dialectic between relations and functions of signification.

relations and functions which means that significance is internal and automatic and the Lukacsian concept of the totality sees each part as an expression of the whole, that is, it sees the functions as expressions of the structure or system of relations. Both are highly concordant with the structuralist problematic. The crucial consequence for Slater's Marxism is that he becomes concerned to show that myths are functions of the three base relations or the three aspects of the determining structure. These three relations are:

- (a) "Contradictions within praxis";
- (b) "Contradictions between ideology and a changed praxis";
- (c) "Intellectual contradictions within ideology itself".<sup>33</sup>

In classic, but complex, structuralist style, Slater has posited an abstract universal structure as the source of the specific mythic discourse under observation. Typically, there is the central absence of the material dialectic between these contradictions and their consequent ideology. Also, does the 'resultant' ideology really resolve them? May it not be in conjunction with them and play a determining role? That is, might the contradictions be overdetermined? Where is the inbuilt explanation (the mechanism) of the changes in these contradictions? Might not the nature of the contradictions repress the emergence of an 'ideology-as-solution'? Are these relations or contradictions simultaneous historically with their 'ideology-as-solution'? Might not the 'ideology-as-solution' have been generated in an earlier social formation? What accounts for the form of these relations as "contradictions"? All these problems, and more, derive from the structuralist problematic and its lack of a theory of the social nature of ideology.

Since those fundamental relations are given in modern capitalism, says Slater, there must be a myth-producing agency. There is, and he contends that it is the 'mass media'.<sup>34</sup> He implies that the media is the only myth-producing agency. The concept of the Absolute Source seems to

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33. Op. cit. p. 82.

34. Ibid. p. 95.



have appeared again in the disguise of the mass media as the oracle of bourgeois mythology. He goes on, inevitably, to argue that the press is a function in a system of relations and expresses the relations that make it so in a direct, immediate fashion.<sup>35</sup> Its constituent relations are immanent within it. Thus every relation of signification within the system of press mythology is seen as a transparent function of the relations that give press mythology its function in the social totality.<sup>36</sup> As a natural consequence, Slater hopes that the use of structuralist method will lead him through binary oppositions (relations) in the myth, through the contradictions for which the myths act as solutions and to "the contradictions in the real basis from which they are transformations".<sup>37</sup> My argument that the structuralist problematic was fundamentally idealist is evidenced in strength here. The concept of reading off relations from functions in this problematic when put into Marxist terminology leads an avowed Marxist to try to discover the "real", material conditions in their transformations in the realm of mythologies!! To understand the 'real', Marxism starts from the real, not from spontaneous impressions of the mythical!

"And as in private life one differentiates between what a man thinks and says of himself and what he really is and does, so in historical struggles one must distinguish still more the phrases and fancies of parties from their real organism and their real interests, their conception of themselves from their reality."<sup>38</sup>

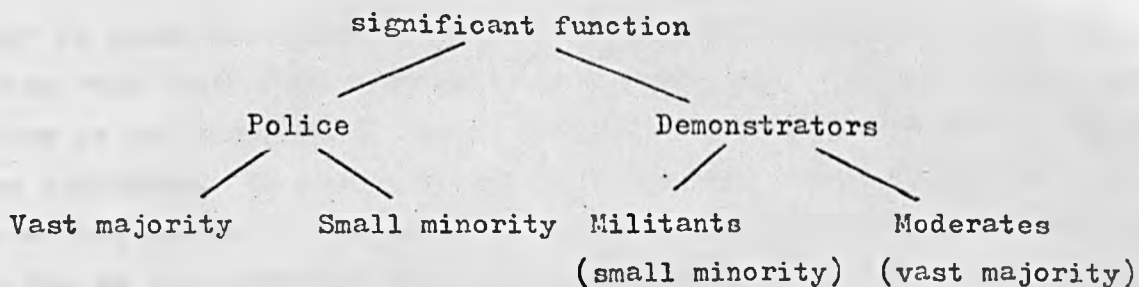
Without delving into the minutiae of Slater's analytical practice, let us note that he proceeds to discern, from a "piece" of the press discourse of the period, a number of binary oppositions e.g. the police get insufficient publicity/the demonstrators too much, the police are supported by the old/the demonstrators by the young. Each significant function ("pieces" of discourse) involves a binary opposition (a relation) and each function of that binary opposition involves another binary opposition e.g.:

35. Ibid. pp. 95, 96.

36. To give Slater his due he is much more systematic than some other structuralists: he deftly places sub-systems into wider systems and maintains his 'cool'. The fact that he has no solution for the problem of the inclusive nature of each totality does not seem to bother him.

37. Ibid. p. 96.

38. K. Marx The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, in K. Marx and F. Engels (1973) op. cit. p. 120.



Some "pieces" of discourse, we may comment, are found to be "poor". They lack "enough data". For a structuralist analysis to proceed "the text must provide contents and repetitions, at least".<sup>39</sup> How similar this is to the problematic of content analysis which also 'requires' contents and repetitions! The existence of content analysis and structuralism within the same wider empiricist problematic forces both of them to look for the 'given' content and its repetition (which seems to provide more certainty of the givenness of the content as data). Clearly some "pieces" of the discourse are denied social significance by Slater since they appear not to be the functions of structuring relations. At the same time,<sup>40</sup> he argues that he knows the significance of those pieces since he is a "member of the potential public"! This 'knowledge' of the code is no use however for Slater, because it must be "expressed explicitly for analysis", therefore he supposes that the news features will act as "code sheets" containing all the relations of the structure.<sup>41</sup> And, thus, he selects certain news features as "code sheets" for definitive analysis. In brief, we can say that here we are observing the operation of selectivity built into the structuralist problematic. This selectivity exists even though the analysis is supposed to be of all the "data", of all the 'variants of the myth'. Structuralism cannot live up to its own promises by its very nature.

All the time during this investigation of the complex structure of constituent relations, the functions, which are only given by these relations, are granted social significance. For example, the function

39. (1970) op. cit. p. 120.

40. Ibid. p. 121.

41. We see that the discourse must appear in the 'visible content' or else it is abandoned. 'Code sheets' are only devices which provide 'content'. Again this is highly similar to the practice of content analysis which analyses the repeated 'visible content' as an index of 'the discourse'.

"spy" is taken to summon up notions of 'cracking international plots', saving "the West" from disasters, investigation of the enemy etc., etc..<sup>42</sup> Slater is not supposed to "know" this without a knowledge of the constituent relations. He claims he does - as we have seen, because he is a "potential member of the public". This fundamental problem for structuralism has as its necessary condition of existence two inextricably linked concepts: (1) the concept of the existence of a "common universe of discourse" (the concept of ideology as a discrete, monolithic system), (2) the view that significance is produced in a logical system and can thus be elucidated solely by logical reference. Slater adopts both, and the problem is raised that: if there is a common universe of discourse, Slater's Marxism must hold that the contradictions in capitalist societies only exist at the infrastructural level, and not at the superstructural level. That is, the adoption of the 'consensus' solution of structuralism implies that the superstructure is a direct, one-sided, passive function of the relations of the infrastructural system; a satisfactory resolution of contradictions in the base! This is a Marxism that Marx (with his concepts of dialectic, antagonism, relative autonomy and complex structures) would not have recognized.

Having outlined a complex series of binary oppositions, immediately 'underlying' the selected pieces of discourse, Slater attempts to discover the contradictions for which the structure of the myth are a solution. These contradictions are at the level of ideology (in his definition of the concept) which 'mediates' reality and myth. 'Ideology', unsurprisingly, seems to be equivalent to the "collective consciousness", a universal code of discourse. Earlier Slater had commented on the repeated appearance of certain significant functions:

"It suggests that at one and the same time the Press is using a pre-existent (ideological) language, and also transforming that language. It was a pre-existing language because in order to represent an event such as the demonstration in the first place it draws upon various codes already present in the 'collective consciousness' of the public: Communists, trouble-makers, militants, foreign agitators, 'Londoners', violence, revolution, extremists etc.. It transforms the ideological language to some extent, by changing the meanings associated with expressions formerly considered to have different, or otherwise quite common meanings ... .. there is a real sense in which nothing happens ... and what is 'new' is not really news at all."<sup>43</sup>

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42. (1970) op. cit. p. 134.

43. Ibid. p. 142.

As the myth producing agency the 'mass media' thus operate with the universal "public" ideology as their instrument of production. Using Leach's concept of the creation and nature of the constitutive relations of ideology,<sup>44</sup> Slater then discusses several examples of constitutive ideological relations which all seem to boil down to one binary opposition: humanity/property. Are we to be surprised that this is the ultimate, deep structure of ideology when Hegelian Marxism, with its focus on the dialectical Logos, capital: labour, is combined with a structuralist problematic? The inability of structuralism to conceive of dialectically related systems in a complex, historically determinate, structure-in-dominance results in an Ultimate Source. Hegelian Marxism must posit that source to be the capital/labour structure, or, in other terms, the opposition humanity/property. As regards the "student revolt", the ultimate source is the ideological "contradiction" or structure: Students as humans/Students as investments.<sup>45</sup> Students as humans are part of "Us" and have the normal characteristics of Everyman. Students as investments are the commodities of technological capitalism. When "rebel students" come along they "fuse the two roles" or, if you like, they exacerbate the contradiction for they are both humans and commodities. They can only be represented within the units of this structure and, therefore, three solutions are possible:<sup>46</sup>

- (a) Rebellion is denied. If there are too many rebel students to make this possible the rebels are presented as the tiny minority, thus negating the rebellion;
- (b) The rebels are students as humans. That is they are not really students at all. They do not work, or they are professional revolutionaries, or they cannot play student roles properly;
- (c) The rebels are fulfilling their correct function as intelligent, critical students. Perhaps the administration is authoritarian or old-fashioned.

Thus these three units of significance are three possible functions of the same basic relation or contradiction. Clearly there are other possible

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44. Ibid. p. 142.

45. Slater (1970) op. cit. pp. 169, 170.

46. Ibid. p. 171.

outcomes of the basic structure along the lines of the ones Slater outlines (e.g. under (a) a great quantity of rebel students could be seen as non-rebels simply making a 'sensible', 'human' protest) but that is not important. What is important is that the variants or functions of the ideology (in my sense) are reduced to functions of one basic ideological structure or original relation which is said to have been made into an antagonistic contradiction by some abstract 'human praxis'.

This concluding 'discovery' of Slater's illustrates everything I have said. He has found a deep ideological structure to explain the variations in the myth. In typical structuralist fashion, he has, in fact, simply described, at a general level, the apparent nature of the mythic discourse. Students as humans/students as investments is not an explanatory structure but a description of the apparent key dilemma in the discourse of the myth. Only structuralism would try and locate the base of an ideology within ideology itself: it cannot provide the concepts with which to specify the sociality of ideology. Structuralist readings cannot account for the historical or social specificity of significant functions, their uneven development, and their determination in a dialectic with the elements of a concrete, specific, social practice. This inability is inextricably related to the structuralist problematic which is dominated by the principle of immanentism, which is a condition of existence of the object of structuralist analysis. That object is the structure; a structure which constitutes its effects in its own likeness and which ultimately is reducible to one master relation or set of relations, the Original Structure, the Structuring Structure of all History, the Creator. Structuralism, we must definitely and categorically conclude, is fundamentally antithetical to Marxian analysis, and cannot, therefore, do anything to help us construct a theory of reading ideology, but can only lead us to revise Marx's work rather than develop it.

## 5 SEMIOLOGY

Introduction

To introduce this chapter it is only necessary to reiterate briefly the relevant points made at the beginning of the last chapter. 'Semiology' is the same as 'structuralism'. The existence of two terms for one problematic is an historical accident. The problematic they refer to is the problematic of forms, a problematic which sees things as forms of something else, as signs of an inner essence. This problematic has been outlined, criticised and illustrated in the last chapter. As a result, this chapter on the branch of the structuralist problematic known as European semiology will be more expositional than critical. The point of its inclusion is that this branch or development of structuralism has influenced many Marxists and persuaded the present author to do a reading of ideological discourse under its aegis. Therefore I would like to give attention to the more 'applied' concepts of structuralism in its guise as semiology, in contrast to the analysis of the 'pure' concepts of structuralism in the last chapter.

Therefore it is the case that this present essay performs two tasks. Firstly it is an exposition which constitutes a self-criticism and a warning to other students of ideology attracted to semiology. Secondly the essay shows in detail what the practice of structuralist reading entails. The analysis of Slater's work in the last chapter was only sufficient to demonstrate the weaknesses of the structuralist problematic in general. The work examined here will provide the more detailed minutiae of the reading practice of structuralism. The exposition of the details should further enlighten comprehension of the faults of structuralism in general. Furthermore the application of the critique developed in

chapter 4 should enlighten the link between structuralist theory and structuralist practice. Certainly it must be stated that this chapter must be read in the light of the previous chapter. None of the chapters in this text stand on their own and this particular one is especially connected to the last.

### The concepts of Barthesian semiology

Semiology, as I have said, is the same as structuralism. For the structuralist problematic, the world is only a world of appearances. Nothing exists in its own specificity - everything is a sign for something else, its real essence, contained deep within it. I shall quote several passages to illustrate this basic point extensively. Barthes has said:

" ... as soon as there is a society, every usage is converted into a sign of itself... " <sup>1</sup>

He conveys the basic tenet of structuralist discourse that the real is nothing but the content of a sign-form, and that it is only intelligible in that form. Umberto Eco argues:

"We only know a cultural unit communicated to us by means of words, drawing or other means. For the defence or destruction of these cultural units as for others such as /freedom/, /transubstantiation/ or /free world/ men are even ready to go out to meet death. Yet, death, once it has arrived, and only then, constitutes the one and only referent, or event, that cannot be semiotized (a dead semiologist no longer communicates semantic theories). But right up to the moment before, "Death" is mainly used as a cultural unit." <sup>2</sup>

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1. R. Barthes Elements of Semiology (1967 London: Cape) p. 41.

2. U. Eco "A semiotic approach to semantics" Versus 1 (1971) p. 23.

Freedom and oppression are mere forms (or signs) without any real 'guts'. Even death is only a sign-form until its concrete side is realized. For the semiologist the concrete side of death can never be comprehended, since at the point of comprehension he is no longer alive. Life in semiology is the movement of pure form: death is the static quagmire of impure but stark reality.

Form is always extracted from content in the structuralist problematic, even in its 'Marxist' variants. Julia Kristeva illustrates my point:

"In his study of the capitalist system of exchange Marx showed that it is a semiotic system in which money, through a series of mutations, becomes the general equivalent or the sign of the work invested in the exchanged object. The economic system is thus a semiotic system: a chain of communication with a sender and a receiver and an object of exchange - money - which is the sign of a piece of work."<sup>3</sup>

'Marxist' semiology reduces even the production of material wealth to a cybernetic system of forms! Note how Kristeva reduces money to simply a sign, a form of value. At no point in Marx's analysis of value did he consider the phenomenon one-sidedly. To consider the determinations of value as purely 'formal' is to mistake the analysis of the form and content of the real for the analysis of the form of the real: such a step 'Hegelianizes' the Marxian dialectic. Marx's own comments on such structuralist, formal practice are highly appropriate:

"The fact that money can, in certain functions be replaced by mere symbols of itself, gave rise to that other mistaken notion that it is in itself a mere symbol. Nevertheless under this error lurked a presentiment that the money-form of an object is not an inseparable part of that object, but is simply the form under which certain social relations manifest themselves. In this sense every commodity is a symbol, since, in so far as it is value, it is only the material envelope of the human labour spent upon it. But if it be declared that the social characters assumed by objects, or the material forms assumed by the social qualities of labour under the regime of a definite mode of production, are mere

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3. J. Kristeva "The semiotic activity" Screen Vol. 14 No. 1/2 (1973) p. 35.



symbols, it is in the same breath also declared that these characteristics are arbitrary functions sanctioned by the so-called universal consent of mankind. This suited the mode of explanation in favour during the eighteenth century. Unable to account for the origin of the puzzling forms assumed by social relations between man and man, people sought to denude them of their strange appearance by ascribing them to a conventional origin."<sup>4</sup> (my emphases)

It is never permissible in Marxism to separate form from content, leaving form as an abstract existence. As Marx notes, this formalist extraction leads to the importation of imaginary universals to explain the inexplicable. As we have seen, modern structuralism, like eighteenth century formalism, has followed this path.

Let us now turn to the concepts of European semiology, having reiterated (and hopefully clarified) its basis as a formalist, structuralist problematic. To explicate these concepts I shall use the work of Roland Barthes, the leading European semiologist. I choose his work because of the extent of its development.

Barthes' commitment is to the reconstitution of the rules within which a reading of a literary text or "cultural unit" (Eco's phrase) must be elaborated. That is to say, his concern is not to discover 'the' meaning of the significant item, but to extract the form or structure of the item which provides the parameters for any reading of it.<sup>5</sup> In other words, Barthes sees his task as the elucidation of the ideological structures which determine the limits of variation of the significant units of the system. To do this it is necessary for Barthes to have some prior knowledge of the social significance of the units. As I argued in the last chapter, this is one of the key problems with the structuralist problematic. It does not seem to worry Barthes:

"Semiology is the science of forms, since it studies significations apart from their content."<sup>6</sup>

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4. (1974) op. cit. pp. 93, 94.

5. See G. Genette "The reverse side of the sign" Social Sciences Information Vol. VIII (4) (Aug. 1969) p. 170.

6. (1973) op. cit. p. 111.

As I have shown, the reduction of things to signs should be nothing for a Marxist to be proud of!

In the search for the form or structure of things, Barthes employs Saussure's distinction between langue (language, as an abstract code) and parole (speech or message). For Barthes, langue is a social institution:

"It is the social part of language, the individual cannot by himself create it or modify it; it is essentially a collective contract which one must accept in its entirety if one wishes to communicate."<sup>7</sup>

What Marx was saying, about those who separated form from content and, then, in puzzlement at the problem they had created, ascribed the origin of the form ("arbitrary fictions") to "convention", to the "so-called universal consent of mankind", seems to apply to the work of Barthes. However, Barthes is no apologetic, bourgeois 'social-contract' theorist, and hedges at his produced concept of the conventional, customary origins of the language-structure. He proceeds by noting the "manifest affinity" of the language-structure, of langue, and Durkheim's concept of the "conscience collective". Now, Durkheim and Saussure certainly worked in Paris at the same time and Saussure was aware of Durkheim's work. But Barthes does not investigate this connection further and, instead, opts for the solution that in most sign-systems the code (structure) is elaborated by a "deciding group" and not by the "speaking mass".<sup>8</sup> The Logos of the Levi-Straussian 'universal structure of the human mind' is thus replaced by the Telos of bourgeois ideology. Barthes' position here is no less crude or functionalist than Slater's position: since ruling class ideology dominates at all social levels of capitalist society and since, therefore, ideology functions only for the benefit of the ruling class, the origins of ideology lie in its position as a function of 'the'

7. (1967) op. cit. p. 14.

8. Ibid. pp. 23-27 and 31, 32. This concept is practically the same as Althusser's location of the preparation of ideology in ruling class-dominated, state ideological apparatuses. See ch. 2, supra.

'deep structure' of society, the relation between capital and labour.<sup>9</sup> Barthes, like Slater, sees a society's relations of signification and units of significance as a function of the dominance of the bourgeoisie, a dominance provided by the deep structure of capital/labour. Consequently, elaboration of the langue or language-structure is the privilege of the ruling class and the forms are handed out, without recrimination or response, to the subordinate classes. Barthes' formulations, like those of Slater and some of Althusser's, often resonate a kind of Parsonian radicalism!

Parole, for Barthes, is the individual, diachronic aspect of language: "an individual act of selection and actualization".<sup>10</sup> It is a combination of the ability of the "speaking-subject" to use the code to create discourse and the "psycho-physical mechanisms" which enable him to exteriorize the discourse.<sup>11</sup> This concept reminds one sharply of the notion of homo significans imported by structuralism to solve the problem of the absent concept of the social emergence of significance. 'Man' signifies - men interact - structures of signification are built up - language, or langue, becomes a social institution. Again we can note the similarity between radical, European, modern, functionalist structuralism and the conservative, structural-functionalism of Durkheim and Parsons.<sup>12</sup>

Langue and parole are said to exist in dialectical process - each of the two forms achieves its full definition only in dialectical unity with the other. It is within this dialectic that "linguistic praxis" exists:

"On the one hand the language is 'the treasure deposited by the practice of speech, in the subjects belonging to the same community' and, since it is a collective summa of individual imprints, it must remain incomplete at the level of each isolated individual: a language does not exist perfectly except in the 'speaking mass'; one cannot handle speech except by drawing on the language."<sup>13</sup>

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9. See Ch. 4, supra.

10. Barthes (1967) op. cit. p. 15.

11. Ibid.

12. Compare Barthes (ibid. pp. 14; 15) on parole with Durkheim's account of the emergence of social institutions and Parsons' account of the emergence of shared value-orientations.

13. Barthes, ibid. p. 16.

This dialectic is the focus of the semiologist's attention, the purpose of which is to separate the langue from the speech and hence to constitute "the problematic of the meaning".<sup>14</sup> Barthes here explicitly delineates the target from which structuralism extracts the form and content analysis extracts the content, the target I mentioned in the last chapter.<sup>15</sup> This target is 'empirical' discourse: discourse perceived in its immediate, spontaneous impressions. Barthes merely pays lip-service to dialectic here. The concept is an insignificant unit within his discourse; he is only interested in practice in the forms of spontaneously observed discourse. His actual method of reading does not at all take cognizance of those forms as reflections of a particular structured practice. It thus excludes the dialectic between active-speech and passive-language in its practical concentration on the passive language or code.

We can now move to the concept of connotation. Connotation is said to be the aspect of the discourse which contains the attitude, choice, prejudice or intention of the communicating subject. For Barthes, connotation is the level where private ideology intervenes in the public institution of language. The socially-contractual, arbitrary aspect of discourse is conceived of as the level of denotation, upon which layers of connotation are added. Discourse is thus constituted by the pure, shared level of denotation and the added 'culturally-specific' level of connotation or ideology. Like the American content analysts (and many 'non-scientists' such as politicians), Barthes conceives of ideology as an intentional, sectional appendage or overlay to the common universe of denotative discourse.<sup>16</sup> Language (the denotative level) is thus separated from the ideology (the connotative level). The former is 'pure' and fundamental to social life and the latter is a sordid, motivated, 'distortion':

14. Ibid. p. 17.

15. See p. 139.

16. Barthes (1967) op. cit. pp. 89, 90.

"Entrusted with 'glossing over' an intentional concept, myth encounters nothing but betrayal in language, for language can only obliterate the concept if it hides it, or unmask it if it formulates it. The elaboration of a second-order semiological system will enable myth to escape this dilemma: driven to having either to unveil or to liquidate the concept, it will naturalize it."<sup>17</sup>

Connotative systems of discourse are thus developed to 'naturalize' the motivated ideology of the sectional, interested subject or group. Ideology is thus the unhealthy development of class society. It is thoroughly distasteful and muddies the water of denotative discourse:

"The fact that we cannot manage to achieve more than an unstable grasp of reality doubtless gives the measure of our present alienation ..."<sup>18</sup>

The task of the semiologist is to scrape away the layer of connotation, the site of the intentional concepts of ideology, and "liberate" the "significant".<sup>19</sup> Connotative discourse is a parasitic growth on the host, denotative discourse.

Denotation is "contractual", the level where "this contract is collective". Connotation is a sectional form reflecting social and cultural divisions. The signified referents of connotative signifiers are ideological "fragments" which have a "very close communication with culture, knowledge and history, and it is through them, so to speak, that the environmental world invades the system".<sup>20</sup> Never has the purity and abstract sociality of language (at the denotative level) been expressed so forcefully! Perhaps the reader may think that Barthes' ideological "fragments" connected to social divisions are very similar to my ideological formations, elements in social practices. But this is a deceptive appearance, for what Barthes is basically constructing is a classically structuralist discourse about two discrete systems of significance. Denotation and connotation, for Barthes, represent two discursive systems which have an unexplicated co-existence in capitalist social relations. Barthes can only talk of the real sociality of

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17. Barthes (1973) op. cit. p. 129.

18. Ibid. p. 159.

19. Ibid. p. 9.

20. Barthes (1967) op. cit. pp. 92-92.

ideology by positing the abstract sociality of 'language proper' or denotation. Connotative discourse, for Barthes, is the form in which an abstract language appears socially. In my formulations there are no statements or even hints that one can extract the form of discourse and ascribe to it a discrete, asocial, abstract existence, sanctioned by the "universal consent of mankind". I would hope that I made it clear that discourse only existed socially, in social practice, and that its form and practical conditions of existence existed in dialectical relation. The absence of a dialectical, materialist concept of discourse in Barthes' work is inscribed in the very fact that Barthes employs two concepts of discourse instead of one. 'Denotation' represents the metaphysical, agreed forms of discourse and 'connotation' the real, unshared forms. The two cannot exist together in the same sphere, hence Barthes is forced to separate them. This feature of his discourse reflects structuralism's inability to conceive of a material dialectic between the social conditions of signification and the units of social significance: structuralism always posits a one-sided determination of the social content by its immanent, abstract, non-social forms. Without such a dialectic of significance one cannot begin to understand the social effect, in certain historical conjunctures, of the dominance of particular ideological forms and contents. This concept of the dialectic between social relations and forms of social significance is absent in Barthesian semiology; an absence which fixes its inadequacy as a social theory of ideology, and its positivity as merely a means for the subjective description of apparent, immediately readable structures. The allegedly determinant "structures" or "codes" produced by the practice of semiological reading are thus purely abstract in their theoretical status: 'abstract' - in that their social reality is never located within any specific social practice.

In semiological terms, the structuralist problematic's key concepts of relation and function are known as the syntagmatic and paradigmatic "axes" of discourses. Barthes would see every discourse as a discrete phenomenon, as a closed system of units or signs. The divisions or differences which produce the units or functions exist at the syntagmatic level. The units available to a given system exist at the paradigmatic level. The syntagm is the division of the continuum which is the 'blur of reality'. It is the fundamental operation of a discourse since the creation of these "divisions" produces the "points of the

structure" known as the units.<sup>21</sup> Thus the syntagmatic level of a discourse, in general structuralist terminology, is composed of the relations (or system) which constitute and establish the units or functions. Within a particular syntagm or discourse-system, only certain units or sign-functions are possible. Terms which are equal in that they serve as variants of expression of a point in the system stand in "paradigmatic" relation to each other. Thus, when making a semiological reading of a discourse, the analyst uses what is called the commutation test. If he suspects that term X is a function of relation A, he supposes that there are other terms which could equally act as functions of relation A. Thus he substitutes, in his imagination, the hypothetical terms for the term in the text in order to confirm his suspicion that relation A is at work. If the substituted terms do not alter the meaning of the text then he concludes that relation A (or syntagmatic form A) is in operation.<sup>22</sup> These three concepts (of the syntagmatic plane, the paradigmatic plane and the commutation test) are, therefore, simple expressions of the basic concept of the structuralist problematic (that the structure is the determinant of the content and that the content is only the transient manifestation of its inner formal essence). Our criticisms in the previous chapter are applicable in toto to these semiological concepts, so I will not go through the tedious process of repeating them all. The only thing I will mention again is that these semiological concepts are clearly based on an empiricist problematic which takes its object to be the visible essence of the visible real. All three concepts presuppose the transparency of the formal essence in the substantive content of the text without any theory of why this might be the case. Barthes argues that "it is impossible to guess in advance the syntagmatic units which analysis will discover for each system".<sup>23</sup> However, the semiologist can only act on his suspicions as to the operation of a syntagmatic unit or structure because he has ascribed a social meaning to the term in the text. So, although it

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21. Ibid. p. 64.

22. Ibid. p. 65.

23. Ibid. p. 68.

is obviously true that the semiologist cannot guess the syntagmatic level of an unseen text, once he has made a spontaneous reading of a text he has assumed he knows what the syntagms are in the act of granting meanings to the units of the text. Hence, semiology forces its practitioners to "guess" syntagmatic units in advance of analysis, in typically empiricist fashion.

It must be remembered that semiology claims to be the science of all sign-systems whether they be forms of food, dress, cars, literature of ideology. Thus in its analyses it is concerned to extract the code (the syntagmatic plane of relations) from the units of the system. Some things are seen as complex and combine two systems. Thus foods are structured by two systems, the relations between the food-forms themselves and the relations between the discursive or linguistic forms that refer to the food-forms. Similarly, discursive materials are seen as combined systems. They are composed of the system of denotation and the system of connotation. Each of these systems is held to be a form unto itself and the analyst is held, therefore, to be capable of extracting the level of connotative relations from discourse. The two systems are combined in a particular way. Barthes makes it clear that denotation is the base level of all discourse and connotation an added level and that, therefore, signs constituted by the relations of denotation constitute the sign 'demonstration' to refer to 'a political meeting or procession'. In other words, in the system of denotative divisions, the mark 'demonstration' is a particular unit or sign-function, referring to 'a political meeting or procession'. The series of units 'a political meeting or procession' similarly refers to other sign-functions and units (e.g. meeting refers to an organized gathering), which in turn refer to yet more sign-functions and so on. Thus, 'demonstration' is simply a unit within a whole series of units which are all given their unit-ness or function by the relations of denotation i.e. the relations between the units. Now, this sign-function 'demonstration', when placed in a connotative system, retains its nature as a denotative sign-function but also acts for another system, the relations of connotation. Within the latter system 'demonstration' retains its old 'meaning' as 'a political meeting or procession' but possesses an additional reference as (for example) 'an emotional gathering of militants'. Thus it is that



Barthes argues that connotation simply adds meaning to the 'pure', 'linguistic' level of denotation.

The connotation of 'demonstration' in our example would be, for Barthes, a "fragment of ideology".<sup>24</sup> That is, the reference at the connotative level is a sign-function of an ideological system produced by real, social life (unlike the sign-functions of denotation which seem to be produced abstractly by the magical 'social contract'). Each connotative reference is a part in a total system of connotative references, just as a denotative unit only exists as such within its system. So, for example, the ideological reference 'an emotional gathering of militants' presupposes other ideological references such as 'we disapprove of militants', 'we disapprove of political meetings', 'militants are emotional since they are not rational and level-headed' and so on. The ideological sign-function of 'demonstration' only exists as such within an interrelated system of ideological sign-functions. In sum, we can see that the structuralist notion of discrete, closed systems appears in these semiological concepts, which specify two separate sign-systems only linked in the practice of signification. This problematic relation between ideology, denotation and practice can now be briefly examined.

It is noticeable that the relation of ideology to social life is not mentioned much nor explored in any theoretical depth in semiological work. Semiology cannot really grant origins to the system of ideological sign-functions without contradicting itself. Strictly speaking, it must say that the functions are products of the relations and that the system is totally autonomous and discrete. To illustrate this, we can comment on the lack of explanation of the view that the system of ideological discourse swallows up the system of denotative discourse, of the view that denotation only exists abstractly as the neutral 'tool' or "raw materials" of ideology. Why should there be two systems of discourse and why should the abstract one be the basis of the social one? Semiology cannot answer these questions. From a Marxist perspective the answers are simple. Social discourse or ideology swallows up denotation

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24. Ibid. p. 91.

because denotation is simply a figment of the semiological imagination. The denotative code is simply an abstract form or structure created by semiology and not a real part of social discourse. Semiology cannot deal with the structure of denotation as a social fact because it is only an abstract form extracted from the content of social discourse, at a specific historical conjuncture, and granted the "universal consent of mankind". In social reality there is only ongoing social discourse: discourse is only expressed historically and socially, in particular social practices. Thus Marxism must abandon the concept of 'denotative discourse' and, instead, talk of specific, structurally-located, social, ideological discourses. It can then focus its attention on the real underpinning structures of ideological discourses - the structures of specific, historical, social practices. Similarly Marxism can abandon the talk of 'discursive systems' in relation to ideology, if it abandons formalist structuralism, and, instead, talk of ideological formations which do not form in exact systems or precise structures. As we have said before,<sup>25</sup> ideology exists only in a loose structure, some of its forms interconnecting, others being isolated, always lying within a particular social practice. Particular ideological formations (such as deviance) only exist socially as aspects of definite social practices. They are not products of some abstract form: their 'constitutive relations' are their connections with other elements of social practices - the social relations linking the elements of a practice. The 'idealism' of semiological concepts is apparent in their extraction of forms from their contents and in their constitution of those forms in neat systems which are privileged by the collective adherence of the people to them or by the decision of the ruling class to advance them. A materialist approach to ideology refuses to separate ideological forms from their contents and locates both, concretely, in determinate social practices. Thus Marxism does not conceive of language as a pure, word-form overlaid with social, ideological contents. For Marxism, language is the mode of expression of the social discourse or ideology of a people engaged

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25. See ch. 2.

in social practices in a particular social formation. There are a number of languages and language-forms each linked to the ideologies of classes of people engaged in class practices. There is no such thing as 'a society's ideology'. Language is the form in which a social class expresses its ideologies, hence, in class societies, there are as many languages and language-forms as there are classes. Thus, for example, in modern Britain the ideologies of members of the working class are rarely expressed in 'the Queen's English' or in word-forms in general. Perhaps from bitter experience, members of the working class believe that 'actions speak louder than words'. Of course, I do not mean to suggest that, in any given historical situation, languages and ideologies are mapped in perfect parallel with class structure. The classes with most wealth and power will usually be able, thereby, to establish their language and their parole in the institutions of communication and 'culture'. Power and wealth enable cultural hegemony. However, the propertyless, powerless classes do not accept this without demur; nor are their cultures ever smashed as long as they are alive. Hegemony involves conflict and struggle rather than submission and uniformity.

#### A semiological reading of press discourse on political demonstrations

To exemplify the practices of semiological reading I shall now describe the reading I completed in 1973.

From March 7th 1973 to April 7th 1973 I extracted from the newspapers of the English national press (excluding the Morning Star - the Communist newspaper) all the cuttings (92 in total) which contained news-items on 'political demonstrations' taking place in

the U.K..<sup>26</sup> Features and editorials which talked about 'political demonstrations' were to be analyzed at a later (never to arrive) date and were to provide the 'code-sheets' (Slater's term) to confirm my analysis of the ideological structures in the news stories. The Morning Star cuttings were also to be analyzed later to prove that its ideological structures were only the inverse of the 'orthodox' press and were within the same frame of reference. That is, I held the idea that the whole national press was working within one great system of ideology which expressed itself fragmentedly in news stories and purely and extensively in editorials and features, and which expressed its opposite form in the Communist newspaper. Clearly this was an approach of a structuralist or semiological nature which conceived of ideology as a socially universal set of relations, as a neat system.

Which cuttings qualified as 'cuttings about political demonstrations'? Only those which employed the term 'demonstration' or its variants: 'demonstrated', 'demonstrators' etc., or those which reported an event which was "obviously" a 'political march or procession'. Thus 'strikes' and 'sit-ins' may have been excluded if they were not described by a newspaper as 'demonstrations'. 'Demonstration' was thus conceived as one sign-function within the supposed monolithic, ideological system of sign-functions employed by the press.

Having selected the cuttings, each one was analysed in great detail - every word, comma and headline being taken into account - and a series of relations of signification produced alongside a series of units of significance or paradigmatic functions. Let me illustrate the practice of the reading by an account, based on my notes at the time, of one analysis.

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26. I assumed 'foreign' demonstrations would be dealt with differently - this seems to be true.

Before detailing my analysis, some precautionary remarks are necessary. In the analysis of this cutting, there entered one factor which semiologists rarely mention. To all the cuttings, after the first few, I would bring assumptions and expectations about finding a systematic ideology. Based on a theory which specifies that all these cuttings will express a neat, discrete system of ideology, this tendency is perfectly natural. Since the analyst is looking for a system he tends to look for elements which repeat themselves. Slater also noted that the structuralist analysis needed content and repetitions.<sup>27</sup> When a reader is attempting to extract the 'deep structure' from a series of discourses, it is inevitable that he will look for repetitions and particular contents that 'catch his eye'. Thus, the practice of semiological reading supports my theoretical finding that structuralism is very similar to content analysis - both types of reading are based on the frequency of appearance of selected, spontaneously observed, contents. In sum, therefore, my reading of this cutting was informed by preliminary notions that certain syntagmatic relations or structures were at work. It is necessary to note this so that the reader of this text does not think that I whisked my reading of this example-cutting out of thin air. It is also necessary to note that I assumed that headlines encapsulated the ideological message in a nutshell - an expectation which was often seen to be true, but not always. Headlines clearly have other, more practical functions than this one e.g. drawing the reader's attention.

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27. See supra p. 149.

# 'Sell-out' protest by angry steelmen

By PETER WELBOURN

**ANGRY** placard-waving steelworkers yesterday accused union leaders of selling out to the Government and the bosses.

They were protesting after a conference of delegates from 16 unions agreed to Steel Corporation plans for closures and redundancies as long as alternative employment was created.

Spokesmen for 300 demonstrators from Shotton, Flints—where 6,500 jobs will be lost—East Moors, Cardiff (4,500) and Corby, where redundancies are also threatened, said: "This decision is a disgrace.

## Blocked

"They are accepting the bosses' plans and standing idly by while we end up at the labour exchange. Whose side are they on?"

All attempts to frame militant resolutions at the Sheffield conference—of the T.U.C. steel consultative committee—were blocked by its chairman, Sir David Davies.

Afterwards Sir David, general secretary of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, said: "Strike action would be a matter for individual unions."

He made it clear that the unions would fight to hold up closures until alternative employment has been created.

Daily Express

8th March 1973 p. 7.

My analysis of this cutting was as follows:

- Headline - 'Angry' lies in syntagmatic relation to 'protest' (i.e. 'angry': 'protest').
- "'sell-out'" = a slogan  
∴ angry:protest:slogan
  - "'sell-out'" lies in inverted commas and is therefore, at the best, not granted any legitimacy and, at worst, disputed. (The implication that a sell-out has not in fact occurred supports our reading of "'sell-out'" as a slogan.
- The connotations of slogan, and the fact that the relation angry: protest: slogan has already been suspected, strengthen the conviction that angry:protest:slogan is at work in this news-story. At this stage, before we read any more, we strongly suspect that the steelmen will be portrayed (a) unfavourably and (b) as militant and irrational.

PARAGRAPH 1

- 'Angry': 'placard-waving'

(Militant irrationality is strongly connoted here along with the effects of emotion and possibly a Lebon-type

theory of crowd-hysteria).

Angry:protest:slogan:action:emotion:irrationality:  
militancy: disapproved.

(At this stage the last three elements of the structure are only tentatively posited).

- 'accused' - implied that at a minimum their allegations may not be fair or true.
- very tentatively, the structure workers:bosses:: unions: government seems to be at work here (That is, workers are in the same relation to bosses as are unions to government). This possibility rests on the use of 'workers' and 'bosses' in the same paragraph - it could have been put in other ways.

PARAGRAPH 2

- 'conference' - reinforces the mild, business schema or framework that had been developing by the use of 'sell-out'.
- accused:'protesting'
- the implication is that they are 'protesting' for nothing since 'alternative employment' is a condition of the agreement. (Protest always seems to be pointless i.e. protest: futility is a common structure. The implication is, of course, that 'there is no need to take to the streets, protest or criticize because your leaders will look after you'. 'Leaders' was used in the first paragraph).

PARAGRAPH 3

- Protest:'demonstrators' (And therefore 'demonstrators' fits into the chain of relations developed during the analysis of paragraph 1)
- 'Spokesmen':demonstrators::union leaders:steel workers (Note: 'Spokesmen' = an anonymous collective. Do they not warrant names as demonstrators?)

Heading

- 'Blocked' follows main headline thus, we get 'protest blocked'. (Protests are always 'blocked' by one of our great leaders). Thus we expect the following paragraphs to describe the block.

PARAGRAPH 4

- Simply presents the full flow of the protest. We wait for the application of the 'block'.

PARAGRAPH 5

- The 'block' is applied.
- It is applied by a named 'chairman' (as opposed to unnamed 'demonstrators' 'spokesmen'), who is even given his title.
- "were blocked by" - passive tense. The 'militants' are active. He, as a moderate-by implication, simply blocks militancy. Moderates are rarely said to actively attack militants - they merely respond.
- 'militant' - this was expected from the above paragraphs.
- Angry:protest:slogan:action:emotion:demonstrators:militants:disapproved.
- Sir David Davies is, by implication, a rational, passive moderate. Tentatively then we have a counter-structure:moderate:rational:passive:approved.
- 'All attempts' -strength of Sir David Davies, he 'blocked' everything the militants threw at him. Militancy was totally defeated (as usual). (Thus to our list of related significant units we could add /futility/ and /always defeated/).

PARAGRAPH 6

- 'Sir David'. He's obviously very popular. (I wonder if the article went on longer whether he'd be called 'Dai'). His surname has been dropped and he has been granted more status as the 'general secretary' of another body.
- 'said' - passively no doubt. There's no 'accusations' or sloganeering for 'Sir Daid'.
- Regarding the content of his statement, the clear implication I would say (from my reading of previous cuttings) is that the collective policy is rational, sensible and moderate etc. and that as a moderate, 'Sir David' would not impose himself on the unions. If any of them wanted to engage in irrational militancy then that is up to them.

PARAGRAPH 7

- "made it clear" - to those who, in their emotional state, could not see the moderate, rational nature of their leaders' policies.



- 'fight' - this cannot mean 'strike' since that was said to be a matter for individual unions. Hence we get the relation:

fight:strike::moderate:militant

(Thus 'fight' clearly means 'negotiation'. Moderates always 'fight' by negotiating)

- The statement reinforces the point made above that the implication is that they are 'protesting' for nothing since jobs will be provided. 'Sir David' makes that 'clear'. (So there is a slight sense of puzzlement in the article as to what they are protesting for! I think the question is answered by the conceptions of 'militants' and 'demonstrators'. They are usually motivated by more evil purposes than the ones they claim).

This kind of rigorous reading is, of course, totally speculative. One can see clearly how it is just one radical's spontaneous, close reading of a news-cutting. The natural after-effect of such a reading is to believe that one is watching a ruling class ideology in operation. After doing this kind of analysis painstakingly through 92 cuttings and observing the same 'signs' and 'relations of signification' at work time and time again, one becomes absolutely certain. There is no question about it, in the spontaneous practice of reading 'news-discourse' it appears that there is a systematic ideology 'underpinning' that discourse. Or, to put it another way, at the level of spontaneous reading, ideology appears as a system. This is how it has appeared to all the spontaneous readings we have discussed so far. Researchers such as Berelson, Young, and Slater, engaged in spontaneous readings (whether they recognized it or not), have all concluded that there is some kind of systematic or unified ideology underpinning the discourse. And, of course, 'non-researchers' or 'people in general' also attribute some kind of systematic, unified ideology to any extensive piece of 'cultural discourse' - whether they call it 'a prejudice', or a slant', or 'a world-view', or 'a point of view', or 'a bias'. As we noted

earlier;<sup>28</sup> at the spontaneous level, ideology appears as the product of human agency and hence as thought given a unity by 'choice' or 'will' (whether 'role' or 'interest' forced the unifying practice is irrelevant). The two appearances go well together and we can say that, in general, cultural discourse is seen spontaneously (ideologically) as the chosen product of a human being and as the expression of his point of view. This general notion is the axis of many variants, some colloquial, some philosophical and some sociological, but basically the point I am making still holds: at the level of the spontaneous social practice of reading discourse, ideology appears to its consumers in a twofold manner:

(1) As a system or totality. That is, it appears as a unity in itself. This is the form of its appearance.

(2) As an expression of a human 'will' or 'mind'. This 'will' or 'mind' is the content of its appearance. The essence of the human agent is contained within the ideology as it appears.

In other words, ideology is the mode of spontaneous consciousness made up by a morass of the thoughts, images and percepts of experience only given structure by their location within a social practice, but in the spontaneous reading of discourse ideology appears as a unity constituted by 'the human essence'. That is, the ideology of ideology only sees human nature expressing itself, and does not comprehend that ideology can only be seen as such because it is a constituent element in a social practice whose agency is the physical human being. To conclude, the other side of ideology, not seen by the ideology of ideology, is that the only unity it has is its 'fixing' connection with the other elements of a definite social practice and that its only 'essence' is as an expression of the social relations combining the elements of that practice. Ideology may appear as a unity expressed by a man's inner nature, but it is in fact, I would submit, a constituent element of social production carried out under definite social relations.

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28. See supra p. 118.

It may be thought from this that ideology's 'appearance' is mystical, illusory and false. But make no mistake. Ideology's 'appearance' is as real as its 'non-appearing' side. In fact it is only too real! This point can be reinforced by referring back to my 1973 semiological reading. But, before I return to this illustration, let me just repeat a point made earlier.<sup>29</sup> 'Appearance' is a misleading term. In the spontaneous practice of reading discourse, ideology does not just 'appear as' but, actually is a unity expressing one human being's nature. In such a practice, that is the perceptible form taken by ideology, just as in economic practice, in the capitalist mode of production, value is price. The term 'appearance' could lead the reader (of this text) to believe that ideology's form in the social practice of reading discourse is illusory. That would be wrong. In the spontaneous mode of reading, ideology's form is real: within such a practice it is a unity expressing human nature. Ideology, like value, has several forms - all equally real and all conditional. The condition of 'existence of ideology (in discourse) as a unity expressing a human nature is the spontaneous reading of that discourse. In other words, the spontaneous practice of reading ideology is the condition of existence of its form as a unity expressing a human nature. This fact is amply illustrated by my spontaneous reading of the other press reports of that same 'demonstration' of March 8th 1973. Let us now turn to those cuttings to see that ideology's spontaneous appearance as a unity is not illusory but very real and convincing.

We can look first at the cuttings from the Daily Telegraph and Financial Times, (newspapers which, along with the Daily Express, are usually thought of as the 'right-wing' press) for a likely source of support for the ideology apparent in the Daily Express report.

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29. See supra pp. 114-116.

## Work force cuts agreed by steel men

Daily Telegraph Reporter  
**DELEGATES** representing 220,000 steel workers decided in Sheffield yesterday not to oppose the Government's plans to cut the steel industry's work force by 50,000 by 1980.

But within minutes of reaching the decision they were accused of "a sell-out" by 300 demonstrators from Wales and the Midlands.

Sir Dai Davies, general secretary of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, later told a Press conference that it was now up to individual unions to decide on taking direct action.

He said: "We reached common agreement not to oppose modernisation but to make sure that new job opportunities must be provided before closures are implemented."

Speaking after the TUC steel committee had considered the White Paper setting out the Government's 10-year £3,000-million investment programme for the industry, Sir Dai said: "We have to adopt a positive attitude."

But the Government's plans ought to be flexible so that steel closures can be put back until such time as jobs are available."

### Shotton lobby

Several hundred steelworkers from Shotton, Flintshire, where the jobs of 6,500 men are threatened under the programme, lobbied the meeting.

Mr Joe Atkinson, assistant secretary of the Shotton action committee, said afterwards: "We are not swallowing the alternative jobs list."



Shotton steelworkers demonstrating outside a meeting of the Trades Union Congress's steel committee in Sheffield yesterday. An eight-strong delegation was allowed to attend part of the proceedings.

Daily Telegraph

8th March 1973 p.7

The Daily Telegraph cutting has the complication of a photograph. In my practice of semiological reading I assumed that headline and photograph fitted together to provide a strong connotation, or the main ideological message. This cutting provides us with an example of a poor fit. The headline announces the consensus between the Government

and the workers, but the photograph signifies a workers' protest against Government measures. This is a contradiction. However, if we follow Hall's work on newsphotographs, we assume that the caption directs us to the appropriate message or connotation, that the caption 'anchors' the meaning of the photograph.<sup>30</sup> In this instance the caption lessens the contradiction considerably by alerting us to the connotation that it was only the "Shotton steelworkers" who disagreed with the Government policy. It lessens the contradiction even further by denoting that the Shotton workers were actually represented at the conference, connoting that their interests were democratically represented.

The text begins by counterposing "220,000" who accepted Government policy to "300 demonstrators" who did not. Those in disagreement were "demonstrators" and they "accused" their "delegates". Their accusations were clearly based on pre-conceived ideas, the text connotes, since they were accusing "within minutes" of hearing the decision. Thus the series - demonstrators:accusing:active:ideologically motivated:sectional interest - is developed already. A series very similar to that in the Daily Express cutting.

Our speculations, regarding the popularity of David Davies in the ideological structures at work in the Express cutting, are reinforced here by the Telegraph's appellation "Sir Dai Davies". He gets title and nickname. At the press conference, he expresses the "common agreement" and, again, it is connoted that he will not stop "individual unions" "taking direct action". As in the Express, the image of him is one of a passive, rational moderate in line with the consensus. Further on in the text his appellation becomes "Sir Dai". He increases in popularity as the report goes on.

The remainder of the text makes it clear that the Shotton workers who demonstrated were only a small minority of the workers at Shotton whose jobs were threatened. Again, they are pictured as the active, militant minority. The quote from one of their leaders (who, to be fair, does get his nickname, "Joe", and his title "Mr.") does nothing to suggest that the workers' resistance to the plan is anything more than stubbornness, based on irrational fear.

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30. See S. Hall "The determinations of newsphotographs" (1973) W.P.C.S. 3 pp. 53-87. See also R. Barthes (1973) op. cit. pp. 109-159 and "Rhetoric of the image" (1971) W.P.C.S. 1 pp. 37-52.

# Action group of steel men calls protest talks

BY JOHN WYLES, LABOUR STAFF SHEFFIELD, March 7.

A RANK and file conference of steel workers is to be organised in Manchester on April 13, following a refusal to-day by leaders of the TUC steel committee to commit themselves to industrial action to resist plant closures.

The conference has been called by the action committee at the British Steel Corporation's Shotton works, in North Wales, which may lose up to 6,500 jobs by 1980 because of modernisation plans.

Over 300 Welsh steelworkers travelled from Shotton and the East Moors plant in Cardiff to Sheffield to-day, to demonstrate noisily outside at a delegate conference of the 16 steel industry unions—the first such conference to be organised by the TUC steel committee.

According to delegates, it was marked by stormy exchanges between the platform and the floor. A number of delegates were angered and disappointed that the conference had not been able to frame a national union policy on closures.

During the conference, Sir Dai Davies, chairman of the TUC steel committee, had refused to accept resolutions calling for industrial action because, as he later explained, these would "usurp" the power of individual unions to make their own decisions on direct action.

Stating TUC steel committee policy afterwards, Sir Dai claimed that the proposed cut-back of jobs would have to be delayed unless the unions were satisfied that new jobs were available in the affected areas.

He said there had been "general agreement" that the unions could not logically oppose

modernisation of an industry which had suffered in the past because of a lack of investment. The TUC's moderate line on closures is likely to be further challenged at a first-ever delegate conference of Sir Dai's own union, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, on April 18.

● The British Steel Corporation last night withdrew its notice of a 24 hour shutdown of the rolling mill at East Moors works in Cardiff. BSC said: "As a concession and act of goodwill we have decided that the rolling mill will continue in operation."

"It is hoped this gesture will help in obtaining a favourable decision to return to normal loading of supplies to customers."

Workers at the plant, which is due to close by 1975 with the loss of 4,500 jobs, have been threatening to hold a sit-in over the proposed rolling mill closure.

Financial Times

8th March 1973 p. 21

The headline here immediately links "action" with "protest". Again the demonstrators are said to be a small minority, and they "demonstrate noisily". David Davies is again "Sir Dai Davies" and very rational as he "explains" why he would not force any union to take industrial action. "Sir Dai", as he is later called, adopts a "moderate line".

This is obviously not a thorough analysis of the cutting. It merely selects points that correspond with those in the Express and Tele-graph reports. It should be clear now, after only three cuttings, that some significant units are repeated time and time again across the national press and that certain relations of signification also repeat themselves frequently. Look how my analysis of the Express cutting almost predicted the appellation "Sir Dai". Look how the connections between /militancy/irrationality/noise/protest/action arise in each of these cuttings.

However, allow me to continue further with this demonstration of the way that ideology presents itself as a system when it is read spontaneously.

## A sell-out, say angry steelmen

By JAMES BEECROFT

**H**UNDREDS of angry steelworkers, chanting that they had been "sold out", picketed a TUC sponsored meeting of union chiefs yesterday.

The steelmen were mainly from Shotton works in Flintshire and the vast Moors works at Cardiff, due to take about 12,000 redundancies between them under the British Steel Corporation's £3,000 million modernisation plan.

They wanted their leaders, meeting at the Engineering Union offices in Sheffield, to force a showdown with the Government over the plan.

But the meeting side-stepped the men's get-tough demands.

Daily Mirror

8th March 1973

The Mirror wastes no time in linking /angry/ with /chanting/ and /picketed/. The irrational militants wanted to "force a showdown"; this was one of their "get-tough demands". Again we see the connotation of the active, aggressive militants trying to force the moderates to do something against their will.

# Steel workers angry at attitude to cuts

By GEOFFREY WHITELEY, Northern Labour Correspondent

Union leaders in the steel industry are to tell the Government and the British Steel Corporation that no plant closures should take place under the plan for reducing the size of the industry until there are firm guarantees about jobs for redundant workers.

At the same time the unions, representing 220,000 workers, 30,000 of whom are likely to lose their jobs if the BSC plan goes ahead, are moving towards acceptance that rationalisation is inevitable. This view will be greeted with anger by workers who had hoped for a battle-cry from their unions.

Representatives of 16 unions agreed at Sheffield yesterday not to oppose modernisation in principle. They will try to concentrate on making sure that enough jobs are created for the redundant.

Sir David Davies, general secretary of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, the chairman at yesterday's conference arranged by the TUC steel committee, said afterwards that the unions did not feel they could logically oppose

modernisation of the industry, which had traditionally suffered from lack of investment.

The craftsmen's leader, Mr John Boyd pointed out that the BSC plan, which envisages a labour force of about 180,000 by 1980, would continue to be challenged by the unions, who did not believe the corporation's planning was infallible.

These attitudes, however, are unlikely to satisfy demands for firm opposition to the plan. About 400 steelworkers from Shotton, Cardiff, and Corby went to Sheffield to demonstrate anger at the impending loss of employment.

One demonstrator, Mr Gordon Roberts, a member of the action committee set up to resist the partial closure at Shotton, said workers had hoped that union leaders would produce a policy of outright opposition. "This is a let-down and a non-event," he said. Those faced with redundancy would be "disgusted" at their leaders' attitude.

The demonstrators chanted throughout the meeting. But inside Sir David resisted pleas

for united direct action. Action, he said later, was for individual unions. Neither the TUC nor anyone else could dictate to union executives whether they should strike.

But Sir David emphasised that the unions were determined to pin down the corporation, at talks over alternative jobs due to start on March 26. There was scepticism about promises made by the corporation, which would have to justify its closure proposals in every detail.

Unions would insist that all social implications be considered. If unions were not satisfied about alternative employment, closures would have to be put back until new jobs were available.

Meanwhile the unions felt they should cooperate with the Government's "task forces." "We have to take a positive attitude and cooperate in every possible way in efforts to provide alternative jobs," he said. This view made little impact on the demonstrators. Sir David, who leads the largest of the steel unions, decided to leave by a back door.

The Guardian

8th March 1973 p. 6

Again the TUC view is put as the "logical" view and the workers are "angry" and fearful (requiring "firm guarantees"). "Sir David Davies" becomes "Sir David" again, rather than 'Mr. Davies'. The workers want to "demonstrate anger". A member of the workers' action committee, "Mr. Gordon Roberts" is described as "one demonstrator", Mr. Davies is described as "general secretary of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation". Never in such reports are people like Mr. Davies described as 'one moderate'. Never in reports of 'political demonstrations' do the moderates act irrationally like the militants e.g. here "The demonstrators chanted throughout the meeting". "Sir David" "resisted pleas", in the passive manner of a true moderate, for a policy of action because he did



not want to "dictate to union executives whether they should strike". The moderacy never wants to dictate - but it is so frequently implied that militants do. Of course, as we all know, in reality moderates do dictate and, as they tenaciously hold on to the power which they exercise so frequently, they cry 'we do not want to dictate'. The Guardian's report ends with a classic scenario; the militants refuse to cooperate and the moderate is in fear of his neck. Militants, of course, never want to cooperate and always threaten moderates' safety, property, etc..

To "anchor" my point about the reality of ideology's appearance as a system from the viewpoint of the spontaneous reading, I shall now list some headlines that appeared in my sample of 92 cuttings.

Daily Telegraph	7th March 1973 p.36	-	AGITATORS 'WORKED UP DEMO CROWD
The Guardian	7th March 1973 p.5 (same story as above)	-	DEMONSTRATORS 'IN FRENZY'
The Guardian	8th March 1973 p.8	-	BATTLE OF SONG IN WELSH PROTEST
Daily Express	8th March 1973 p. 6 (same story as above)	-	THE WELSH MEET THEIR WATERLOO
The Sun	8th March 1973 p.4	-	WELSH DEMO GIRLS RIP IT UP IN A COURTROOM
The Guardian	10th March 1973 p. 20	-	SIT-IN STUDENTS REJECT PEACE MOVE
Sunday Telegraph	11th March 1973 p.3	-	FIGHT ENDS WOMEN'S LIB SIT-IN
Sunday Mirror	11th March 1973 p.2 (same story as above)	-	WOMEN'S LIBBERS 'GET STUCK IN'
Daily Mail	15th March 1973 p.9	-	STUDENTS MARCH OUT
Daily Telegraph	15th March 1973 p.2	-	POLICEMAN HURT IN CLASH WITH STUDENTS
Daily Express	16th March 1973 p.6	-	POLICE SEAL OFF TOWN
Financial Times	16th March 1973 p.23 (same story as above)	-	COURT ACTION PROTEST SHUTS LIVERPOOL DOCKS

Daily Telegraph	16th March 1973 p.7 (same story again)	-	PICKET CASE DEMO BRINGS DOCKS TO HALT
Daily Mail	16th March 1973 p.11 (same again)	-	DOCKERS ON THE MARCH
The Guardian	16th March 1973 p.6 (same again)	-	DEMONSTRATORS FACE 800 POLICE OUTSIDE STRIKE- CASE COURT

I could go on to provide many more examples. Of course, the ones I have provided are selective - I have chosen those that illustrate the overall ideological message running through the vast majority of the cuttings. No more examples of my point should be needed however. It should now be simple enough for the reader to imagine how one can build up a view of one systematic ideology running through the press reports. Time and time again the same connotations about 'militant demonstrators' causing industrial stoppages, damage, 'disruption to the peace' etc. appear, accompanied by all the stereotypical images of 'the demonstrators' themselves. It is important to stress, therefore, that the spontaneous reading of ideology can find support for its concept of a grand ideological structure. This appearance of an organized, systematic ideology is real - from the standpoint of a spontaneous reading.

Built in to the concepts of a semiological reading is the concept of the grand, abstract structure existing transparently on the surface level of the text. The significant functions or units are thus capable of being grouped into classes. These classes of units are composed of units which are interrelated to form a paradigmatic element. In my work then the next step was to set up the classes of units. I 'found' two: the paradigm of militant demonstration and the paradigm of moderate demonstration. Each paradigm consisted of a syntagmatic series of connected connotations. The paradigm of militant demonstrations contained the following major ideological connotations (this list is not comprehensive):

Demonstrations transform a peaceful situation into one of trouble/They cause much damage/Militants' demos are organized by extremists with the ulterior motive of destroying the system/Most of the demonstrators are manipulated by their leaders/Militants rarely get strong support/Militants never give up/They demonstrate for self-interest/They are usually irrational because the government looks after their real interests/Militants' demos create crowd hysteria/Demonstrators are noisy, mindless, childish etc. etc.

The paradigm of moderate demonstrations involved the following main elements:

Moderates are disciplined, sensible, unemotional and tidy people/Their demonstrations are quiet, sincere, interesting and have good motivation/  
Moderates only support good, human causes/Their demos involve united masses (often whole families go on them) spontaneously expressing their rationally and quietly held views/Speakers address them rather than agitate them/  
Moderate demos are usually in self-defence of interests threatened by aggressive militants/Their demos lead to no violence but good humour etc. etc.

This operation is a classically semiological one. Spontaneous impressions of the connotation of the text are ordered into abstract structures which never actually appear in their full form. Syntagmatic relations are therefore grouped together under a paradigmatic structure: militant/moderate. Clearly, all I was doing by creating these groups was organizing my own spontaneous (even though rigorous) impressions into some abstract model. The defect of the semiological approach is evidenced clearly here. All the semiologist does is to weave pretty patterns with his spontaneous observations whilst pretending to move to a different level of analysis. What I, in fact, did was to create an abstract model or structure which was said to operate throughout the national press. This act takes ideological formations (or ideologies) right out of specific social practices, groups them together and sets up the groups as The Structure, which is then said to determine the ideological expressions in the news reports. It is only a short step from here to the assertion that this base-structure is carried by all journalists (who all work consciously for the ruling class, of course); a ridiculous notion and one that is truly metaphysical. In actual fact, I never did get round to speculating about the origins of the militants/moderates deep structure because my doubts about the nature of the method had grown. However, I had intended to show that the militants/moderates structure was an effect of a more important ideological structure: democracy/communism. I had mapped out on paper the clear connections between the two structures. It did seem clear that the fundamental deep structure was that which justified the political system of capitalism as against that of communism. Had I gone through with this step of the work, I would have finally arrived at a complete semiological view where a fundamental ideological structure vitally close to the economic and political structure of capitalism generated a series of ideological expressions. I would have

found an Absolute Source. This Absolute Source, or Structuring Structure, would have been entirely abstract with no concrete social existence: as abstract as Levi-Strauss's universal structure of the human mind.

The effects of any arrival at such a Structuring Structure as Capitalism/Communism illustrate the faults of semiology outlined previously. Firstly, I would have arrived at the position that all ideological formations about politics derive from one particular ideological formation (Capitalism is good/Communism is bad) which reflected the fundamental particularity of the capitalist social system, the fact that it is capitalist. In other words, my discovered Key Ideological Formation, the Structuring Structure, would have been the reflection of a general concept, capitalism. Instead of seeing the many particular ideological formations as products and instruments of particular, concrete social practices, I would ultimately have derived ideology from the social totality - as if a totality could give off an all-embracing ideological structure. It would have been analogous to finding that a particular piece of meat had its origins in 'butchery', or that the next particular word in this sentence came from 'writing'. It would have been an attempt to derive a particular fact from a general principle. Obviously that level of theoretical approximation is useless and almost metaphysical.

Secondly, the lack of historical perspective meant that the possibility of the same ideological structure, 'militants/moderates', occurring in another social structure was ignored. The politico-ideological disapproval of rebellion is, on first glance, not peculiar to capitalism. Thirdly, explaining the ideological impression by a general idea is a method alien to historical materialism and more fitting for a Hegelian problematic. More pertinent would have been a movement from contemporaneous impressions to impressions of ideological formations of 'political resistance' in prior capitalist periods and in other modes of production, and from there to the analysis of the material, social conditions which gave rise to these apparent ideological formations. Even better, however, would have been a research practice which started from social conditions and moved to ideological formations. Farthly, by moving from impressions to the abstracted collection of those impressions the research completely loses all sense of the connection between ideological formations in 'the news' and the social practices of news

production. Instead of attempting to locate the connections between the ideological formations and their most immediate source, news production, one would move, through the semiological approach, to their least immediate source, an abstract, general concept. Fifthly, the semiological approach, by its very nature, makes its practitioners face the perplexing question of how they can 'read' the ideological formations of the text. This uncertainty in the semiological method lies, right at the very beginning, in the practice of reading the structure (of ideology) as immanent in its effects (the text). This is the fundamental tenet of any structuralist method and, in itself, it generates the problem of what it is that enables the reader to see the effects of the structure as solely composed of selected elements of the visible text. Such an uncertainty at the heart of its method provides semiology with the seeds of its own downfall. It was such an uncertainty that led me away from the method. For, if I could read the ideological formations accurately from the textual presences, then it seemed to me that this could only be because I was already aware of those formations. And, if I was already aware of them and if the reading was only a process of recognizing the already-known, then there was hardly any point in using this method - I could have just written something polemical, of a politico-ideological nature, on the capitalists' attitude to political resistance. At this point it became clear that what ought to have been at stake was the question: what are the social origins of ideology? It became obvious that what had to be explained was the problem of how it is that 'we already know'. What was at stake was an explanation of the obvious, an explanation of the 'already-known'.

At this juncture, I realized that the obvious, the ideological, could not be explained by beginning with the ideological. Like Slater, whilst practising a semiological approach, I was attempting to derive ideology from ideology. That was not a very Marxian approach. Of course, ultimately, I would have found the Absolute Source to be capitalist society in the form of 'dominant' or 'ruling class' ideology. This would have produced an apparently Marxian product. However, a scientific, Marxian approach to ideology does not explain bourgeois ideologies by simply asserting the existence and domination of bourgeois ideology. It still seems to me that many Marxists are working within such a tautology, even a great master such as Althusser.

The same remarks are applicable to the question of deviance. To look for the sources of deviance in the ideological forms disseminated by the mass media and received by the masses is simply to attempt to understand an ideological formation by positing its source in ideological formations. That is simply a tautology. At this point the questions of ideology and deviance began to merge. Just as one had to look for the conditions of existence of ideology in concrete social practices, so, too, one had to look for the conditions of existence of deviance (a type of ideological formation) in concrete social practices. Deviancy theorists of all kinds, over the last seventy years, have attempted to explain deviance by reference to a normative order, or to the definitions of the morality-enforcers, or to the definitions of the ruling class. In other words, deviance has been put down as the effect of ideology. All these explanations have broken down into simple tautologies because their protagonists have had to admit that what constituted 'deviance' was an infringement of the ideologically acceptable and, therefore, have put themselves in the position of trying to explain ideology by ideology. Such sociologies are analogous to the nineteenth-century political economists who tried to explain surplus value by its own forms (profit, interest and rent). Hitherto, the sociology of deviance has remained caught within this trap of tautology and, thus, has so far only produced descriptions of deviance. Clearly, if one tries to explain ideology as a product of ideology, all one can achieve is descriptions of ideologies; explanation is outside the parameters of such an operation. To move from a merely descriptive, superficial sociology of deviance to an explanatory sociology of deviance requires an adequate theory of the social and historical origins of ideologies.

### Introduction

The search for a theory of reading ideology cannot end yet for, although we have distinguished two distinct modes of reading (formless empiricism and empiricist formalism), there remains a body of work which attempts to transcend these ideological modes and to develop a dialectical materialist theory and practice of reading. This body of work can be entitled 'new-structuralism' because, as we shall see, it remains imprisoned with the problematic of form with all its associated weaknesses. I shall consider the effects of these deficiencies in selected writings from the work of Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva and Louis Althusser.<sup>1</sup>

I shall not produce a comprehensive review of their texts since I am closely familiar with only one corpus out of the three, that of Althusser. All that I can achieve here are some indications of the inadequacy of their work, as far as I understand it. Hence my comments on Derrida and Kristeva are purely provisional - and await the overdue translation of their major works into English. However, having said that, I must add that I am satisfied that one can grasp the general direction and substance of the work of Derrida and Kristeva, even from the small amount of their writing that exists in English translation (in Kristeva's case) or in English publications (in Derrida's case). This degree of certainty arises not from a cavalier attitude to scholarship but from

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1. M. Foucault's work is also 'neo-structuralist'. However his work will not be dealt with since I am only familiar with it at a very general level.

the fact that even small quantities of their writing can be readily comprehended if one has grasped the nature of previous theories of reading ideology and from the fact that their available works take the form of intellectual manifestoes, or programmatic statements, which are fairly explicit. My work in the previous three chapters has described and criticised the existing problematic of reading ideology against which the work of Derrida and Kristeva must be read.

Although all of Althusser's major works are in English translation (the most important for our purposes is Reading Capital), I would argue that, despite this plenitude, we cannot really grasp Althusser's theory of symptomatic reading (and its consequences for his reading of Marx) unless we set it in the context of other theories of reading. Set in its context of neo-structuralism and in its struggle with existing empiricist and structuralist problematics, Althusser's mode of reading comes alive from the stylish ambiguity and convincing novelty of its formulation in Reading Capital. (It is vital to appreciate that Althusser is fighting empiricist and structuralist epistemologies: this appreciation is easily achieved since Althusser continually names his enemies. But, it is also vital to appreciate that Althusser's fight exists within the problematic of neo-structuralism. The relations between the theoretical work of Althusser, Derrida and Kristeva should become clear as this chapter progresses.) For the moment, let us just note that, given Althusser's impact on world Marxism, it is obviously very important to understand the relation between neo-structuralism and structuralism, and, therefore, this chapter must be read in the light of the previous three. I would say that, once digested, this chapter orders us to 'decode' Althusser's interpretation of Marxism on the basis of a more detailed knowledge of his neo-structuralist problematic. This task is beyond the scope of this project, but it is of such obvious importance for the development of Marxism that I shall try in passing to give some indications on the key points at stake.



De-centring the discourse

In our discussion of the problematic of form we gave air to the problems naturally flowing from the concept of Structure. To re-iterate only the main points, we examined the problem of movement or history, the problem of internal contradiction, the empiricism of the structuralist reading, the 'de-substantiation' of the concrete elements of the structure, the logocentrism or teleogism resorted to in order to give the structure a context, the universal infinitude and asociality of the structure and the problem of the combination of structures. All these problems arise from the static, formal, asocial, 'abstract' concept of structure. Structuralism, in short, had taken the blood and fight out of history. Indeed, structuralism could be said to have taken the history out of history and left it with the rotting skeletons of form which act as signposts or monuments to an elusive, never-present reality. It is no wonder that structuralists talk of 'archeology'.<sup>2</sup> They strip history of its flesh and bury the bones carefully in profoundly mysterious places; only to return with their semiological shovels to dig the whole thing up again and to leave joyfully, proclaiming that they have 'discovered' the 'signs' of past civilization. Structuralism has not just 'neglected' the social 'context' of the cultural message in its attempt to discover universals, as one reviewer has argued:<sup>3</sup> its basic concepts and consequent methodology logically exclude any concrete analysis of the social nature, movement and function of ideologies. As we saw in chapter 4, structuralism is totally antithetical to Marxism, to a dialectical, materialist analysis of phenomena. Structuralism fundamentally excludes movement and matter in its fetish for the static form. As such it stands radically opposed to Marxism.

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2. See M. Foucault The Archaeology of Knowledge (1974 London: Tavistock).  
 3. T. Loell "Anti-Earthquake Pill" Times Higher Education Supplement 14th September 1973.

The movement away from 'pure' structuralism takes place (in the field we are considering) in France in the 1960s and 1970s, notably in the work of the Tel Quel group, a collection of Marxian cultural analysts and linguists whose work was produced in the journal Tel Quel and a series of texts on the theory and practice of reading ideology. Derrida and Kristeva belonged to this group. The movement clearly affected structuralism proper. Roland Barthes, in 1971, was arguing that there is no general semiological system and that each text had its own system. Agreeing with Derrida, Barthes now thought that each text must be seen in its "difference", as the accomplishment of many codes.<sup>4</sup> For Barthes,:

"Reading must focus on the difference between texts, the relations of proximity and distance, of citation, negation, irony and parody. Such relations are infinite and work to defer any final meaning."<sup>5</sup>

The absolute meaning of the text had therefore disappeared. The text no longer had 'its structure'. Various readings of the text were now allowed. The stress had shifted from the Structuring Structure to the creativity of the reader in producing an 'active reading'.

Culler summarizes the Tel Quel position as a conscious rejection of structuralism.<sup>6</sup> He says that the group would argue that the concepts of 'literary competence', 'the collective code', 'the semiological system' etc. are means whereby orthodox culture is frozen and preserved. The concepts of structuralism are denounced because they are said to deny the value and existence of creative violations of cultural conventions. The Tel Quel group, states Culler, would emphasize the possibility of several different readings of the text, or cultural artefact, and would reject anything which would grant one reading a privileged status. Derrida has expressed this emphasis well:

"... the absence of an ultimate meaning opens an unbounded space for the play of signification."

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4. See J. Culler (1975) op. cit. p. 242.

5. Ibid. pp. 241, 242.

6. Ibid. pp. 241, 242.

"the joyful Nietzschean affirmation of the play of the world and the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs which has no truth, no origin, no nostalgic guilt, and is proffered for active interpretation."<sup>7</sup>

Reading ideology now becomes the creative practice of signification where past, present and future significance all enter play as active features. The analyst must 'let his hair down' and enjoy the human capacity to create sense and meaning. Any critical reading will do, since no-one is privileged in this socialist utopia of classless readings. Such is the position of *Tel Quel* at its most general level. Structuralism would appear to have given way to an avant-garde humanism pleasuring itself in the aesthetics of creative reading. Let us examine this apparently remarkable shift in more detail and see how it relates to Althusser, Kristeva and Derrida.

Jacques Derrida rejects the classic Saussurean structuralism embraced by Barthes's work as "logocentric" in that it grants an Absolute Meaning or Source to the text. For Derrida and Kristeva the view that the empirical words or sounds are simple expressions or representations of the Structure is characteristic of all previous Western philosophy of the sign. Like Althusser, they see Leibniz and Hegel as the best exponents of this "representativism" (Derrida) or "expressivism" (Althusser). Giving a discourse a "centre" is to give it "a definite origin" and to make each visible part of the system an expression of the invisible Structure. 'Centring' the discourse, therefore, argues Derrida, closes the play of the elements which that discourse inaugurates. "The concept of the centred structure is in fact that of limited or founded play"<sup>8</sup> and it thus testifies to the presence of an ideology, since, like Althusser, Derrida sees ideology as a closed discourse, one that prevents further development. Derrida, therefore, rejects the very basis of structuralism when he renounces the notion of discourse with a fixed structure or centre. In place of the all-powerful

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7. Passages from 'L'Écriture et la différence (1967 Paris:Seuil) quoted in Culler *ibid.* p. 247.

8. Culler, *ibid.*, p. 244.

structure, which dictates the meaning of the empirically visible elements of a discourse, Derrida develops the concept of the 'system decentré', the decentred structure. In this concept each reading displaces the Centre of the system or structure. For Derrida, every discourse has a surplus of meaning and this surplus creates "a play" in the process of signification. Each term in the discourse may have 'normal' usages, but it refers us to other possible meanings. These possible meanings may involve reference to past connotations, or present connotations, or, indeed, they may involve the creation of new references. Derrida argues that meaning is a function of differences between terms, à la pure structuralism, but for him the relations between the terms are infinite and all have potential for producing meaning. Hence every reading is an active process of signification which decentres the 'orthodox', 'customary' meaning of the discourse by its invocation of other, less orthodox, 'private' meanings and references.

This general outline of Derrida's analytic position shows that the concept of the denotative structure of language survives but now it exists alongside the concept of the continual displacement of that structure by every new act of reading. The structure, in other words, is always being displaced. It is no longer the limit to the possible meanings of the text, as pure Barthesian semiology would have it. In fact, the structure must give way to the active reader, rejoicing in his "Nietzschean affirmation of the play of the world and the innocence of becoming".

We can now examine more precisely how Derrida constitutes his theory of the decentred structure.<sup>9</sup> Firstly, he urges us to see all signification as a "formal play of differences", or as a formal play of "traces". This concept of the "play of differences" can be grasped more easily if we remember that 'pure' structuralism (found in Saussure, linguistics and Barthesian semiology) saw the structure as a system of differences which specifies the units of the structure and thus constitutes their significance. Derrida argues that the fact of a system

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9. This section draws mainly from J. Derrida "Semiotologie et grammatologie" in J. Kristeva, J. Rey-Debov and D.J. Umiker Essays in Semiotics (1971 The Hague-Paris:Mouton) pp. 11-27. The article was kindly translated for me by M. White.

of differences means that no element ever exists in a discourse purely in itself and reflecting nothing but itself. As an element in an infinite system of differences, an element of discourse is merely a "trace". It is a mere 'notation' or transient flash of significance in an infinite sky of meaning. Such an element, therefore, contains traces of the rest of the system. It does not exist in itself in the discourse but as an element in a chain. It thus reflects other elements in the chain, some being visible in the discourse, others invisible, others absent altogether. Every element in a discourse therefore carries traces of related elements from the system of differences. It is in this sense that Derrida goes on to argue that no element of the system is ever simply absent or present in the discourse, "there are only differences of differences and traces of traces". The whole system of infinite significance is, therefore, forever potentially present in any discourse. It is ever, already-given in its presence and is thus the most general concept of semiology.<sup>10</sup> Derrida gives the ever-pre-given structure of significant differences the term "the gramme". Semiology, for Derrida, must therefore become grammatology - the study of the infinite plane of the significant traces.

The gramme is structure and it exists in movement. It is the systematic play of traces or differences called into movement in the praxis of signification. It is a structure but not a static, synchronic one: "Differences are the effect of transformations" (Derrida). These shifts in the structure of significance which effect differences lead us to the centrality of signifying practice of "semiotic activity" for Derrida's neo-structuralism. The gramme, or ever-pre-given-structure of significance, only exists in and through its activation in signifying activity. The play of traces is no mere slogan, it is Derrida's concept

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10. We can note how Derrida's concept of the structure-in-movement of significance is extremely similar to Althusser's concept of the social structure: "Instead of the ideological myth of the philosophy of origins and its organic concepts, Marxism establishes in principle the recognition of the givenness of the complex structure of any concrete 'object', a structure which governs both the development of the object and the development of the theoretical practice which produces the knowledge of it. There is no longer any original essence, only an ever-pre-givenness, however for knowledge delves into its past ... There is no longer any original simple unity (in any form whatsoever), but instead, the ever-pre-givenness of a structured complex unity." L. Althusser (1969) op. cit. pp. 198, 199.

of the active employment of the potential structure of significance in practice. Every text or discourse is thus a production, which can only be read against another text or discourse - that text or discourse which was unconsciously transformed or reflected in its production.

Derrida points out that the notion of "epistemological break" (an obvious reference to Althusser) is misleading since every new discourse is always reinscribed in an old fabric which must be continually, and interminably, undone. Discourses only exist as transformations of other discourses, as situated productions, and can never escape the formal play of the structure of differences. They are always constituted by the traces in them of the other elements of the system.

It is interesting that Derrida comments, in puzzlement, that "grammatics" is introduced by him at the moment when he appears to have "neutralized all substance". He is reflecting on the fact that material substances such as speech, books, etc. all appeared to have collapsed under the weight of his concepts of 'gramme' and 'semiotic praxis' and the critique of Saussurean expressivism (which saw the empirical world as the mirror reflection of the structure carried and mediated by the motivated subject). It is interesting because always Derrida puts the structure, the system of differences or gramme, before all else. "There is no presence outside of and preceding the semiological difference (the gramme - C.S.)", says Derrida. He goes on to argue that we must begin with the systematic production of a system of differences before we can talk about code/message and langue/parole distinctions. In other words, semiologists can only begin to construct abstract, metaphysical 'codes' or structures out of the units of a message on the very basis of their (the semiologists') systematic production of a set of differences. To put it bluntly, the be-all and end-all of Derrida's position is that significance is always actively produced in semiotic practice and the semiologists' work is no exception. Every discourse is a creative reading of the world, acting upon and constructing a chain of differences, and there is no discourse outside this practice, yet, at the same time there is no significant practice without the system of traces which is ever-already-pre-given. Nothing precedes the gramme or system of traces. Derrida should not therefore be surprised when grammatics appears as substance vanishes; for Derrida's grammatics are yet another celebration of the Structure or Form at the expense of its content, which is relegated to an "effect". Thus, for Derrida, the structure of the

discourse is for ever being decentred by its active receivers or 'readers' but only because the field of the significant is such an infinite structure, an endless chain of systematic relations. The infinitude of the system of significance provides the surplus meaning which all readers can actively exploit in their semiotic practice. The ever-already-givenness of the gramme is thus the basis for the always-creative practice of signification.

Derrida has attempted to rid us of the notion of the Logos, the Absolute Source or Structure, by conceptualizing signification as creative work. Both the text and its reading are productions. Every discourse has its difference as a creation of a possibility already present in an infinite range of linked possibilities. Meaning is no longer the production of a 'subject' but is ever-already-given by the structure of significance.

Julia Kristeva also rejects the ideological aspects of semiology and spends much time criticizing them, arguing that she wants to combine semiology and Marxism to create a science of ideology.<sup>11</sup> For Kristeva, semiology, to become a science, must continually analyze its own postulates:

"Semiotics cannot develop except as a critique of semiotics ... Research in semiotics remains an investigation which discovers nothing at the end of its quest but its own ideological moves, so as to take cognizance of them, to deny them, and to start out anew."<sup>12</sup>

Semiology must continually decentre its own structure. This may seem to leave semiology in a state of avant-garde, cultural masturbation, based on the pleasure of producing new meanings. This would, of course, be acceptable if it renounced its claims to scientificity and its links with Marxism: semiology as an artistic or propagandist practice would be an honest and valid proposition. However Kristeva wants a semiotic science and founds her claims on a position identical to Derrida's. For Kristeva, the "infinite memory of significance", represented in

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11. See J. Kristeva "L'expansion de la semiologie" in Kristeva et al. (1971) op. cit. pp. 31-45, "La semiologie comme science des ideologies" *Semiotica* 1 (1969) pp. 196-204 and "The semiotic activity" *Screen* Vol. 14 No. 1/2 (1973) pp. 25-39.

12. Quoted in Culler (1975) op. cit. p. 245.

Derrida's concept of the "gramme", is termed the "geno-text". This structure serves as the "substratum" (Culler's term) to any actual text:

"... the geno-text can be thought of as a device containing the whole historical evolution of language and the various signifying practices it can bear. The possibilities of all language of the past, present and future are given there, before being masked or repressed in the pheno-text."<sup>13</sup>

Like Derrida, she holds that the only concept that can serve as the centre for her analysis is a concept of the infinitude of significance. She, also rejects Saussure's emphasis on the signifier as the combination of material letters on the page of the text. This is 'empiricist' - the letters or words are really only "supports" (Althusser's word) for the structure of differences which is always present; just as human agents are only the supports of the structure of the social totality in Althusser's Marxism.

Kristeva, like Derrida, wishes to produce 'readings' unrestrained by a particular 'cultural' theory. She, too, wishes to live in the permanent revolution of a continually-decentred, ideological structure. Culler points out that her own readings, in practice, actually operate "quite restrictive conventions of reading".<sup>14</sup> Kristeva would probably be satisfied with the defence that her 'reading conventions' were in a state of permanent de-centredness:

"At every moment in its development semiotics must theorize its object, its own method and the relationship between them; it therefore theorizes itself and becomes, by thus turning back on itself, the theory of its own scientific practice ... "<sup>15</sup>

This is a self-justification of the most obvious kind. Any reading is permissible because its validity is guaranteed by its existence as an expression of the geno-text. It may not be scientific at first, but if the reader looks at the assumptions of the reading, and theorizes them as

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13. Ibid. pp. 246, 247.

14. Ibid. p. 250.

15. Ibid. p. 251.



an activation of an ever-present geno-text, he can then say that his reading is fully theorized and scientific. We may note that no recourse to any outside consideration is necessary - the scientificity of the practice is guaranteed internally. The point was worth mentioning at this stage because, later we shall see that Althusser guarantees his own scientificity in the same way (without any reference to anything outside the sphere of differences brought into play by the theorist himself). The plane of systematic references activated by the practice of the analyst (or the theorist) defines its own objects, concepts and methods; scientificity is thus internally constituted, as a mere point within the system of differences.

Again like Derrida, Kristeva believes that semiotic gestures should be seen as semiotic practices with the same status as other social practices.<sup>16</sup> Their social value lies in the "global model" of the world suggested in their practice; bearing in mind that one should always relate the "global model" to the specific phase of the country's social development and not lapse into teleology and "projectivism".<sup>17</sup> This is the nearest Kristeva gets to relating semiology to the world outside her busy hive of semiotic reproduction. Her main project is "semanalysis". This would be a form of analytical semiotics that attempted a typology of signifying systems, it would attempt

"... to dissolve the constitutive centre of the semiotic enterprise such as it was posited by the Stoics, and this would mean the interrogation of the fundamental matrix of our civilization grasped in its ideological, neuralgic locus."<sup>18</sup>

In other words (and as usual with the neo-structuralists, we do need 'other words') the project of Kristeva's semanalysis would be to call into question the whole theory of knowledge in Western thought. This project would be of the utmost importance for "contemporary thinking" since

16. Kristeva (1971) op. cit. p. 37.

17. Ibid. By "projectivism" Kristeva seems to mean guesswork or speculation. Structuralism always masks simple materialities with the convoluted terminology of their essences or forms. The very incomprehensibility of structuralist discourse is built into its problematic: it is hard to express essences in simple terms.

18. Kristeva (1973) op. cit. p. 34.

the sign is "the foundation of our culture".<sup>19</sup>

Ideology may well be crucial to capitalism's future, but Kristeva's approach will not carry us very far. Her main concern seems to be to "think the constants of (our - C.S.) culture" in order to pose, "once more", "the problems of the signifying act" and to reformulate them. Kristeva is concerned only with the infinite grammatological possibilities of reformulating the problem of formulation (or signification); she seems to care little about the relation of her formulations to the real world, the world of social relations which present immediate appearances. The process of formulation and signification seems as important to her as the process of money-making to the capitalist. As Marx notes, it is not money but money-making that entrances the capitalist: in neo-structuralism it is not knowledge but the process of knowledge-producing that interests its proponents. This would appear to be true of Derrida and Althusser as much as of Kristeva. As Althusser puts it:

"Unlike the 'theory of knowledge' of ideological philosophy, I am not trying to pronounce some *de jure* (or *de facto*) guarantee which will assure us that we really do know what we know, and that we can relate this harmony to a certain connexion between Subject and Object, Consciousness and the World. I am trying to elucidate the mechanism which explains to us how a *de facto* result, produced by the history of a knowledge, i.e., a given determinate knowledge, functions as a knowledge, and not as some other result (a hammer, a symphony, a sermon, a political slogan etc.). I am therefore trying to define its specific effect: the knowledge effect, by an understanding of its mechanism. If this question has been properly put, protected from all the ideologies that still weigh us down, i.e., outside the field of the ideological concepts by which the 'problem of knowledge' is usually posed, it will lead us to the question of the mechanism by which forms of order determined by the system of the existing object of knowledge, produce, by the action of their relation to that system, the knowledge effect considered. This last question confronts us definitively with the differential nature of scientific discourse, i.e., with the specific nature of a discourse which cannot be maintained as a discourse except by reference to what is present as absence in each moment of its order: the constitutive system of its object, which in order to exist as a system, requires the absent presence of the scientific discourse that 'develops' it."<sup>20</sup>

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19. Ibid. p. 35.

20. (1970) op. cit. p. 69.

Like Kristeva and Derrida, Althusser's object is the mechanism of the production of significant systems, i.e. their mode of production. Like his fellow writers, he is concerned to protect his work from the field of ideology and to understand scientifically the mechanism of signification. And, like them, he seems to cut off his theoretical work from the project of making sense of the world as it appears in practice. We will return to Althusser; however, I would suggest that, although he poses knowledge-production as a question, he does in fact build in the answer in his construction of the question. The mechanism that produces the knowledge is presupposed: it is the system of differences at work for the theorist. The "systematicity of the system" makes the "knowledge-effect" possible.<sup>21</sup> Like Derrida and Kristeva, Althusser posits scientificity as a 'trace' within a system of 'traces': it is the structurality of the conglomeration of meanings that creates scientificity. Scientificity for the neo-structuralists is constituted internally by every semiotic system.

Returning to Kristeva, her "semanalysis" would base itself on two main concepts: Marx's concept of work and Freud's concept of the unconscious. Signification as an act of unconscious production is thus the 'centre' of Kristeva's 'field of differences'. The process of signification as work involving a "formal play of differences" becomes her base-point.<sup>22</sup> And, having defined her object as semiotic practices (in my terms, the sphere of ideological practice), it is not surprising that she focusses the would-be semanalysis on literary and poetic texts. After all, as Kristeva says, these texts, more than any other type, carry a 'surplus of significance' which provides the material for an approach which orients itself to "the pre-signifying and pre-conscious work" that the text exposes.<sup>23</sup> This 'surplus of significance' will undoubtedly give her much scope for creative readings and re-readings of the unconscious work "exposed" in the text.

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21. Ibid. p. 68.

22. Kristeva (1973) op. cit. p. 37.

23. Ibid. p. 38.

As with Derrida, we find that Kristeva focusses on the active production of significance in the field of 'literary or artistic creativity'. Both of them seem to be attending to the question of the mode of production of 'creative art', of how an artist can operate a field of differences to creative effect. This involves both of them in a recovery of Freudian psychoanalysis since the active creativity must necessarily be unconscious (since neo-structuralism rejects human authorship).<sup>24</sup> It is thus a fit ending to this brief exposition to note that Kristeva and Derrida displace the God of Structure and replace it with the artistic practice of decentring the Structure. Inasmuch as they bring 'social practice' in to play, their neo-structuralism is an advance. But in so far as social practice only means the creative, artistic praxis of literary and poetic work this advance is limited. Furthermore, given that they see the semiotic practice of art as simply the creative decentring of the Orthodox Structure of Conventional Normative Discourse through the operation of an already-pre-given, infinite Structure of Significance, Derrida and Kristeva have not left the bounds of structuralism.

#### Critique of Derrida and Kristeva

It seems to me that these writers have simply replaced the structure of orthodoxy with the infinite structure of the possible. Or, perhaps more accurately, they have added to the structure of unorthodox meaning an opposite which is presupposed by it. By viewing ideologies and ideological formations as the expression of a structure of ideological significance, however infinite and complex in its differentiation, they

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24. It would be interesting to examine Jacques Lacan's position in all this. Lacan has become important because of his structuralist rewrite of Freud. Althusser, Derrida and Kristeva are all very familiar with his work.

have not moved one step away from Hegelian expressivism, despite their statements to the contrary. Ideology is still its own source and master. We are still left with an abstract, universal structure which lies in wait for the beginning of any significant practice. The emphasis on practice is a very important advance but it is retarded by its location within a structuralist problematic. Derrida and Kristeva have only talked about practice activating and developing a pre-given structure: they have been failed to specify even at a general level, the social origins and locations of ideological structures as elements within specific social practices. The concepts of 'gramme' and 'geno-text' are simply metaphysical since they posit an abstract structure with no social location. Kristeva and Derrida have destroyed the concept of the structure of the visible text, but only to replace it with the concept of the structure of every text, the gramme. Thus they have not destroyed the structuralist concept of structure but merely displaced it to a more abstract level. Consequently, all my previous criticisms of structuralism (mentioned at the beginning of this chapter) are applicable to their work.

Creative, but unconscious, praxis in the works of Kristeva and Derrida is a motto for the comprehension of avant-garde art. Social practice in the context of their problematic is thus not only crippled by its position as an agency for a mysteriously pre-given structure of meaning but also by its restriction to creative work in the field of art. Science demands that we sweep away the ideological notion of ideology (ideology as an expression of itself) and move towards the analysis of the material conditions and social relationships necessary for the production of particular ideological forms. In the work of Kristeva and Derrida, material conditions and social relations of production seem to be unimportant, yet, as I have argued, one can only understand ideological forms as material elements within social practices composed of other material elements and social relations. Without this rigorous concept of the labour-process, their work simply reproduces metaphysical concepts of 'creation' as the human production of a prior (religious) presence.

Relegating creativity to the unconscious does not solve the problem either - it simply helps to conceal their concept of the production as the work of a human agent activating an ever-already-present, monolithic structure. Rendering Jesus unconscious would not make him any less the agent of the Deity. Nor does the 'decented

structure' solve the problem. It still posits the existence of an unconceptualized, dominant ideology (the structure-to-be-decentred) and, moreover, perpetrates the notion that even the liberative act of decentring is only the expression of a collectively-shared, infinite structure of significance.

The concept of the pheno-text or gramme, the infinite structure of significance, seems to be yet another structuralist universal. It is slightly different from Levi-Strauss's 'structure of the human mind' but it still retains the character of a vague, ahistorical presence. If it was clear that they were arguing that, since the time man ceased to be an animal and developed ideology and language, each particular historical social structure begets a particular structure of significance which limits all ideological and scientific expression, then that would be an interesting proposition. However, their emphasis on the infinitude of significance in any historical period, and on the ability of creative decentring work to conjure up any past, present or future meaning, clearly forces us to criticize them for setting up another cultural universal. Just like Leach, they appear to be operating a concept of the primeval continuum of significance out of which creative men carve interesting chunks. In typically structuralist vein, they have expropriated the history from history and left us with the skeletons of the universal structure. I, for one, am less interested in skeletons than in the bodies they inhabited and the part these bodies played in the development of social life. Reducing history to forms is not an activity that is begotten by Marxism, in my view, but rather one begotten by structuralism. Marx never sanctioned the reduction of history to the expression of cultural universals or the consent of mankind.

Derrida and Kristeva do not in any way take the study of the significant out of the ideological sphere of 'Cultural Studies'. Significance and signifying practice remain in the domain of 'culture' as though 'culture' was some element of society separate from social practice. In Marxism, ideologies are an integral element in social life. In 'Cultural Studies', 'culture' is usually something produced by the upper and middle classes in their leisure time; a conception that loses the fully social nature of ideology to social science. For all his faults,

Barthes had at least tried to demonstrate the diffusion of 'myth' throughout the social formation. Unfortunately he also suffered from the conception of myth (a form of 'culture') as the production of the ruling classes: dominant ideology thus remained the privileged product of the bourgeoisie. Derrida and Kristeva have failed to challenge this pervasive notion and to place ideology in its general location in social practice. They have universalized ideology inasmuch as they posit a pheno-text of significance, but this concept fails to grasp the general concept of the place of ideology in social practice which enables us to develop a knowledge of the historical origins, specificity and development of any particular ideological formation. Their concept of a generalized ideological structure is too metaphysical to lead us to any such theoretical development. Derrida talked of the movement of the gramme when he argued that significant differences were the "effect of transformations". However, he did not provide us with the concepts with which to think the nature of these "transformations". The transformations of the gramme appear as a general assertion, an article of faith. Derrida fails to develop the concepts adequate to the movement of ideological forms. Had he and Kristeva begun to think of ideologies as necessary elements of specific social practices, then the concepts of the movement of ideologies could have been constructed. But, without connecting ideologies to the elements and relations of specific social practices, it is impossible to do anything but posit a Mysterious Movement of an Absolute Structuring Structure.

These remarks close our critique of Derrida and Kristeva. I have not put to them the three questions on their reading of ideology (the questions outlined in ch. 3) because these questions can be best answered by dealing with the problematic as a whole. We must examine Althusser's "lecture symptomale" before the questions can be addressed to the whole problematic. Before Althusser, however, let us briefly look at Jonathan Culler's response to the work of Derrida and Kristeva.

#### Culler's critique

Culler begins his critique by arguing that the Tel Quel group's position is subject to its own arguments. The fact that a text can be read in a number of different ways does not demonstrate the lack of

structure in the text so much as the complexity of the reading process:

"If each text had a single meaning, then it might be possible to argue that this meaning was inherent to it and depended upon no general system but the fact that there is an open set of possible meanings indicates that we are dealing with interpretive processes of considerable power which require study."<sup>25</sup>

Thus, for Culler, the principle of the decentred structure, adopted by the Tel Quel group, is just another principle of interpretation that centres the discourse under study and consequently it is just as ideological as any other principle of interpretation or reading. Moreover, the ideological reading of Tel Quel is particularly weak because it specifies that any reading of the text is possible. Culler finds this apparent anarchy unsatisfactory since it forgets that there are conventional ways of reading. It is one thing to try to change the rules for reading but it is equally valid, says Culler, to study the conventions that actually do commonly operate in the current social situation.

The perpetual self-transcendence, advocated particularly by Kristeva, does not secure invulnerability from current cultural and ideological influences in Culler's view. Firstly he points out that, in order to transcend orthodox readings, one has to study existing 'established' semiotic conventions - it is a step that cannot be avoided. I think that this criticism is misguided since Tel Quel do not deny that conventional readings must be examined before any progress can be made. Kristeva's whole position is based on a process of critique of orthodox conventions, clarification of the concepts of the critique, application of the new concepts in a reading, re-clarification of the mode of reading and self-criticism, a new application, and so on. Culler's second point is that there is no such thing as a freedom to create meaning since every creation implies a rejection or destruction of other possible meanings. Each reading has its own limits and constraints. Therefore to search for the totally creative reading is utopian in the extreme since there will always be limits and constraints to any mode of reading.

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25. Culler (1975) op. cit. p. 243.



From this correct observation, Culler then jumps several steps in the argument to the position that no reading can escape from the existing conventions of meaning:

"Whatever type of freedom the members of the Tel Quel group secure for themselves will be based on convention and will consist of a set of interpretive procedures ... What I should like to argue, then, is that while structuralism cannot escape from ideology and provide its own foundations, this is of little importance because the critiques of structuralism, and particularly of structuralist poetics, cannot do so either and through their strategies of evasion lead to untenable positions. Or perhaps one should say, more modestly, that any attack on structuralist poetics based on the claim that it cannot grasp the varied modes of signification of literature will itself fail to provide a coherent alternative."<sup>26</sup>

He goes on to direct us:

"Rather than try to get outside ideology we must remain resolutely within it, for both the conventions to be analyzed and the notions of understanding lie within. If circle there be, it is the circle of culture itself."<sup>27</sup>

In other words, all readers are trapped within the circles of their personal ideologies and there is therefore no point in trying to break out. All the literary critic can try to do is "participate in the play of the text" and to isolate the "series of forms" in the text "which comply with and resist the production of meaning".<sup>28</sup> Criticism should focus on "the adventures of meaning" and make the text "interesting".<sup>29</sup> But, Culler anticipates, his return to structuralism is not a return to a structuralism for pleasure (the pleasure of making pretty and "interesting" patterns out of the text in order to combat "boredom"). Pleasure, he argues is not the only value of a structuralist reading: "Literature offers the best of occasions for exploring the complexities of order and meaning".<sup>30</sup>

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26. Ibid. pp. 252, 253.

27. Ibid. pp. 252, 253.

28. Ibid. p. 254.

29. Ibid. p. 262.

30. Ibid. p. 264.

We are thus to return to structuralism, according to Culler, in order to understand how man makes sense of the world. And, as I expected, he finally reasserts structuralism's concept of "homo significans" and assumes that by understanding "man's" ways of reading we will understand the world we live in:

"Man is not just homo sapiens but homo significans: a creature who gives sense to things ... To know oneself is to study the intersubjective process of articulation and interpretation by which we emerge as part of the world."<sup>31</sup>

From this reading of Culler's critique and in the light of the history of theories of reading ideology, it seems that he has relapsed into that form of structuralism known to sociologists as 'ethnomethodology'. The absolute, universal structure (homo significans) remains and the task is to explore the various taken-for granted meanings that this basic structure can produce in different situations (i.e. different intersubjective contexts) in order that we might find out more about it. Despite his protests to the contrary, he has regressed from Tel Quel structuralism and restored the logocentricity of the Absolute Source, the human subject. Like the ethnomethodologists (especially Garfinkel), he is not concerned with changing ideologies but only with exploring "the adventures of meaning" which they enable. Like the ethnomethodologists, Culler sees the social production of normative conventions (or 'ideologies' in my terms) as a matter of intersubjective interaction in everyday existence. And, like the ethnomethodologists, his subjectivism produces no expressed concern with the social relations between men and nature which form the basis of social life and enable the very existence of purely intersubjective relations.

Derrida and Kristeva may have failed to establish the materialist concepts for the reading of ideology but at least they rejected the logocentrism of the human subject as Absolute Creator of meaning. Culler's relapse into a kind of phenomenological subjectivism takes us no further in our quest for an adequate theory of reading

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31. Ibid.

ideology. He never left the realm of spontaneous readings of discourse and thus became enmeshed in its circle of insecurity based on the question: how do we know? Because the answer to the question is not available at the level of spontaneous analysis he could not find it. However, the solution is not to give up and assert the fact that, at the level of ideology, all is subjective. Rather the task is to develop a general theory of the mode of production of ideological impressions and thus to move from the level of subjective, spontaneous reading to the analysis of objective social practices which demand and sustain specific social ideologies. All is indeed subjective at the level of ideology: what theory must achieve is a knowledge of the objective, material conditions which produce and maintain the ideological forms that structure the vision of the human subject.

#### Althusser's "lecture symptomale"

Re-reading Althusser's theory of theoretical discourse in Reading Capital in the light of the work of Derrida and Kristeva is quite startling. What becomes obvious very quickly is the similarity between his concepts and those of Derrida. I hope that in what follows I can indicate the basis of this obviousness.<sup>32</sup>

Just as Derrida rejoiced in his "world of signs which has no truth, no origin, no nostalgic guilt" where the "innocence of becoming" is regularly affirmed, so Althusser submits there is "no such thing as an innocent reading"<sup>33</sup> and enjoins us to share in his "adventure" of

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32. The similarity between Foucault and Althusser could also be demonstrated - focussing especially on their concepts of semiotic activity, and the systematic field of differences structuring such activity.

33. Althusser and Balibar (1970) op. cit. p.14.

reading Marx's Capital. To be more accurate it is Althusser and friends who read Capital:

"The studies that emerged from this project are no more than the various individual protocols of this reading: each having cut the peculiar oblique path that suited him through the immense forest of this book"<sup>34</sup>

Is this to say that each reading of Capital was seen as purely 'subjective'? Since Althusser goes on to announce that "We are all philosophers" and that they had engaged in "philosophical reading", it seems clear that he locates the "guilt" of the reading not so much in its subjectivity as in its application of a philosophical problematic to the text:

"To read Capital as philosophers is precisely to question the specific object of a specific discourse, and the specific relationship between this discourse and its object; it is therefore to put to the discourse-object unity the question of the epistemological status which distinguishes this particular unity from other forms of discourse-object unity".<sup>35</sup>

The philosopher's 'problem of knowledge' guides their "paths" through "the immense forest" of Capital. A grid, composed of a system of philosophical differences, is thus placed over Capital and a reading is made of "Marx's philosophy".

Althusser feels no shame about the reading: "It is a guilty reading, but one that absolves its crime on confessing it."<sup>36</sup> His position is practically identical to that of Kristeva and Derrida. Neo-structuralism is continually making "active" readings, criticising their assumptions and developing new ones; for example, Kristeva seemed to accept a state of permanent de-centring of the structure as the

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34. Ibid.

35. Ibid. p. 15.

36. Ibid.

normal state for neo-structuralism.<sup>37</sup> This continual self-examination ensured that semiotics always "theorized itself" and always existed as "the theory of its own scientific practice". Semiotics, therefore, is practised in a permanent state of scientificity: a state justified for itself from within. Althusser's "philosophy" appears to be very similar to Kristeva's "semiotics" and Derrida's "grammatology" in that the practice of all three is self-justifying. All three programmes represent attempts to specify a relation between a proposed field of significant differences, operating unseen within any given text or discourse, and the explicit "concepts" and "objects" of that text or discourse.<sup>38</sup> All three modes of exploration operate by concepts which provide a 'safety net', i.e. they all use the notion that any reading is permissible provided its constituting system of significances or 'grid' (Althusser's term) is systematic enough to prove itself necessary. The systematicity of 'the reading' thus ensures its own validity and necessity.

Althusser rejects Hegelian models of reading which provide an "immediate reading of essence in existence", and 'fetishist',<sup>39</sup> and claims that Marx inaugurated a scientific reading in Capital:

"Capital, on the contrary, exactly measures a distance and an internal dislocation (decalage) in the real, inscribed in its structure, a distance and dislocation such as to make their own effects themselves illegible, and the illusion of an immediate reading of them the ultimate apex of their effects: fetishism."<sup>40</sup>

Just as Marx saw that the text of "history cannot be read in its manifest discourse" and is the "inaudible and illegible notation of the effects of a structure of structures", so too, Althusser argues, a theoretical discourse cannot be read from its immediately visible text as though that text was the direct expression of its human author's vision. Althusser thus registers the important concept of the dislocation of

37. See infra p.195,fn. 15.

38. Foucault's "archaeology" seems to represent the same operation.

39. (1970) op. cit. p. 17.

40. Ibid.

of the significant functions from their relations (or structure) of signification. Derrida and Kristeva did not make this point explicitly, but, clearly, since they rejected expressivism and posited the "pheno-text" as an expression and repression of elements of the "geno-text" or "gramme" they implied a definite concept of the dislocation between the pheno-text and geno-text. The visible elements of significance in the pheno-text were not just related to each other but also to invisible presences and to significations absent altogether from that text. The neo-structuralist structure is always decentred. Ben Brewster's Glossary definition of Althusser's concept of "dislocation" is interesting:

"Althusser argues ... that the relations between ideology and the other practices, between the different practices in general, between the elements in each practice, and between ideology and science, are, in principle, relations of dislocation, staggered with respect to one another: each has its own time and rhythm of development."<sup>41</sup>

The principle of the de-centred structure has thus been applied to the social structure: each element has its own "relative autonomy" or internal specificity. The latter point is also, of course, a basic premise of dialectical materialism. Consequently, Althusser correctly notes that Marxism thinks of the social formation as a "structure-in-dominance", a structure of dependent, but independent, elements dominated by one element, the sphere of the economy.

Examining Marx's method of reading the texts of Adam Smith, Althusser finds that Marx reads Smith in two ways:

(1) A "grid" reading. Marx reads Smith spontaneously through the grid of his own problematic and finds him lacking, ridden with "oversights" etc. This reading concerns itself with the observation or identification of the weaknesses in the object-discourse and does not trouble to reflect on the reasons for these inadequacies.

(2) A "symptomatic" reading. This reading reads the connections between the visible and invisible (or, strength and weakness) in a discourse. Any "oversights", inadequacies or concepts invisible to

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41. Ibid. p. 312.

the theoretical discourse in question, are seen to be built in to its vision or problematic as part of its whole field of operation. Althusser argues that Marx does this kind of reading but never consciously talks about it. It is unconscious to Marx but nevertheless, it is argued, it is an integral part of his theoretical discourse. Like his first reading, Marx's second reading measures one "text" (his own) against another (e.g. Smith's). But what marks off the second (symptomatic) reading is that Marx's "text" is "articulated with the lapses"<sup>42</sup> in Smith's text. I shall attempt to explain what Althusser means by this.

It is this attribution of a method of symptomatic reading to Marx that marks the operation of the concept of the decentred structure in Althusser's theory of theoretical discourse. Therefore we must examine this symptomatic reading in detail.

To understand "lecture symptomale", we must realize straight away that Althusser sees knowledge as a production:

"What political economy does not see is not a pre-existing object which it could have seen but did not see - but an object which it produced itself in its operation of knowledge and which did not pre-exist it: precisely the production itself, which is identical with the object."<sup>43</sup>

Shades of Derrida here as Althusser introduces the notion of theory as a semiotic practice! Althusser seems to share Derrida's notion of the "play of differences" created by semiotic production because he has introduced the ~~no~~-structuralist concept of a space created by discourse. The discursive space is composed, as we have seen, by traces of traces of traces, by a conjuncture of elements from the gramme, a field of significant differences.

Althusser continues:

42. Ibid. p. 28.

43. Ibid. p. 24.

"This introduces us to a fact peculiar to science: it can only pose problems on the terrain and within the horizon of a definite theoretical structure, its problematic, which constitutes its absolute and definite condition of possibility, and hence the absolute determination of the forms in which all problems must be posed, at any given moment in the science." 44

A theoretical problematic is a product of theoretical practice (the transformation of ideology into knowledge by means of theory<sup>45</sup>). But where does theory come from? Theoretical practice? But surely that would be tautologous! Theory would simply derive from theory. Althusser's reading of Marx has ignored the many asides in Capital to the economic and political "interests" of the political economists. These asides may be ad hoc and untheorized but they must be confronted. By focussing on Marx's supersession of Political Economy in theory, Althusser renders the process of theoretical transformation totally autonomous. This problem reappears many times in Althusser's works in the forms of 'the relation between Marxism and political practice' and of 'the general relation between theory and practice'. A similar problem exists for Derrida and Kristeva in that they fail to transcend the notion of the ideological source of ideology. This problem (which has become known as the problem of 'theoreticism') is very important for Althusser's position and one that remained unsolved in his prior text, For Marx.<sup>46</sup> In that text he had specified the notion of scientific knowledge as the product of work done on ideological formations by scientific theory. That notion opened up the problem which he creates again in Reading Capital. In For Marx the problem was indexed with a note declaring that the concept of 'theory' "obviously deserves a much more serious examination".<sup>47</sup> In the passage quoted above from Reading Capital Althusser again posits the "theoretical problematic" as the "absolute and definite condition of possibility" of a "science". In my view this begs the question: what

44. Ibid. p. 25.

45. Ibid. p. 316.

46. (1969) op. cit., esp. pp. 182-193.

47. Ibid. p. 184.fn. 21.



connection does the production of science or theory have with the ongoing production of social life (in its various forms)? After all, there are other necessary conditions for science; notably, the scientist must eat and obtain shelter - this simple point means that we must ask about his position in the structure of production and in what ways this position influences his science (either positively or negatively). Like Derrida and Kristeva, Althusser seems to propose that a theoretical discourse is a dislocated expression of a theoretical structure and that this structure exists purely in theory, i.e. abstractly and asocially. In this strict sense, Althusser has not left the terrain of a structuralist problematic. The "forms" which theoretical "problems" take are governed by the theoretical problematic. Is this not the same as Derrida's view that forms (past, present and possible) of significance are governed by the "gramme" or Kristeva's view that the forms of the "pheno-text" are governed by the "geno-text"? Althusser seems to be operating the same neo-structuralist concept of the mysteriously-appearing, grand structure which determines all forms of the content of a discourse. The "theoretical problematic" seems to stand in relation to theoretical discourse as does the "gramme" to the "formal play of differences".

Althusser goes on to argue that this concept of the theoretical problematic removes the subjectivity of theorizing and reading:

"Any object or problem situated on the terrain and within the horizon, i.e., in the definite structural field of the theoretical problematic of a given theoretical discipline, is visible. We must take these words literally. The sighting is thus no longer the act of an individual subject, endowed with the faculty of 'vision' which he exercises either attentively or distractedly; the sighting is the act of its structural conditions, it is the relation of immanent reflection between the field of the problematic and its objects and its problems." 48

Thus the reader or theorist is "unwittingly" the agent of the theoretical structure or problematic. Althusser footnotes the fact that, as his work is consciously (note the irony) 'anti-structuralist', the concept of "immanent reflection" used in this passage presents problems. It certainly does, since it is a classic structuralist concept! How similar this is to the other neo-structuralist works which by-pass the 'human subject' through their conception of the text as the dislocated expression/repression of the geno-text or Structure! Althusser's footnote refers us to a later section of Reading Capital but this section fails to solve his difficulties.<sup>49</sup> The section concerned simply argues that the organization and order of succession of concepts in a theoretical work are underpinned by the "systematicity" of the system of concepts in the theoretical problematic and that a concept's meaning is given by its "place and function" in the totality of concepts.<sup>50</sup> These are classically structuralist notions. The problem is indexed by Althusser's uneasy use of two favourite structuralist terms "synchrony" and "diachrony" (he argues that the "synchrony" and "diachrony" of the concepts are given by their "place and function" in the theoretical structure).

The reason why Althusser calls this method (of reading the structure of a theory in its absences and presences at the level of the text's theoretical concepts) a method of symptomatic reading is as follows: Under "certain very special critical circumstances" (unspecified by Althusser), the theoretical problematic produces "the fleeting presence of an aspect of its invisible"<sup>51</sup> within its visible field of discourse. To the spontaneous, "grid" reading, this presence of the invisible appears as a theoretical lapse, weakness or oversight. To a symptomatic reading, the presence of the problematic's invisible field (its 'repressed' concepts) at the level of the visible is a symptom of the "unconsciousness of the text",<sup>52</sup> its problematic; just as some of the patient's utterances are for Freudian psychoanalysis a symptom of the

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49. The very fact of the footnote at this juncture (p. 25) indexes again the problem of structuralism in Althusser's discourse.

50. (1970) op. cit. p. 68.

51. Ibid. p. 27.

52. Ibid. p. 317.

structure of the unconscious. It is interesting to consider that the term 'symptom' can mean 'sign' and that 'semiology' is the science of signs or symptoms. Althusser's 'discovered' mode of reading in Marx seems to be no more than an imposition on Marx of a 'neo-structuralist' or 'radical semiological' approach to phenomena. The similarity of terminology between Althusser and the structuralists simply indexes that fact. However it would be wrong to say that the neo-structuralists are simply structuralists. They definitely remove the concept of the immediate presence of the structure in its effects and definitely construct the valuable concept of semiotic modes of production, two important moves away from structuralism. However, on the other hand, we should not exaggerate the differences; neo-structuralism is just a new, developed form of structuralism. What conceptual developments neo-structuralism has made simply displace the concept of the Absolute Structure to another, more abstract, level; they do not remove it altogether.

A 'symptom' is defined (in the 1971 Oxford English Dictionary) as "a perceptible change in the body or its functions, which indicates disease, or the kind of disease". 'Symptomatic reading' is thus a very accurate term for the neo-structuralist mode of reading since it expresses the fact that this group of theorists see the Structure as a thing in movement. In this sense, their conception of the Structure is a dialectical one - a distinct advance on structuralism. And, because the Structure (the problematic, gramme or geno-text) is in continual transformation, movement or "dialectical mutation" (Althusser's term), it is constituted two-sidedly by its presences and absences. Thus the symptomatic reading observes the dis-ease within the theoretical problematic as it moves; the dis-ease being constituted by the antagonism between the two poles of the problematic, its recognized concepts and its unrecognized, hidden or repressed concepts.

As such, symptomatic reading is an advance on ordinary structuralist readings, which only observe the 'recognized' or 'visible' concepts of a static problematic or ideology and fail to discern the totality-in-movement of the structure composed of visible and invisible concepts in connection. Unfortunately on the other hand, being a form of structuralism, neo-structuralism fails to locate its discovered forms within the social totality and fails to define the concept of the

importance of the 'contents' or material substance of a form. Neo-structuralism has been very important in introducing the concepts of Structure-in-movement and contradictions-within-the-Structure, but it has failed to put the Structuring Structure into the social totality, to give the elements of the Structure any real materiality and history and to solve the problem of the combination of structures.

These weaknesses or failures can be illustrated by pursuing Althusser a little further. Althusser's concept of the theoretical problematic and its effects is remarkably similar to Derrida's concept of the gramme with its appearance in traces. Althusser also talks of the production in theory using a spatial metaphor like Derrida. These two similarities can be indicated by the following passage:

"Hence, if we wish to preserve the spatial metaphor, the paradox of the theoretical field is that it is an infinite because definite space, i.e. it has no limits, no external frontiers separating it from nothing, precisely because it is defined and limited within itself, carrying in itself the finitude of its definition, which, by excluding what it is not, makes it what it is." 53

This may appear to be sheer gobbledegook or dialectical metaphysics, but, in my view, Althusser is attempting to specify the concept of a created, discursive space in movement. He is trying to steer clear from static concepts of structure and to embody movement in his definition of the problematic. Thus he sees it as a "disengaged" theoretical space, "limited within itself" and "marked inside itself", created by a productive mechanism - the knowledge's mode of production. This concept is practically identical to Derrida's concept of the infinite sea of differences in which semiotic practice introduces a particular 'play'. And, as regards the form of appearance of the field of differences, Althusser talks of "illegible notation" and "the fleeting presence of an aspect" while Derrida talks of "traces" and "traces of traces". Not only do they both use the same 'stars-in-the-night-sky' image to indicate the profound degree of mediation between the structure and its effects, but also they

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53. Ibid. p. 27.

share the view that the absences of the text are as indicative as its presences.

Althusser argued that the distinguishing character of a Marxian symptomatic reading lies in the fact that the reader's 'text' is articulated in the "lapses" of the real text because (he says) Marx occupied the terrain of the unconscious text of his victims. Only on the condition that the reader through his theoretical 'work' has occupied both the conscious and unconscious terrain of the theoretical problematic under examination can he achieve a symptomatic reading of that problematic's written, theoretical texts. The theorist or reader must, literally 'conquer' the territory of his predecessors before he can make the advance of opening up new theoretical space for the creation of knowledge. He must grasp in full the thought-structures in existence before he can locate and resolve their inadequacies: for only by understanding the mechanism (the structure) of their production of knowledge can he eradicate it, or improve upon it, and so create new knowledge. It may be observed that this is rather obvious to anyone who has engaged in any kind of serious, scientific research and that it does not take all this complicated language to express the fact that 'one has to master the field of knowledge before one can advance it'. I may be doing Althusser an injustice but, at this point in time - after this long and arduous deciphering of his discourse, this observation seems to be fully justified. To say that a theoretical text is always inscribed in and against the field of significance of another text is surely to state the obvious. Moreover, the fact that it is so obvious is suspicious, to say the least. My suspicions lead me to suggest that the obvious substance (yet magical appearance) of Althusser's symptomatic reading corresponds to an absent concept of the social origins of theoretical revolutions (and stagnations). Althusser's discourse focusses solely on the movement of theory, as if it went on in a vacuum; none of his concepts reflect the relation between theory and the social formation. The reason why it seems obvious that theory is produced in and against a field of theories is because that conception of the origins of theoretical revolutions is an ideological one, or, what amounts to the same thing, it is purely

descriptive in referring to the apparent differences between theories, and the apparent, purely theoretical, structures which produce them. 'Theory evolves from theory' is as ideological as 'ideology evolves from ideology' - it is equally tautological and equally descriptive. Symptomatic reading, therefore, is simply a thorough way of describing theoretical differences. That is all Marx does in the passage given so much attention by Althusser.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, symptomatic reading is not so markedly different from "grid" reading - it is simply the reading theorist's reflection on the differences between his "grid" and that of the object-text which he has comprehended and superceded.

Just as Kristeva produced a concept of semiotics as a continual reflection on its own field of differences, so too has Althusser produced a mode of reading which continually reflects on its own differences. Symptomatic reading simply produces a list of differences between two theoretical "grids" and explains those differences in terms of the different structures of the two grids. In an era of increasing surplus labour, it is interesting to note that "lecture symptomale" is very much a 'surplus' reading; the basic form of reading is "grid" reading. Normally, theoretical advances should be possible on the basis of "grid" readings. However, the symptomatic reading, in its nature, will clearly give the theorist a greater degree of certainty over the novel nature of his concepts and an apparent explanation of the inability of other problematics to produce his discoveries. Perhaps, then, a symptomatic reading of Marx (to produce the specificity of his differences) has been produced at a time when there is a felt need for a development and/or a redefinition of basic Marxian concepts in the light of threatening tendencies such as Stalinism, anarchic humanism, adventurism, reformism etc., etc.. Does the uncertain Marxist retrace his steps of theoretical origin at times of crisis in the socialist movement? Perhaps. But should he then generalize his retreat as a new, 'Marxist' theory of reading? No. It seems to me that Althusser's symptomatic reading is, in one way or another, itself merely a symptom -

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54. Ibid.pp. 20, 21.

a symptom of a Marxism (or form of Marxism - Communist Party Marxism) in retreat, retracing its steps, in order that it can go forward on a correct and sure footing. But, on the other hand, the practice of symptomatic reading is not thereby an incorrect procedure in itself: at times, theory must be reworked and retraced in order to advance. However, symptomatic reading is only a rigorous, double-checking reading most suitable to periods of (or Parties in) theoretical stagnation or turmoil; it should not be generalized to the level of an absolute, scientific mode of reading. Any such generalization would mean condemning theory to a perpetual reflection on its own premises; a fate that would send Marxism round in circles. Certainly, critique, re-examination and theoretical reflection are, in certain conjunctures, vitally necessary but only inasmuch as they enable the further production of adequate theories of social developments. Like Kristeva's reflexive semiotics and Derrida's grammatology,<sup>55</sup> Althusser's symptomatic readings or philosophical analyses threaten to be an infinite regression into insecure introspection and an obstacle to the rapid development of adequate knowledge of social developments.

Theoretical reflection is valuable when it produces more fruitful general concepts than presently exist. General concepts are necessary if one is to develop any concepts of the particular. However it should never be forgotten that the object of theoretical introspection and review is to provide general concepts that can be developed in the particular. The production of general concepts in itself is not the ultimate end of theoretical review; such a motive could only succeed in providing massive and intricate webs of generalities with no grasp on the particular. Such general theory would be abstract and one-sided with no concrete, objective character as a reflection of the movements of the real world.

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55. And, for that matter, Alvin Gouldner's "reflexive sociology": see A.W. Gouldner (1971) op. cit.

In short, the object of Marxism should not simply be to reach "the threshold of Marx's philosophy", as Althusser himself admits.<sup>56</sup>

Althusser's reading is indeed "guilty" in that its object is to recognize "the infinite extent contained within its minute space: the extent of Marx's philosophy."<sup>57</sup> In his view, "we are all seeking this philosophy".<sup>58</sup> Having found it, other 'readings' of Marx and Marxism will be possible. At this point, says Althusser, "before it is too late"<sup>59</sup> we will be able to understand correctly "the reasons for this unreason".<sup>60</sup> By "unreason", Althusser refers to the ideological deformities of Marxism such as the "cult of the personality". Althusser, alarmingly, seems to assume that all the problems of global socialism stem from a crisis in Marxist theory and that continual philosophical re-readings will resolve that crisis. My position on this should be clear from what I have said already, but let me reiterate some basic positions:

(1) Any such crisis in theory does not of itself explain the problems of practice. No doubt, the problems of theory are connected to the problems of practice: theoretical problems have been generated by certain movements of revolutionary practice and problems in practice have been generated by certain movements (or lack thereof) in theory. One cannot be a Marxist and see theory as an Absolute Structure generating all the practical problems of the surface text of history. This implication of Althusser's position relates to his adherence to structuralist concepts, particularly the implicit concept of the socially determining, but not socially determined, nature of theory.

(2) Continual philosophical re-reading of Marx and Marxism will not provide anything but a developed super-abstract philosophy. What is needed is the development of appropriate general concepts and their particular counterparts in order that Marxism can provide adequate theoretical analysis of social developments presenting problems for

56. Althusser (1970) op. cit. p. 29.

57. Ibid. p. 30.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid. p. 34, fn. 14.

60. Ibid. p. 34.



revolutionary socialist practice. A developed philosophy, in itself, does not provide even general concepts because it is a backward step into the abstract non-material basis of conceptualization as a whole. Philosophy simply generalizes the epistemologies of sciences - that is, it works on sciences - it does not actually produce a science. Socialism certainly has its abstract, theoretical side but that side looks forward to the practical concrete side of socialism. It does indeed study the abstract basis of its theory (i.e. its epistemology) but it also studies its material basis (i.e. the conditions of social development). Now, it is certainly true that many Marxist works are undialectical and the restoration of the dialectic to Marxist theory is possibly the most urgent theoretical task today. But that restoration must also be realized in the practice of theoretical analysis of particular social developments, not in the practice of concocting endless streams of general permutations made possible by the dialectical approach. Certainly dialectical philosophy is potentially "infinite", only waiting for philosophers to produce its extended "space". But strings of potential abstractions are irrelevant! They would simply be empty speculations on what could be. Rather more immediate is the employment of the dialectical principle in the development of necessary, new, general concepts which can then enable us to grasp faithfully the particular developments in the global social structure. Dialectical materialism is an approach which grasps social phenomena in their movements and which was built on a rejection of metaphysical 'philosophies' pointed upwards towards the Heavens rather than downwards towards earth. Althusser's philosophical readings aimed at putting the dialectic back into dialectical materialism threaten to take the 'materialism' out, just as other forms of structuralism have taken the history out of history. After all, if one has grasped Marx's critique of philosophy in his early works and the nature of materialist dialectics practised in the later works, one should put this comprehension into a theoretical practice of explaining the latest social developments rather than a practice of propounding a philosophy of Philosophy or an ideological theory of theory.

I would not like to leave this critical discussion of Althusser's "lecture symptomale" without registering the fact that, in my view, Althusser's reading of Marx is very valuable. It has produced, or at least encouraged, a re-awakened interest in the question of ideologies.

He, and his colleagues, have through their actual readings observed, albeit descriptively, the intervention of ideologies in Marxist theory. The central object of Althusser's work seems to be the role of ideology and it seems to me that, at the present stage of historical development, as in the past, the role of ideologies is a very important and decisive one. The development of the Marxist theory of ideology and particular ideologies, and their mode of intervention in the social formation at particular conjunctures, is therefore a vital task. However, such a development is only effective and realized inasmuch as it can produce general concepts and concrete analyses which can be of use in actual political/ideological struggles. Concepts of 'philosophy', semiotics and significance which (a) do not specify in themselves the specific connections between ideology and the social structure and (b) remain at the level of generality will be of little value in practice. It is interesting that Althusser's post-Reading Capital writings show some awareness of this point. In the Foreword to the Italian edition of Reading Capital, he talks of his conception of "philosophy" as "theoretical" and likely to "induce 'speculative' effects".<sup>61</sup> In an interview in 1968, Althusser still maintains a concept of dialectical materialism as the "philosophy" of Marxism, but emphatically sees that "philosophy" as a necessary weapon of proletarian revolution, since it enables "the defence and development of theory".<sup>62</sup> He seems to have moved to a position identical to the one expressed here: that theoretical development is an important thing and that 'reading adventures' represent a tendency to speculative thinking. Moreover, there seems to be more of a sense in this interview of the historically-specific nature of the need to defend and develop theory: there is less sense of the absolute nature of symptomatic reading. In short, Althusser himself seems to be looking forward to the relation between theory and practice rather than backward to the philosophical practice of producing systems of super-abstract generalities.

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61. Ibid. pp. 7,8.

62. See Althusser (1971) p. 15-25.

Althusser's actual readings of Marx are not just important for their sense of smell for ideology, they are also important because, in one way or another, they reassert the method of dialectical materialism as the mark that distinguishes Marxist theory from any kind of radical positivism, radical phenomenology or mechanical, economic materialism. Very shortly, we must turn to a dialectical materialist theory of reading ideologies but, before that, let us examine neo-structuralism in the light of the three questions posed to the other modes of reading ideology.<sup>63</sup>

### Ideology-detection in neo-structuralism

The neo-structuralist problematic sees ideology as a closed discourse: one which makes unselfconscious assumptions and therefore lacks systematicity. 'Science' is predicated by the systematicity of a discourse. Scientific discourse is not closed at any point since it constitutes an infinite system of elements. Hence the neo-structuralist analyst can read ideology scientifically (or 'detect' it) by reading a discourse through the concepts of his own field of signification and identifying the closures and silences in the field of signification of the object-discourse. Consequently the neo-structuralist is looking for the 'breaks' in the chain of significance in the discourse, its 'blind spots' and its 'gaps'.

In other words, the analyst's 'discourse' is juxtaposed against the 'discourse' of the object-text and the discourse that has weaknesses is deemed the ideological one. The object-discourse is said to be read

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63. The questions outlined supra, p.86, concerning the method of reading ideology, the conception of the presence of ideology, and the theoretical grounding of the reading method.

against the reading-discourse, or, as Derrida would have it, one text is inscribed within the lapses of another, and the text with lapses is the one with the ideology. For Kristeva, of course, the next thing to do would be to check back on the 'winning' discourse to see if its infinite systematicity is real. With this mode of reading, of course, the field of discourse reading the text can be found to be ideological just as much as the text's discourse itself. In this sense there are no guarantees in this method that the discourse of the text is the one that is the object of reading; for if the 'reading field' or grid is found lacking, in comparison with the text's discourse, then it is the one with the ideological lapses and the one that is the object of the reading practice. In such an instance, we could say that it was the reading-discourse that had been read! Frequently, it will happen, of course, that lapses are found both in the reading-discourse and in the read-discourse. In that case both discourses are ideological and there is a frantic search for systematicity: this is reflected on the surface in the mind of the reader as a 'crisis in theory', or, perhaps, as 'an intriguing problem'.

This mode of reading ideology is an advance in two important ways. Firstly, there is the concept of the object-discourse as actively signifying in relation to the active field of signification of the reader. Secondly, there is the concept of the active nature of the reading-discourse in relation to the actively-signifying object-discourse. In other words, both the planes of 'the reading' and 'the read' are considered active. They are seen as active because the practice of the reading activates them. The reader operates his own field of significance in reading and by that act he also activates a field of reading in the text. In short this concept of the reading process is a dialectical one: it posits a movement between the reading- and read-discourses. The reading-discourse is only constituted in the practice of reading the read-discourse and the read-discourse is only realised in the activity of the reading-discourse. The concept of the given, static structure of a text is abandoned and in its place is substituted the concept of the decentred structure created by an active reading. It is important to note that, in this dialectical conception of reading, the ideology of the read-discourse (if any) is not given to all-comers - it is produced,

in the reading practice, by the work of a more systematic reading-discourse on a less systematic read-discourse.

Thus it is that ideology is detected by the production of closures, breaks and lapses in the read-discourse. These closures, breaks and lapses exist at both the visible level of explicit significance and the invisible level of implicit or absent significance. There are no guarantees that they exist in the text and can only be produced by a reading practice employing a more systematic, more scientific field of significance. This is the neo-structuralist theory and practice of reading ideology. Clearly it is a 'self-conscious' or 'reflexive' mode of reading, it not only reads (with its 'grid') but it also notes the differences in mechanism between itself and its object-discourse. This mode of reading thus involves both 'grid' and 'symptomatic' reading. It reads and then talks about its reading. This is peculiar to all three protagonists of neo-structuralism discussed here. It was clearly expressed by Althusser in his explicit enunciation of the two modes of reading ('grid' and 'symptomatic') in Marx, but it is equally clear in Kristeva. The following passage illustrates her view of neo-structuralist reading (in the form of "semiotics") as a 'grid' reading which constantly questions its own structure:

"For, ... if the raison d'etre of the semiotic enterprise from the time of the Stoics to the present day has always been to found scientific abstraction in posing the sign and in so doing allowing the constitution of science (including linguistic science) as systematisation and formalisation, semiotics is now called upon to question these foundations, the foundations of science (and of linguistics) and to work towards the constitution of a theory of knowledge in which the project of linguistics, duly questioned, will itself be integrated. In other words, having provided the positive foundations of metaphysics and/or science, semiotics now offers itself as the area of the interrogation, analysis and criticism of metaphysics and/or science that they may be refounded in a new theoretical gesture (of which all that may be said is that it is practised as a critique of metaphysics). 64

'Combined with a passage quoted earlier,<sup>65</sup> this text can be seen as a perfect example of the 'philosophical' nature of the neo-structuralist reading. This reading does not 'discover' the pre-given structure of a pre-given text in classic empiricist style; rather, it claims to 'construct' a critique of the text, out of the relation between itself and the discourse of the text, and then examines the conditions of difference (the 'breaks') between the two discourses which enabled that critique to take place.

But does not this make the neo-structuralist reading simply a kind of reflexive or dialectical structuralism? After all, as in ordinary structuralism, the reader still reads the problematic of the text, its discourse, from the empirical absences or presences from the words of a book. It is interesting when listening to Althusserians talking about symptomatic reading, that they talk as if the book itself was empirically absent.<sup>66</sup> Williams has noted this problem also in his brief discussion of Althusser's "lecture symptomale":

"But, in Althusserian theory, what 'lecture symptomale' is required to do is to locate the discrete subject and object in each problematic. The indexical reading of questions and answers does not allow this, at least without inaugurating a mystery about the connection between what is absent and what is present, that is the questions and answers which are a kind of incomplete present image of the absent problematic."<sup>67</sup>

Indeed, there is a "mystery" in Althusser's thinking over this question of the empirical text, and, to my knowledge, the usual tactic in

65. Supra, p. 194, fn. 12.

66. See, for example, J. Taylor "Marxism and Anthropology" *Economy and Society* 1:3 (1972) pp. 339-350, especially pp. 342, 349. See also F. Hindess and P. Q. Hirst Pre-capitalist modes of production (1975 London: Routledge and Kegan Paul): "These concepts (of modes of production - C.S.) are abstract, their value is not limited by the analysis of the concrete. As concepts they can have a theoretical function even if concrete conditions to which they are pertinent do not exist, have not existed and will not exist" (p. 321) As the authors note, because they do not analyse "concrete conditions" they cannot be accused automatically of speculation. However, they do seem to ignore the issue of the relationship of "concrete conditions" to the construction of their concepts. Do these concepts 'work' in the analysis of "concrete conditions"? How important were historical analyses of "concrete conditions" for the construction of the concepts?

67. K. Williams (1974) op. cit. p. 49.

Althusserian analysis is to gloss over this problem of its status ( and existence) by an implicit assumption that the symptomatic reader does not see the words etc. of the actual book in front of him. It appears almost as if the object-discourse is 'whisked in' from nowhere by the activation of the reading-discourse. This impression is reinforced by another one—the impression that Althusser ignores statements (actually empirically present) in Capital which do not suit his purposes. Now, should that be surprising to us after our analysis of structuralism? For, after all, do not structuralists see the actual words and sentences as mere manifestations of the 'deep structure'? From what we have seen already, 'pure' structuralism or semiology does not see the elements of the structure as anything but the 'playthings' of the relations of the system. As we have seen, for pure structuralism, the elements of a structure have no internal specificity, relative autonomy or history. Consequently, in a dialectical form of structuralism which emphasizes reading as a practice and specifies a dialectic between the unconscious discourse of the reader and the unconscious discourse of the object we should expect to find that the object-discourse is defined entirely by the existence of the reading discourse, as its dialectical counterpart or 'necessary condition of existence', and that the mediating material, the empirical book, is rendered almost totally immaterial.

Not only does neo-structuralism tend to ignore the elements of the structure (or the 'signifiers') like structuralism proper, but it commits a second structuralist crime in assuming (a) that the object-discourse is directly readable through the text without any other recourse and (b) that there is a centre to be decentred. The first assumption specifies, even if implicitly, that the analyst can read the words in their 'real' or 'true' meaning. Thus, in reality, neo-structuralism seems to engage in the structuralist practice of reading the Structure in its effects. Somehow, despite all the talk of dislocation and mediation, the neo-structuralists must assume they know the meaning of the words in their normal use in order to discern the Structure of the text. The second assumption connects to the first. The neo-structuralists assume the orthodox meaning of the discourse in order that they can 'de-centre' it as the structure of the text. One clearly cannot 'de-centre' a structure unless one can read its presence. This assumption has implications

- primarily, that there is a 'dominant ideology' ever-already-present in the discourse of a text. This implication may sound fine to the radical ear, but the problem is that we are back to the universal Absolute Source notion. Neo-structuralism does not question the assumption of a Dominant Ideology, which exists ever-present in the text like the "Universal Structure of the Human Mind" (Levi-Strauss), rather, it displaces it by the procedure of an "active reading" which de-centres the Structure. In sum, the neo-structuralist conception specifying the structure-to-be-decentred contains within itself a structuralist denial of the movement, transience and social nature of ideologies; rather these ideologies form a static Structure with no specific origin (or condition of existence). Like structuralism proper, neo-structuralism whisks in its Absolute Source - only the difference is that this time the 'whisking in' is consciously done under the aegis of a dialectical, 'active reading', performed by a systematic field of significance. In neo-structuralism, ironically, the Structure of Orthodoxy is set up by the concept of de-centring the Structure and, on their own admission, neo-structuralists create their 'opposition' whilst creating their own discursive system. The Dominant Ideology, thus, is as much a product of their fertile imaginations as is the Structure of the Human Mind; it remains a Metaphysical concept with no concrete, social or historical reference.

In conclusion, ideology-detection, in this problematic, is the effect of the difference in systematicity between two theoretical discourses, brought into being by the practice of reading. The systematic discourse can detect the closures and breaks of the ideological discourse by juxtaposing itself with the other in the practice of reading. Naturally enough, this problematic also produces a 'science'. The 'science' is constituted by the systematic discourse. In simple terms, then, science for neo-structuralism is not a body of theory which explains the mediations between the real structure of things and their immediate form of appearance in social practice, but rather that field of significance which most systematically connects itself or, if you like, that body of concepts which explains itself the best. Although questions of science must remain largely outside the scope of this discussion, one comment can be made.



It seems to me that, although neo-structuralism carries a useful definition of science, the problem of 'the data' remains. It is fair to say that theoretical problematics produce their own 'data' and, consequently, that if they can make sense out of that data they are 'knowledges' or 'sciences'. But, this is to solve the question of science one-sidedly. If science is the "cognitive appropriation of the real" (Althusser) then scientificity must lie in the connexion between cognition and reality not simply in the field of cognition. Empiricism errs in locating the site of the problem of scientificity in the field of the 'real', but neo-structuralism (like phenomenology) seems to go to the other extreme by locating the problem in the sphere of 'cognition'. Neo-structuralism seems to have resolved the question of science at the level of theory rather than at the level of the connexion between theory and reality. Systematicity provides no guarantees, in my view, that the theory is a "cognitive appropriation of the real". Successful scientific theory may be systematic, however its condition of existence is not systematicity but rather that it explains the nature, mediation and movement of practical appearances and thus acts as the theoretical expression of concrete social relations. 68

As Marx said:

"Of course the method of presentation must differ in form from that of inquiry. The latter has to appropriate the material in detail, to analyse its different forms of development, to trace out their inner connexion. Only after this work is done, can the actual movement be adequately described. If this is done successfully, if the life of the subject-matter is ideally reflected as in a mirror, then it may appear as if we had before us a mere a priori construction." 69 (My emphases - C.S.)

Just because a theory is systematic does not imply that it has explained, or reflected in the abstract, the concrete movement of appearances. For example, a systematic theory could occur which explains the internal structure of a social phenomenon at one point in time, yet, because of

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68. See Marx The Poverty of Philosophy (1955) op. cit. p. 95.

69. Marx (1974) op. cit. p. 23. See also infra, p. 221, fn. 72.

quantitative changes in that phenomenon over the next period of time, it may change its quality or structure.<sup>70</sup> In consequence our systematic theory would no longer explain or faithfully reflect the internal structure of the phenomenon. Furthermore, this theory may not even have noticed the changes in the phenomenon because it was so busy checking its own epistemological assumptions. As a result, it would be unaware that it had ceased to be the theory of the 'data', and a theory which is not the theory of some current thing or condition is only a general theory with no immediate relevance to social practice. The new 'data' would be available to the theorist with his systematic theory - yet, because he was so anxious to be systematic and non-ideological, he would not have made the ideological observations (of the surface changes) necessary to enable and stimulate the development of the old theory. In short, a scientific theory of social life must not only always check its own assumptions, it must also constantly keep abreast of changes in the phenomenon as they reflect themselves (albeit in complex, mediated fashion) in people's ideological impressions (either in the practices of everyday life or in research practice). Any science that concentrates on 'systematicity', 'reflexivity' or 'self-consciousness' alone is likely to become "theoreticist", speculative, metaphysical, abstract, idealist, old-fashioned, useless and impractical. In the same way, any science that only concentrates on recording new, apparent developments in the world is, on the other hand, likely to become empiricist, pragmatic, 'trendy', unsystematic, illogical, practical but partial, lacking in perspective and fragmented.

My final point on neo-structuralism concerns the fact that Althusser's version restricts itself to complex and systematic or theoretical discourse, whilst Kristeva and Derrida restrict their work to literary products rich in surplus meaning. It would seem that the concepts of neo-structuralism specify the need for it to provide discourses of substantial 'depth'. Without this 'depth of meaning' or 'width of space' created by the theoretical or artistic discourse, neo-structuralism

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70. See, for example, Marx on the quantitative changes that led to qualitative changes in the very nature of the English mode of production. See, especially, *ibid.* p. 192.

simply cannot work in practice. We should not be surprised that it restricts itself to advanced theoretical disciplines (Althusser), or literature (Kristeva and Derrida), film (Metz) or medical science (Foucault). Neo-structuralism, although its practitioners never admit it, needs data. How ironic! The theory that dispensed with the concrete in favour of the Structure finds that it cannot work without forms rich in substance! The real world has come back to haunt the formal skeletons of our structuralist metaphysicians! Just as Slater found that he had to use newspaper editorials thick with ideology in order to make the Structure of Bourgeois Ideology produce the connotations of news reports, so, too, the neo-structuralists require 'code-sheets' rich with repeated connotation to enable them to 'read off' the Structure. One can only conclude that structuralism in all its forms is heavily reliant on its data, even though its practitioners deal with data simply as an effect of the Form. Structuralism grants the elements or substance of a structure no inner determinations and, paradoxically, this is ultimately reflected in its practitioners' search for 'rich' discourses to analyze. Structuralism needs 'texts' rich in ideological substance so that it can proceed with its abstract analysis of their forms without the social nature of this substance becoming problematic.

A mode of reading ideology which wishes to attain scientificity needs to theorize (a) the nature of ideology-in-general and (b) the specific nature of a particular ideology, before the reading takes place. The scientific identification of ideology, in other words, proceeds on the basis of elaborated concepts of ideology-in-general and of the specificity of a particular ideology. Neo-structuralist readings proceed on an inadequate concept of ideology-in-general. They presuppose that the weaknesses in the read-discourse, which they produce, are indicative of the presence of ideology-in-general: hence ideology-in-general is implicitly defined as an unsystematic or 'closed' discourse. Such a definition fails to specify the social conditions for ideology and remains at the level of a description of ideology's effects. Furthermore, neo-structuralist readings proceed without a concept of the social and historical specificity/materiality/objectivity of the particular ideology under examination. Hence they do not, within themselves, provide a theorized identification of an ideology with a definite social and

and historical specificity. All they can provide is an identification of ideology-in-general within the specific form of appearance of a specific ideology. Their 'sightings' must as a result remain, in effect, spontaneous, subjective and ideological. As such they may have great political value, but cannot claim scientific status. The inbuilt weakness of all forms of structuralism is their refusal to attend to the historicity, materiality and specificity of the substance of a discourse. Viewing content as a mere manifestation or effect of an 'deep', general structure, they are unable in practice to identify the precise objectivity of that structure. All that is possible in their practice is the identification of the general form of a substantive discourse as an ideology; and, even then, as I have argued, such an identification remains questionable because of the problems with the definition of ideology implicit in the reading practice.

A note on the relation between Althusser's structuralism and his reading of Marx

It is not possible here to develop a full analysis of the effects of Althusser's neo-structuralism in his reading of Marx owing to the immensity of the task. However, given its importance for the socialist movement and given its relevance to the comprehension of the Marxism in this project, I think 'a note' should be made on the question.

The main effect of Althusser's neo-structuralism lies in the question of the elements of the structure. So far I have only analyzed this question at a very general level. However, when we look at Althusser's reading of Marx, our critiques of the previous chapters begin to bite with sharp teeth. Neo-structuralism, as we have seen, writes the elements out of significant existence. Althusser's work feels the effects of that in several ways. Firstly, in his "lecture symptomale", as we have already noted, there is no discussion of the 'objective' meaning of the words, that is, their connection with material social relations - that is assumed - and their structure is constituted

immediately and subjectively from them. Secondly, and more importantly, the Structure of the social formation is said to constitute the individual human subject:

"... the real protagonists of history are the social relations of production, political struggle and ideology, which are constituted by the place assigned to these protagonists in the complex structure of the social formation ... The biological men are only the supports or bearers of the guises (Charaktermasken) assigned to them by the structure of relations in the social formation."<sup>71</sup>

Here we see a classic example of structuralist; idealism and metaphysics: ideas or concepts make history whilst men only act out the role that is set for them by the concepts. Althusser makes the categories fight the battles of history in Reading Capital. We know what Marx would have said:

"Economic categories are only the theoretical expressions, the abstractions of the social relations of production."

"The same men who establish their social relations in conformity with their material productivity, produce also principles, ideas and categories, in conformity with their social relations."<sup>72</sup> (My emphases - C.S.)

"If we abstract thus from every subject all the alleged accidents, animate or inanimate, men or things, we are right in saying that in the final abstraction, the only substance left is the logical categories. Thus the metaphysicians who, in making these abstractions, think they are making analyses and who, the more they detach themselves from things, imagine themselves to be getting all the nearer to the point of penetrating to their core - these metaphysicians in turn are right in saying that things here below are embroideries of which the logical categories constitute the canvas."<sup>73</sup>

"... the moment you present men as the actors and authors of their own history, you arrive ... at the real starting point, because you have abandoned those eternal principles of which you spoke at the outset."<sup>74</sup>  
(My emphases - C.S.)

71. B. Brewster in the Glossary of Reading Capital (1970) op. cit. p. 320.

72. Both this and the above quote are from K. Marx The Poverty of Philosophy (1955) op. cit. p. 95.

73. Ibid. pp. 92, 93.

74. Ibid. p. 100.

M. Althusser, like M. Proudhon, has made ideas produce history, whilst, for Marx, men make history under the conditions in which they live. Althusser has failed to grasp the interpenetration of the opposites, subjective and objective, because of his structuralism. Men's forms of subjectivity (consciousness) are determined by the social relations within which they act, yet the existence of these modes of consciousness is purely 'formal' or abstract until they are realised in definite social practices, and in that process of realization they re-create, or revolutionize, the social relations of production. Althusser can only see the Structure, social relations (whether they be economic, political and ideological); men as authors are erased in favour of abstract categories which use men as 'actors' or 'agents'. Marx sees men as "authors" as well as "agents". He holds a dialectical comprehension of the two aspects of human existence in social formations. The humanist Marxists are one-sided in allowing men an authorship outside their role as agents of social relations, Althusserian Marxism, on the other hand, is equally one-sided in refusing to see the authorship involved in agency. Both 'humanism' and 'anti-humanism' are non-dialectical positions. For Marx, social life involves the dialectical combination of the objectivity of 'matter' with the subjectivity of men. Hence authorship is always agency and agency is always authorship. Ideology is not simply a "level" of the social formation but an aspect of human practice.

Althusser's neo-structuralism has thus led him to write men out of history in Reading Capital. Like all forms of structuralism, Althusserian Marxism only leaves us with the skeletons of the Structure. It is true that capitalism predicates men as "creatures" (Marx) of the system, but men did create, and do daily recreate, that system themselves, not in the abstract but under the conditions of specific social practices. Without men's 'work' the capitalist system would collapse. Althusser's "supports" are vital to all social systems known to history as are the "supports" of a building - he talks of "supports" as "agents", implying the absence of subjective determination. But forms of consciousness do determine the forms taken by material things and that includes the social relations of practice. Social relations of practice indeed determine forms of subjectivity, but only inasmuch as the subjects

continue to reproduce those social relations. Althusser has reduced this highly material dialectic to the historical interplay of abstract forms, or (in Derrida's terms) to a play of differences in a structure, and the historical materiality of the consciousness of the subject is denied the specific effectivity which it has at every level of social practice in every epoch of human history.

Thirdly, the reduction of materiality involved in structuralism effects itself in Althusser's discussion of the elements of the production in Reading Capital. As an index of this effect, we can point to the omission of a detailed discussion of the internal specificity and structuring effect of the means of production in this passage.<sup>75</sup> Althusser points out that the means of production are "things" and not "structures",<sup>76</sup> but that is all. He makes no analysis of the structuring effect of these things (which after all, do have internal structures) on the mode of production. Given Marx's various detailed analyses in Capital of the nature and role of the means of production in different modes of production, this is a surprising omission for a "rigorous reading" of Capital to make; surprising, that is, unless we are aware of the structuralism of Althusser's problematic.

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75. (1970) op. cit. pp. 170-181.

76. Ibid. p. 181.

PART THREE

FORMS OF CO-OPERATION AND  
THE CORRESPONDING FORMS OF  
CONSCIOUSNESS : NOTES FOR  
A MARXIAN ANALYSIS OF IDEOLOGIES



## 7 STRUCTURE AND IDEOLOGY : THE NECESSITY AND SPECIFICITY OF THE CONNECTION

"It is, in reality, much easier to discover by analysis the earthly core of the misty creations of religion, than, conversely, it is to develop from the actual relations of life the corresponding celestialised forms of those relations. The latter method is the only materialistic, and therefore the only scientific one."<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

I now arrive at the daunting task of outlining and refining the concepts for an historical, materialist theory of reading social ideologies. In this chapter I shall attempt to lay some foundations by clarifying the precise connection between social relations (or forms of co-operation) and forms of spontaneous consciousness or ideology. As a consequence of this purpose, we will come across such old friends as economism, idealism, empiricism and structuralism, especially as they appear within Marxist theory. It is vital to emphasize the dialectical connection of necessity and specificity between structure and forms of spontaneous consciousness. There are three main dangers: sociologistic, idealistic and economistic interpretations of that dialectical connection. Sociological readings tend to gloss the necessity and specificity of the correspondence with vague concepts such as 'influence', 'suitability', 'convenience', 'vested interest' and 'correlation'. Idealism refuses to accept the interpenetration of structure and ideology in some areas of social practice. Economism only allows the structure of economic practice the privilege of reflecting ideologies. Let us begin, however, by looking at the empiricism of

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1. Marx (1974) op.cit. p.352, fn.2.

the reading practices criticised in section two.

### Empiricism in the reading of ideology

It was one thing for Saint-Simon and Proudhon to observe spontaneously that poverty and misery appeared to be endemic to modern Western economies. But it was another thing altogether when Marx explained that the inner logic of the capitalist mode of production necessitated the existence of poverty and misery on a national and, eventually, on an increasingly global scale. Correspondingly, the political remedies of Saint-Simon and Proudhon,<sup>2</sup> far from undermining the capitalist system, would in fact perpetuate it, because they were founded on principles intrinsic to its logic. The very heart of the capitalist dynamic depends on the elite-controlled production of science and the exchange of products at their value.

Similarly, it is one thing for content analysts and structuralists (of all kinds) to observe spontaneously that a text contains ideology-in-general, but it is wholly another thing to explain and identify, in one and the same moment, the exact specificity of the ideology in that text. Just as the scientific identification of poverty and misery is dependent upon a theory of their conditions of existence and appearance, so, too, the scientific identification of an ideology must be based upon a theory of its conditions of existence and appearance. This is not to imply that we need science before we know what poverty and misery feel like. However, it is to imply that, without science, poverty and misery can be attributed by their recipients to the Will of God, the Laws of Nature or the National Interest and hence become transformed into something other than what they really are (e.g. eternal 'facts of life', 'acceptable living conditions' or 'just rewards'). Without its scientific identification, an ideology can be attributed to 'individual bias' or 'the social functions of an institution', and so become converted into something else, such as 'the expression of human uniqueness' or 'institutional corruption'.

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2. The reorganization of society by a scientific and Christian elite and the enforced exchange of products at their value, respectively.

The problem is the age-old one in social science of the danger of empiricism. What seems to happen is that when a phenomenon is observed spontaneously, the observer associates it etiologically with the circumstances in which it appears. For example, in dominant criminology, research of an empiricist kind has observed the co-existence of poverty, criminal behaviour, broken family ties and delinquent juvenile gangs within working-class neighbourhoods. From this sighting, criminological researchers have gone on to correlate crime with poverty, broken homes, working class values, etc.. Rather than seeing all these circumstances (including crime) as normal exigencies of life for a class with a specific position within a particular social structure (and, thus, comprehending the connections between social structure and class conditions), the theory-less researchers mistook the appearances for real essences and attempted to make them explain each other. Similarly, in political economy, observers such as Malthus noted the conjoint appearance of poverty and 'surplus population' and proceeded to explain poverty by the fact of 'surplus population'.<sup>3</sup> What the political economists cannot grasp is the fact that poverty and a "relative surplus population" of labourers are necessary conjoint effects of the accelerated accumulation of capital, the essential inner mechanism of capitalist societies. Like dominant criminology, political economy lacks systematic theory and continues by confounding appearances with their inner structure. The object of spontaneous vision remains undifferentiated from the object constructed in theory: the hallmark of empiricist research.

Until a social science learns that the outward appearances or impressions gained in social practice are not identical with the inner essences of social structure, it remains trapped within a vicious circle. The trap is set when appearances (A and B) are statistically correlated on the basis of the idea that their regular coexistence proves that A causes B. In such a research practice, what inevitably emerges is the problem of 'the other variables'. A correlation may be statistically established but the researcher in practice can never

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3. " ... by the absolute over-growth of the labouring population." Marx (1974) op.cit.,p.594.

actually prove to the satisfaction of others that the variables are causally and exclusively connected. Consequently, there are increasing cries for improved statistical technique and a tendency to link increasing numbers of 'variables' together. Eventually a situation is reached where all the conjoint appearances of an apparent setting are statistically correlated in a multifactorial analysis and the researchers are presented with the problem of weighting their causal efficacy. At this point, if theory is not brought in from the cold, the discipline must go on to study weighting and scaling methods and the cry for better techniques takes on a new form. After that, the original problem of causation or explanation is a mere Holy Grail - never to be captured, but always sanctioning the adventure of the quest. Research projects become valued in terms of the technical excellence of their methods and the researcher is judged by his ability to provide an 'imaginative' discussion of the results of his applied technology. Good statistical techniques and a butterfly 'imagination' become more important than systematic theorization which describes and explains the emergence of the social mechanism producing the phenomenal appearances. In this process, what gets lost is the point that statistically significant correlations of appearances merely indicate that their conjoint existence is no coincidence and that the explanation of one of them will probably be at least a partial explanation of the other.<sup>4</sup>

The practice of empiricist epistemology tends to push etiological social science into a cul-de-sac. It seems to divert attention from the specificity of a thing and direct research towards its forms of appearance. The peculiarity of empiricism is its insistence on the transparency of the real. It thus effectively limits the development of theory; the precise reality of the real becomes overshadowed by the technology for linking its appearances. Implicit assumptions and ideas direct this technology, but are rarely confessed in public. In the reading of ideologies, we observed these same effects. Content analysis, speculative criticism, semiology and lecture symptomale are all practices

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4. See D. and J. Willer Systematic Empiricism (1973 Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall).

which fetishise an unexplicated technique.<sup>5</sup> They are all characterized by the wooliness of their application and the repressed nature of their founding principles.

Spontaneously reading ideologies from their forms of appearance is a practice likely to locate the source of an ideology in the immediate circumstances of its appearance in any particular setting. On the one hand, the humanistic readings of content analysis and speculative criticism tend to see an ideology as the expression of a human author's 'world-view', inculcated perhaps by 'professional socialization' or 'political indoctrination'. On the other hand, the anti-humanist readings of the structuralists and neo-structuralists tend to produce a view of an ideology as the consequence of the social function of the practice in which it is expressed. Thus, in readings of press reports, spontaneous readings of a humanist variety result in the ideology being blamed on the journalists, whereas those of an anti-humanist variety result in the ideology being attributed to the social function of the press. Both these tendencies have a similar weakness: they conflate the nature and origin of an ideology with the circumstances of its specific historical forms of appearance. Reading practices which attempt to read off the essence of an ideology from a specific form of its social existence (in a discourse or practice) are likely to lead to the regular confusion of the conditions of existence of a specific ideology with those of its appearance in a specific historical instance. The analysis of reading practices in the previous four chapters illustrates in full the validity of this proposition.

All the reading practices dealt with hitherto have, therefore, been fundamentally inadequate as modes of identification of specific ideologies. In fact, it is arguable that they are not even sufficiently developed to be able to identify specific ideologies at all, and that they are merely methods for observing ideology in general. Content analysis presupposes that its practitioners can distinguish ideology from non-ideology, but, in itself, it is incapable of distinguishing one

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5. I shall ignore information theory in this section because it has not developed a clear and definite practice of reading.

ideology from another and can only count the effects of ideology-in-general as it forces denotative repetitions. Speculative criticism identifies ideology rather than specific ideologies because it is directed towards establishing the presence of a world-view behind any discourse. Pure structuralism is also concerned to detect the presence of ideology in general; its concepts specify the all pervasive action of connotation and its practice attempts to demonstrate that. Neo-structuralism measures one thought-structure against another and the one found to contain the "lapses" is said to contain ideology; obviously, again, whatever the neo-structuralists say, this is a practice which logically can only locate ideology-in-general.

Unless the reader has a theory of the specific nature, or objectivity of an ideology, he cannot know what it is that he is looking for. This absence enables him to claim that he has discovered his intentional object and, thus, the success of the find conceals his ignorance of what he has found. It is insufficient for a reader to say that he is looking for bourgeois, communist or consensus ideology and, then, when he has seen ideology-in-general in its effects, to argue that this general ideology is a bourgeois, communist or consensual form because its author is a bourgeois, communist or functionary, or because the discourse in which it is located serves revolutionary or reactionary ends. Yet, fundamentally, I think that this is what all our examined reading practices have involved. In my view, the essential nature of an ideology is not determined by the fact that it appears in the practice or discourse of a committed communist, bourgeois or functionary or by the fact that this practice or discourse has objective conservative or revolutionary functions. To hold that view would be, for example, to grant socialism to all who claimed to be socialist. As Marx constantly told us, historical materialism does not understand men by relying on what they say about themselves - nor, I would add, can we understand their ideas simply by looking at the social functions of their practice. In my conception, historical materialism holds that it is the structure of the social practice from which an ideology originates that determines its essential form. What happens to that ideology after its birth must not lead us into thinking that its essence derives from a human choice or the social function of a practice. An ideology can take disparate forms in a diversity of practices, mediated by social structures such as bourgeois-proletariat, town-countryside and industry-agriculture. It may take the

most unlikely shapes in the most unlikely places, but that parasitic polymorphism should not be allowed to conceal its elementary structure. Only with a theory of the social relations which predicate a specific form of consciousness can a reading practice be inaugurated which can determine (a) that a particular ideology does in fact appear in a particular social discourse (or practice) and (b) that the ideology in question has a specific form of appearance within that discourse (or practice). Only when these two specifications have been fulfilled can the analyst claim to know what he has found and begin to study the historical process which resulted in the presence of that ideology, in that form, in that place.

Dialectical materialism demands that things be grasped not only in their appearance in social practice but also, and most importantly, in their conditions of existence and forms of development. Consequently, no-one adopting a dialectical materialist position can be satisfied with the practices of reading ideology discussed in this text so far. Both the problematic of content and the problematic of form have been found to be ridden with weaknesses which, by and large, hinge on the fact that their object is an unspecified and general ideology. Their practices attempt to read ideology-in-its-essence from the existence of specific ideologies in specific forms in specific texts. Without any theory of the precise objectivity (its nature as a thing) of an ideology, these reading practices must be thoroughly subjective. What is identified, and how it is interpreted, will be entirely dependent on the personal ideologies of the reading subject. The subjectivity of these modes of reading is not given by the fact that human subjects practise them. Rather, it is the lack of a theory of the objectivity of an ideology which puts the onus of the reading work onto the ideologies of the reader. Because the reading subject carries no consciously elaborated theory of what he is looking for, his own spontaneous thoughts, values and political tendencies will specify the object of his enquiry for him. The weakness in the structure of the reading practice allows his own ideologies full rein and the reading of ideology becomes purely ideological.

We do not need the mystifying, complex language of structuralism or the magical numbers of content analysis in order to carry out a spontaneous reading of ideology in its forms of appearance. Anyone alive can do that. The only thing, from a Marxian standpoint, which separates

subjective readings are their rigour and political allegiance. It is tempting to proclaim that a dialectical materialist reading abandons the problematics of form and content and develops a mode of reading ideology based on an explicit theory of each ideology's objectivity. However this might mislead, for it is impossible to abandon spontaneous reading. Spontaneity is the immediate expression of subjectivity. It is the 'natural' and 'practical' mode of reading. One does not need a knowledge of the historical origins and specific nature of particular ideologies in order to read a newspaper. Marxism should not press for the abandonment of subjective reading - that theoretical error would lead to a Stalinist political drive to squash the spontaneous literary expression. Instead, Marxism should adopt a policy of political sensitization. Subjective reading cannot be wished away but it can be developed. More widespread knowledge of the history, nature and functions of certain major ideologies would minimize political gullibility and guide the proletariat to more effective political choices.

Unlike ethnomethodology, Marxism is not content to sit back with a malevolent complacency and watch the shared ideological rules of 'common-sense' being practised. Such a "neo-praxiology"<sup>6</sup> rests on an idealism of the structure: ideology is seen as the structure of praxis and the latter's material base is lost in the elegance of the ethnomethodologist's committed subjectivity.<sup>7</sup> Marxism is troubled by no such idealism and is fired by a desire for change. Thus, apart from working to supersede the practical social structures which act to deceive, Marxism should develop a knowledge of the history, structure and functions of particularly important ideologies in order to advance the political sensitivity of the people. In doing this it can abandon all

6. A term suggested by Garfinkel and Sudnow as an alternative to ethnomethodology. See H. Garfinkel "The origins of the term ethnomethodology" in R. Turner (ed.) Ethnomethodology (1974 Harmondsworth: Penguin Books) pp.15-18.

7. See J.D. Douglas (ed.) Understanding Everyday Life (1974 London: Routledge and Kegan Paul) for the complete removal of reality outside the perception and H. Garfinkel Studies in Ethnomethodology (1967 Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall) where it has at least managed an underworld existence. What ethnomethodology lacks most is the concept of the connection between objective social relations and the subjective forms of consciousness. That lack is, of course, no accident and part of its problematical denial of the objectivity of social relations.



the terminological and technical language of existing subjective readings. Subjectivity needs no apology; nor does it need to be dressed up as 'science'. The proletariat has no need of the academic's justifications of his existence. But what it does need is a heightened spontaneous consciousness, invigorated by the scientific knowledge of the history of specific ideologies based on open and explicit theorization of the objectivity of ideology within determinate social relations.

It seems to me that the logic of my argument and critique demands a call for the recognition of the distinction between a subjective mode of reading (basically, a spontaneous one which has no elaborated theory of its object) and an objective mode of reading (one which has theorized its object). If this distinction is valid, the obvious implication is that intellectuals should stop trying to rationalize away their own subjectivity and recognize its existence, its nature and limits. All the readers of ideology criticized in this work suffer from an inability to recognize the central role of their own subjectivity in their reading practices; a centrality produced by the empiricism of those practices.

The everyday practice of reading other people's discourse can be usefully contrasted with the empiricism of the practices of the scholars dealt with here. This contrast will expose that empiricism even more starkly than the theoretical criticisms made so far. In ordinary, practical social existence, we are continually 'reading' other people's discourse. It must happen a thousand times a day. What methods do we routinely use to establish, for all practical purposes, the meaning the communicator is conveying? How do we discern ideology or forms of consciousness (or, as it would be known in workaday parlance, 'bias', 'prejudice', 'slant', 'interest', 'intention') on a routine, practical basis? It is obviously outside the scope of my analysis to answer this question in any depth, however I would suggest that there are certain common techniques:

- (1) The perception of repetitions of statements, words or phrases.
- (2) The perception of assumptions contained in certain statements, words or phrases.
- (3) The observation of inconsistencies within an argument or between the argument of one day and that of the next.
- (4) The observation that certain topics are never dealt with in the discourse.
- (5) The grasp of the general 'drift' of a systematic discourse or series of discourses.

Repetition, assumption, inconsistency, neglect and substance are all read routinely as significant discursive phenomena. The perception of their existence leads us to make interpretations or readings of that significance; interpretations which are purely speculative and are often recognized as such. These readings take on a more certain, dogmatic character when we can link them to other facts relating to the speaker or writer, e.g. his job, his domestic relations, his reputed character, his explicit statements of his attitude to life, and so on.

The fact is that all these techniques for the attribution of significance are used by the academic 'readers' criticised in this text. Content analysis in its pure form uses method (1) and in its less pure form it includes methods (2) and (5). Information theory, if it was operationalized in this field, would concentrate on method (2). Speculative criticism tends to focus on methods (1), (2) and (5), although in its well-developed forms, such as literary criticism, all the methods would be used. Structuralism uses method (1) implicitly and methods (2) and (5) explicitly. Neo-structuralism again uses (1) implicitly but explicitly employs the other four methods. In passing, we can note that this comparison of use of everyday reading techniques indicates the validity of the neo-structuralist claim to engage in a highly "rigorous" reading practice.

The empiricism of all the reading practices dealt with in this work is illustrated by this analysis. Practical, everyday, spontaneous reading techniques are the very foundation of the academic reading practices of the problematics of form and content. My conclusion that, essentially, the allegedly scientific modes of reading ideology promulgated hitherto are spontaneous and thoroughly subjective seems well-founded. Like everyday practices of reading ideology, they have remained content with the view that ideology is transparent in its effects. The inadequacy of their theories of ideology prevents them from rising above spontaneous reading to something more scientific.

The effect of this empiricism is that the practices of ideology-detection discussed here are, ultimately, no more than spontaneous efforts in the political struggle for ideological hegemony. It is worthwhile recalling that orthodox content analysis originated in the service of the United States government during a period of war (both hot and Cold), that the speculative critics have often got clear political aims (for example, Young was concerned to demystify deviance and to clarify its relation to

the power structure), that Roland Barthes wanted to liberate true meaning from the myths of bourgeois ideology, and that Althusser desired to restore Marx to himself in order to rejuvenate the socialist movement. The lack of theory reduces these reading practices to the merely subjective and merely political practices of intellectuals acting spontaneously in the heat of the class war. I do not wish to employ a reading practice outside the context of class struggle; however it is vital to develop a practice which is of greater effectiveness within that context.

Basically, the practice of ideology-detection hitherto has involved one side beginning by claiming that the other side purveys ideology and then legitimating that claim by legislating (overtly or covertly) for the scientificity of its own reading. Content analysts back their claims to scientificity with statistics, structuralists back theirs with talk of magical, universal structures, and the neo-structuralists point to the super-systematicity of their general concepts.<sup>8</sup> To be fair to the speculative critics, many of them would not lay claim to scientificity. However, I suspect that many of them would lay claim to an extra sensitivity and perceptiveness which adds a different kind of legitimacy to their readings. On the whole, the practice of reading ideology in discursive materials has merely involved the blanket specification of an opposed viewpoint as ideological. The practice so far, therefore, has been the site of an ideological struggle over the real. There has been little debate over the precise nature of 'the ideological': ideology has simply been identified in its difference, as the version of 'the truth' which differs from that of the reader. It has been the proclaimed outcome of a clash between two different forms of spontaneous, political consciousness.

What I want to try to develop is a reading of specific ideologies which is fully informed by theory; a reading which knows what it is looking for. The reading of ideologies cannot remain bogged down in empiricism because it is politically urgent to be able to trace the history of specific ideologies. Scientific enquiry is distinguished

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8. If information theorists were more active and numerous, they could support their alleged scientificity with the concepts of physics and other 'natural' sciences.

from spontaneous curiosity by the fact that it involves theory. Science is founded upon theoretical work which constructs improved concepts, out of previous theory, and upon the ability of those concepts to grasp more satisfactorily the appearances of practice. The reading of ideologies has been almost entirely lacking in a theoretical base and its implicit assumptions operated without check. Without this theory of the precise materiality or historical specificity of an ideology, the work has not risen beyond the level of a slanging match. Ideology has been counterposed in general to science and the determination of specific ideologies has thus been elided as a field of study. Throughout the present work, the impetus has been to find out whether a theorized or scientific reading of specific ideologies is possible. I have concluded that it is. A critique of previous modes of reading has clarified my own conceptions of forms of consciousness as dialectical reflections of forms of co-operation (or social relations). The key concept in the kind of theorized reading I am advocating is obviously Marx's concept of the structure/ideology connection. This is the concept which founds my belief that we can produce an historical materialist knowledge of specific ideologies.

I shall shortly turn to the task of developing, refining and clarifying that concept. But, before that, I must emphasize that the scientificity of the reading practice I wish to develop is not guaranteed by internal cohesion or legislative fiat. The scientific value of that new practice depends on its ability to come to grips with the complex appearances of ideology under a variety of practical circumstances. It is a mode of identification which is inextricably linked to a theory of ideologies: its scientific strength thus reflects the power of that theory as an abstract expression of real social determinations. In short, ultimately it is worthless unless it can make sense out of the conditional appearances of practice. It is not empiricist to realize that every theory must be a theory of the conditional appearances of practice: empiricism does not realize the need for theory. In contrast, theoreticism does not realize the need to explain the conditions of the regularly apparent. Our conclusion, therefore, must be that the theoretical formulations herein must be put into practice in research in order to illustrate their scientific value. Such detailed research lies outside the present work which remains a purely theoretical exploration.

Social relations and forms of social consciousness : the connection of necessity

In all the modes of reading rejected here, ideology was taken to be obvious in its manifestations. Every reader assumed that he could see ideology immediately in its effects. The political positions taken after the sighting made reading methods such as content analysis and symptomatic reading seem worlds apart. As we have seen, their only real differentiating feature was the number of adopted commonsense techniques of reading, or degree of 'rigour'. However it is poor practice to start theorizing after the data has been produced. Theory must come first and guide the reading practice: the rational identification of social ideologies must be integral to a developed theory of the social nature of ideology which enables specific, explicit concepts of particular ideologies.

In chapter two, I advocated the fundamental general proposition that ideologies were integral to each and every form of social practice. I argued that Marx clearly believed that ideology itself emerges with the advancement of men's productive capacity corresponding to the development of the co-operative appropriation of nature. He points out that men do not initially face nature with "conceptual needs" (Wagner), they begin by actively appropriating nature. Out of this process of appropriation emerges social consciousness and its forms:

"But on no account do men begin by 'standing in that theoretical relation to the things of the external world'. They begin, like every animal, by eating, drinking etc., hence not by 'standing' in a relation but by relating themselves actively, taking hold of certain things in the external world through action, and thus satisfying their need(s). (Therefore they begin with production). Through the repetition of this process, the property of those things, their property 'to satisfy needs' is impressed upon their brains; men, like animals, also learn to distinguish 'theoretically' from all other things the external things which serve for the satisfaction of their needs. At a certain stage of evolution, after their needs, and the activities by which they are satisfied, have, in the meantime, increased and developed further, they will christen these things linguistically as a whole class, distinguished empirically from the rest of the external world ... But this linguistic designation only expresses as an idea what repeated corroboration in experience has already accomplished, namely that certain external things serve men already living

in a certain social connection (this is a necessary presupposition on account of language) for the satisfaction of their needs."

Marx continues by repeating the basic thesis on ideology which runs throughout his later works: that the forms of consciousness correspond to the forms of social co-operation within which men live out their lives:

"... since for an individual, the need for a professional title, or the title of a privy councillor, or for a decoration, not to speak of such things as rice, maize or corn, or not to mention meat (which does not confront the Hindus as the means of nourishment), is only possible in some quite definite 'social organization'."

This thesis, that there is a dialectical relation between social relations and forms of social consciousness, is, without doubt, the most important element in the development of the Marxian, or historical, materialist, analysis of social ideologies. The scientific analysis of the social forms of consciousness begins with "the actual relations of life" and develops from them a theory of the socially necessary ideologies. It is important not to pass lightly over Marx's basic proposition, lest it be misunderstood, and so I shall attempt to elaborate it further.

As I argued earlier, the unity of an ideology lies in its practical connection, that is to say, in its structural position as an element within a specific social practice. In other words, the form that thought-matter takes reflects the structure of a social practice. Having a brain or a printing press made no man into a fascist or a liberal. Forms of ideology are not arbitrarily created by the most powerful neural equipment of a 'genius' or by the powerful technology of the mass media. The elements of a social practice in themselves are incapable of producing social forms of consciousness. The latter are shaped by the social relations within which men exist, by the forms of

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8. K. Marx "Notes on Adolph Wagner" (1879-80) quoted in T. Carver Karl Marx: Texts on Method (1975 Oxford: Basil Blackwell) p.190.

9. ibid. p.205.

co-operation. In turn, of course, once established, a social ideology may govern the nature of new social relations between men and matter (the elements of practice), but, in the first instance, it must be insisted that it is not the bearers of consciousness or their means of transmitting consciousness that determine the shape of generalized ideologies. Only the generalized (or social) relations between men over the means of practice can do that.

The great artist or writer is not great because he invents social ideologies but because he can represent "the actual relations of life" and the natural objects of the earth in a way that is significant to, or recognizable for, the bearers of social ideologies. Social ideologies are not an individual product just because men with nimble brains can manipulate ideas to suit their social interests. Social ideologies are borne by individual men but that fact should not lead anyone to assume that it is individuals who create the social forms of consciousness. Certainly, idiosyncratic ideologies may be held by individuals, but even there, I would argue, one must look to the social relations in which such men have lived, and do live, in order to understand why they possess such peculiar thoughts. Similarly, groups or classes may express the same ideology in radically opposed ways, but that does not mean that these groups have consciously 'invented' particular interpretations of an 'object' they can control. An ideology can take contradictory forms where its generating social relation places men in classes with antagonistic material interests. In sum, general patterns of social consciousness can only be explained by general patterns of social existence.

The precise role of the elements of social practice (men, raw materials, instruments of production) in the determination of an ideology is that they determine the content or substance of a form of consciousness. For example, the 'imagery' of a thought-form will reflect the material setting of a social practice. Thus, the social relations of economic production in ancient Egypt maintained the existence of a religious ideology within the consciousness of its inhabitants. But it was the fact that production was carried on around the river Nile that resulted in the specific representation (on pottery) of the Evil Spirit as a dangerous crocodile with large teeth. Similarly, the social relations of capitalist production in modern Britain may sustain the ideology of Freedom, but it is the material circumstances of the main classes, specific elements within that social production process, which lend that ideological form its particular class substance at this definite

historical conjuncture. So, for the capitalists the motto is 'Freedom from trade union disruption and state control of prices', for trainee teachers, it is 'Freedom from state economy drives' and, for the working class in the factories, it is 'Freedom from unemployment'. Social relations merely reflect the form of an ideology, they do not determine the substance or imagery of that form. We must look to the internal properties of the elements of a social practice in order to understand the reflected substantive characters of an ideological formation. Altogether, it is necessary to say that the totality of a particular ideological instance reflects the totality of the social practice generating or maintaining it. It is a mistake to see both the form and content of consciousness as products of the forms of social organization. It is an even greater error to reduce ideological forms to the reflections of the structure of economic production only. All established social practices can generate social ideologies.<sup>10</sup>

As I noted in chapter two, the concept of 'reflection' has not always been used in its dialectical sense - as a relation of mutual interpenetration between opposites. In my experience, Marxists tend to reduce the concept to the more sociological, one-sided notion of 'influence'. Thus, it is common to hear radicals talking of the material interests of a class 'influencing' its 'choice' of ideologies. The conception of 'influence' is one which implies that the two related phenomena do not interpenetrate each other and that one affects the other purely as an external force. It is as if the force of object A bumps against object B and moves it. As such, I would argue that the concept of 'influence' is an ideological, everyday notion of causation. It fails to capture the interlocking relation envisaged in Marx's term 'reflection'. Thus it is wrong to dilute the concept of an ideology as a reflection of social relations and to imply that social relations simply make X ideology 'a good option' or 'a convenient choice'. Marx's concept is much more complex than that. The 'reflection' of social relations in forms of consciousness entails the logical necessity of those

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10. One might often find that idiosyncratic ideologies are generated in relations which are not social, but isolated forms of existence.



forms to the existence of the social practice. The practice would be impossible without them. They reinforce the social relations of that practice and are an active part of its dynamic. An ideology within a man's brain is a material factor integral to the social practice which generates it. Whether men like it or not, and whether they know it or not, a particular social practice involves particular forms of thought, forms which reflect and reproduce the structure of that practice. Only when this connection of iron necessity, between forms of social consciousness and social relations, is grasped in theory can we even begin to comprehend in practice the precise nature of any ideology and its particular forms of appearance within the different types of social practice of different social classes. I shall now attempt to exemplify this vital concept of the necessary existence of certain ideologies within definite social practices, a concept which will enable us to determine the social and historical specificity and materiality of these ideologies.

I shall look at the practice of commodity exchange and outline the specific ideologies necessary to its structure. Marx enables us to provide this example through his discovery of the social relations as the heart of capitalist economic practice. His theoretical object was the capitalist economic formation rather than capitalist ideological formations; however, we can build a knowledge of the latter upon the foundation of Marx's discovery of the former. It is worth noting that the Marxian analysis of specific ideologies begins with the social relations that reflect them. Historical materialism, unlike structuralism, does not attempt to deduce social relations from social ideologies. Social consciousness can only be specified when we understand the modes of co-operation. At the moment, therefore, the study of ideologies is limited by the lack of subsequent development of Marx's analysis of social relations, capitalist or otherwise. For now, the study of ideologies must be over-reliant upon Marx's work in Capital.

In Capital, Marx demonstrates that the production of capital on a regular basis involves the generalized circulation of commodities, including labour-power. The nature of the material circumstances which demand the exchange does not matter for present purposes. Whether we refer to tribes exchanging salt for tools, or to wage-labourers exchanging their labour-power for money, makes no difference. The exchange relation, predicated by the prevailing material conditions, demands the existence of physical control and a consensual transfer. When this relation is put into practice on a regular social scale it necessarily produces

certain social ideologies:

(a) The ideology of ownership. To exchange goods a man must physically control or possess them, and that possession must be recognized by the other party. That is, possession must be validated. No exchange can take place on a regular, orderly basis without the parties' mutual recognition of each other's valid possession. As Marx puts it:

"They must, therefore, mutually recognize in each other the rights of private proprietors."<sup>11</sup>

Before commodity exchange began, control over produce was simply a physical matter and since, in such societies, produce is communally shared there is no necessity for people to recognize possession:

"... there is no possession preceding the family or master servant relations ... One can imagine an individual savage as possessing something. But in that case possession is not a judicial possession."<sup>12</sup>

The need for the notion of 'possession' would only arise, perhaps, where women were chattels and competitively controlled by men; one would thus expect the concept of 'valid possession' to originate in relation to the control of women.<sup>13</sup> Whether the concept does arise as such or in the form of kinship rules is a matter outside my scope here. What is undoubtedly clear is that when commodity exchange is frequent the ideology of legal/valid possession or ownership must emerge. Corresponding to the ideological formation of 'ownership' are the notions of 'right' and 'property'. 'Ownership' is the 'right' to exclusive control over goods, which thus become the 'property' of their owner. These are all 'positive' ideologies necessitated by the social relation of exchange. But, of course, that relation also necessitates the 'negative' ideology of 'illegal possession'. Orderly, regular exchange cannot possibly continue if one party takes

11. (1974) op.cit., p.88.

12. Marx Grundrisse (1973) op.cit., p.102.

13. Marx clearly thought that the sexual division of labour was the first form of division of labour. "This latent slavery ... is the first property." Marx and Engels (1970) op.cit., p.52.

possession of goods without consent. Thus 'ownership' and 'illegal possession' are simply two sides of the same practical coin.

(b) The ideology of the person. Surplus and scarcity force the exchange of commodities. Men are, therefore, brought together as representatives of the produce which must change places. The exchange relation forces men to act on behalf of their commodities. Men act as personifications of the commodities. Commodities cannot go to market on their own; men must act for them and personify their existence. Hence, the exchange of commodities demands that the parties recognize each other as the personifications of the goods; they must recognize each other as persons. Consequently, the ideology of the person is born. Before exchange, commodities do not need to put on this human face, they exist as themselves and are simply consumed as such. In capitalist societies, where commodity exchange is so extensive and central a part of social life, the fact that men in exchange are merely personifications of the commodities is often brutally revealed. For example, it is common in academic life for a man to be thought of as his book. In so many other walks of modern life men appear as the commodities they purvey, and their real 'personality' is annihilated by their impersonations of the commodity. In capitalism, we are all the dummies of the ventriloquist commodity.

(c) The ideology of the contract. Exchange demands that the parties recognize that each other's 'will' resides within the commodities. Commodities themselves have no motivations and the necessity for them to change places must be imputed to the minds of their 'owners'. The owners must recognize each other as intentional actors, as possessors with intentions and the exchange of commodities appears as a meeting of the participants' intentions, a consensus of minds. Thus, the ideology of the 'contract' is born. A 'contract' is defined as a consensual meeting of minds. The exchange relation necessarily begets this ideology, and what is essentially a product of material circumstances appears as a 'consensus ad idem' (the legal term), an agreement between owners. In capitalist societies, where commodities exchange hands at a rate of knots, the fact that an exchange is an economic necessity is often all too painfully obvious and the necessary ideology of contract often wears very thin indeed. One could argue that only writers of legal textbooks, lawyers and judges live within the ideology with any degree of unconsciousness,

and even they, in their legal practice, are often forced to recognise its ideological nature as a *fictio juris* .

I have shown that the ideologies of 'ownership', 'right', 'property', 'the person', 'illegal possession' and 'contract' are the necessary thought matters to a particular form of co-operation, the relation of commodity exchange. This is something that Marx discovered but did not elaborate on a great deal. All these ideologies take on different contents within different forms of society, and within different forms of practice, and within different class contexts. A discussion of their variants must be left to others. However a word on their legal forms may be helpful.

Commodity exchange can exist as a social relation prior to the establishment of the capitalist mode of production. Where it exists on any regular basis, its necessary ideologies will guide and, thereby, determine its practice. At first, its ideologies may only exist as principles of behaviour or as customary law. However, as we have seen in many places, and notably in ancient Rome, these ideologies may be codified by the political rulers and given the backing of the dominant social power. In this form, they have acted as the backbone of legal systems in many societies where commodity exchange is prevalent. The later adoption of Roman law in many capitalist countries was enabled by the fact that the social ideologies necessary to generalized commodity exchange were already organized into legal codes. Once institutionalized as the formal tools of legal practice, these ideologies began a new life. The relative autonomy of legal practice meant that where these ideologies were formalized in codes of law, they acquired a substantive history of their own, relinquishing their merely formal history as elements of ongoing commercial practice. Their development in law is subject to the structure and circumstances of legal practice. Analysts of modern ideology should not, therefore, expect the ideology in the law to correspond neatly with the current necessities of economic practice. On the other hand, to return to a point implied earlier, such analysts should not be surprised when the ideologies, necessitated by a relation which makes its full social appearance in capitalist societies, appear in the legal pronouncements or political doctrines of tribal chiefs or feudal lords. As Marx constantly insisted, history is not the abstract, logical movement of categories but the movement of real relations according to their own material dia-

lectics. Finally, in relation to the question of deviance, we have seen above that a deviance ideology, 'illegal possession', is a negative ideological reflection of a social relation. Deviance is not a quality of the act nor a quality of the label put upon it by interested actors - it is an ideological quality of a social structure. Furthermore, as a quality of a structure, it does not achieve its full social and political status as the general law of theft until that structure reaches its full form of development in modern capitalism.<sup>14</sup> Deviance is not eternal, it has an historical specificity corresponding to the development of its corresponding social relations.

Once born, these ideologies act as integral elements within the economic practice of commodity exchange and regulate its existence, But, and this is important, the same ideologies may become integral parts of other social practices. As such, they may take on new forms of appearance and serve different social functions. In capitalist societies, 'ownership' surely filters through into most social practices and nearly everything becomes seen and treated as 'private property'. 'Contract' ideology and the ideology of 'right' have also had full and dynamic lives within the spheres of politics and philosophy. It is outside my task to begin the analysis of new forms of appearance, new functions and new supporting relations, but I hope that this present section of the work will indicate the direction which such an analysis might take. However, one point must be firmly secured; once social ideologies are established, their displacement into new fields, especially via the political practices of the powerful, e.g. legislation or revolution, may mean that they determine the form that social relations within a new practice may take. Alternatively, social relations may be transformed and compromised, contradictory or different ones established in their place. It is not the end of the matter when social structures produce various forms of social consciousness - those forms may return in new guises to haunt, maintain or transform the structures that reflected them. Despite the

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14. See J.Hall Theft, law and society (1952 Indianapolis : Bobbs-Merrill) for an account of the conditions under which 'illegal possession' developed from a rule of land law to a full state law of theft-in-general.

formulations of some Marxists, Marx believed that social ideologies were, albeit complexly, material determinants of social phenomena - including the basic forms of co-operation themselves.

To say that social relations (the structure of a practice) necessitate a particular social ideology is not to argue that ideology is produced by abstract forms, à la structuralism. Ideology is only produced when social relations are realized in practice. Social ideologies only emerge within a generalized practice, they have no ephemeral existence outside the lifeblood of society. Moreover, once an ideology has emerged, out of certain social relations, those relations are only realized in practice under the guidance of that particular ideology. Social practices involve forms of co-operation and of consciousness in definite material settings. Forms of co-operation are mere abstractions without forms of consciousness, men and material conditions. As Marx argued, antagonisms within a social structure are only seen by men within the forms of ideology corresponding to them: an abstract structure never presents itself directly and concretely to men's vision. Structures in themselves are blind. It takes guide-dogs, conscious men, to lead them to their logical conclusions; guide-dogs, who are themselves blind to the social logic of that ending. And, I doubt if it is only in capitalism that the blind lead the blind.

### Economism and idealism in Marxist theory

My thesis that ideologies are integral and inextricable material elements of all social practices has two major implications:

(1) There is no social practice without its own ideology. All forms of social practice contain ideologies. An economistic Marxism might argue that all ideologies are derived from the mode of production, that is, from the structure of the dominant economic practice. Or, less economistically, it might diminish the extent and impact of ideologies generated in political and intellectual practice.

(2) There is no social ideology without a supporting practice. All forms of social ideology are produced in social practices. No social ideology is the result of individual genius or invention. An idealistic

Marxism might argue that some ideologies are the products of a spontaneous individual or class creativity. In sophisticated form, this argument might state that science is a radically different form of consciousness to ideology and thus escapes practical determinations, or that a class spontaneously arrives at a revolutionary consciousness of itself.

It might be instructive to examine briefly the existence (if at all) of economism and idealism in the works of Gramsci, Althusser and Cornforth. This exercise should help to indicate further the precise nature of my own thesis.

Gramsci can be accused with some justification of the sin of idealism. His "philosophy of praxis" (i.e., Marxism) yields a distinction between "historically organic ideologies ... which are necessary to a given structure" and "ideologies that are arbitrary, rationalistic or 'willed'".<sup>15</sup> At first glance, then, Gramsci seems to believe that some forms of consciousness can be spontaneously and subjectively raised above and outside social relations. He undoubtedly appears to reverse Marx's position in Capital:

"My standpoint, from which the evolution of the economic formation of society is viewed, as a process of natural history, can less than any other make the individual responsible for relations whose creature he socially remains, however much he may subjectively raise himself above them."<sup>16</sup> (my emphases - C.S.)

Whatever we may think on reading further passages in Gramsci, his distinction between structurally necessary and arbitrary ideologies justifies the accusation of idealism and "spontaneism".<sup>17</sup> It does seem that he is positing a purely subjective source for some forms of consciousness. This impression is anchored by two further passages. At one point he describes the "arbitrary elucubrations of particular individuals".<sup>18</sup> An

15. A. Gramsci Prison Notebooks (1971 London: Lawrence and Wishart) pp. 376, 377.

16. (1974) op.cit., p. 21.

17. Poulantzas and Althusser use this term in criticism of Gramsci. See N. Poulantzas Political Power and Social Classes (1973 London: New Left Books) and Althusser and Balibar (1970) op.cit..

18. (1971) op.cit., p. 376.

elucubration can be defined as a profound treatise produced through intensive study and so Gramsci would seem to be attempting to disengage conceptual space for 'scientific practice'. A second passage, supporting this interpretation, sees Gramsci criticizing Plekhanov for arguing that the social origins of Marx's thought were specifiable. Gramsci argues that Plekhanov has lapsed into "vulgar materialism" and that Marx's "creative and constructive activity" lifted him above his "culture".<sup>19</sup> He proceeds by praising Labriola and calls for "the struggle for an autonomous and superior culture."<sup>20</sup>

Many times throughout his work, Gramsci can be read to say that absolute and unconditional spontaneous creativity is possible. I have merely mentioned some clear examples. Gramsci's apparent idealism however may well be purely the result of an admirable attempt to break away from economism. Let us examine this possibility.

Gramsci is perfectly well aware of contradictions within social relations:

"All hitherto existing philosophies (philosophical systems) have been manifestations of the intimate contradictions by which society is lacerated."<sup>21</sup>

Thus he cannot be accused of 'forgetting' that such contradictions must generate contradictions within an ideology and that revolutionary ideologies must be explained by structural dislocation. However, Gramsci sees the philosophy of praxis as one which grasps these contradictions and locates the philosopher within them:

"... even the philosophy of praxis is an expression of historical contradictions, and indeed their most complete, because most conscious, expression; this means that it too is tied to 'necessity' and not to 'freedom' which does not exist and, historically, cannot yet exist."<sup>22</sup>

19. *ibid.* p.387.

20. *ibid.* p.388, (my emphases - C.S.)

21. *ibid.* p.404. Compare this and the following passage (fn.22) with Althusser's notion that ideology is defined by its subjection to practical-social functions, whilst science (i.e. Marxism) is a pure system of concepts!

22. *ibid.* p.405.



Even the philosopher of praxis, the Marxist scientist, cannot escape from "the present field of contradictions". Now isn't this a different story from that of an idealist? Gramsci sees even the sciences as reflections of social relations. Furthermore, there is an intimation in the above passages that not only economic relations, but also relations of political and intellectual practice, determine the forms of social consciousness.

When Gramsci criticises Bukharin's mechanistic ideas, he points out that the leaders of the dominant classes sometimes make "mistakes". These mistakes are "errors" in terms of the structural interests of the dominant classes. At first glance, this seems to convict Gramsci of idealism. However, his point against Bukharin, however misleadingly argued, is that the latter failed to grant relative autonomy to each social practice:

"It is not sufficiently borne in mind that many political acts are due to internal necessities of an organizational character; that is, they are tied to the need to give coherence to a party, a group, a society."<sup>23</sup>

He argues, in this instance, that political practice has its own dynamic and material setting which, themselves, determine the political ideologies, institutions and acts of the dominant classes. In another instance, Gramsci criticises Bukharin for tending to reduce fluctuations in politics and ideology to immediate fluctuations of "the structure".<sup>24</sup> He contests this tendency, viewing it as "primitive infantilism".<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, it is not usually clear what Gramsci means by "the structure". My reading of the general argument convinces me that "the structure" is, for Gramsci, the mode of production or economic base. Thus Gramsci is here arguing for the relative autonomy of political and intellectual practices. His earlier reference to "organic ideologies ...

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23. *ibid.*, p.408.

24. *ibid.* p.407.

25. *ibid.*

necessary to a given structure" must thus be seen to refer to those ideologies necessitated by economic practice. Therefore, we could fairly interpret his "ideologies that are arbitrary, rationalistic or 'willed'" to refer to the ideologies contained within political and intellectual practice, where of course the importance of specific, systematized ideologies is much greater than in economic practice. Given the general excellence of Gramsci's discussions, it seems perfectly reasonable to make this interpretation of his apparently idealistic statements. In a period where mechanical, economistic Marxism ruled the roost, Gramsci was attempting to specify the relative autonomy of the superstructural practices. It is certainly true that his specifications are extremely vague and misleading and that he never clearly formulates the conception of ideologies elaborated here. However, I think the concept of the importance of all kinds of social ideology is one which inspires his work; although, at the same time, it is equally tenable to argue that Gramsci's language does indicate a political-intellectual "spontaneism" on the part of the revolutionary intellectuals and masses.

My reading of Gramsci's insightful, but often ambiguous, writing can be given added support by reference to his discussion of Marx's critique of political economy in Capital. For him, that critique is enmeshed within the economic determinism endemic to Ricardian political economy. For Gramsci, Marx's analysis of the economic formation of capitalism does not provide the full explanation of historical change, nor of the historical necessity of revolutionary socialism. Gramsci argues that the true Marxian "historical-concrete" conception of historical necessity is contained in a passage written prior to Capital:

"No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed, and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself. Therefore mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since looking at the matter more closely, it will always be found that the task itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation."<sup>26</sup>

(The passage underlined corresponds to the parts emphasized in Gramsci's argument)

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26. Marx 1859 Preface in Marx and Engels (1973) op.cit., p.182.

For Gramsci, Marx's position, therefore, was that, for a thoroughgoing social-structural revolution, the material conditions (matured contradictions between the social relations and the productive forces) must exist and also, correspondingly, the revolutionary classes must be collectively conscious of them in some way. Such a class consciousness forms

"... a complex of convictions and beliefs which acts powerfully in the forms of 'popular beliefs'".<sup>27</sup>

One cannot, says Gramsci, separate the condition of a collapsing economic formation from

"... a certain level of culture, by which we mean a complex of intellectual acts and, as a product and consequence of these, a certain complex of overriding passions and feelings, overriding in the sense that they have the power to lead men on to action 'at any price'".<sup>28</sup> (my emphases - C.S.)

It seems clear that here Gramsci is stressing the vital part played in the social formation (in collapse or otherwise) by various types of superstructural practice, such as political agitation, education, art, literature, philosophy. In an unconscious manner, Gramsci seems to say that the combination of thoughts and emotions within the interstices of the various forms of intellectual and political practice is a vital aspect of society. Hence, I think that he would support the main concept of the present text - the integral and important place of ideology in all forms of social practice. More consciously, Gramsci refuses to accept that historical necessity is simply a matter of the laws of economic practice or of any abstract man progressing towards absolute perfection. The dialectic of history for him (as here, too) entails the laws of the superstructure as well as the laws of the structure. Gramsci ratifies my stress on the materiality, specificity and importance of the social

27. Gramsci (1971) op.cit., p.413.

28. ibid..

"forms of consciousness" within which classes fight out economic, political and intellectual antagonisms. This view seems to be one that Marx always kept in mind. Even within the analysis of value, the forms of consciousness were very important for Marx. For example, the value of labour-power is dependent upon the value of the labourers' socially necessary means of subsistence.<sup>29</sup> Thus, ideologies are effective in deciding what is "socially necessary". Similarly the development of class solidarity and resistance can directly affect the rate of surplus value, through the maintenance of wage levels. Capital seems to have led many to see ideologies as the inert attributes of the "creatures" of the economic system and to ignore the materiality and specificity of ideologies which gives them a determinant role in any human society beyond the absolutely primitive. Ignoring the effects of ideology throughout the social formation tends to lead to an economistic structuralism which sees the movement of history as a dialectic of economic categories. In my view, Gramsci never ignored the effects of ideology, although his conceptualization of the social location of ideology is frequently ambiguous and misleading.

On my reading of Gramsci, Althusser is mistaken when he accuses Gramsci of having flattened the superstructure into the infrastructure in his theoretical formulations.<sup>30</sup> He sees Gramsci's work as theoretically similar to that of the economistic Marxists whom Gramsci criticises:

"In other words, if these really are two distinct ways of identifying the superstructure with the infrastructure, or consciousness with the economy - one which sees in consciousness and politics only the economy; while the other imbues the economy with politics and consciousness, there is never more than one structure at work - the structure of the problematic which, by reducing one to the other, theoretically identifies the levels present."<sup>31</sup>

In another passage, Althusser implies that Gramsci endows "political practice with the questions of philosophy and theory".<sup>32</sup> He labels this

29. See Marx (1974) op.cit.,p.168 on the "moral elements" in the determination of the value of labour-power.

30. Althusser and Balibar (1970) op.cit.,p.138.

31. ibid.,p.138,139.

32. ibid.,p.138.

tendency "spontaneism". In my view, Gramsci separates out the different levels of the social formation (albeit in an unsystematic and ambiguous way) and, therefore, his work is theoretically quite different from the mechanical Marxism of such as Bukharin. Behind Althusser's criticism, I would suggest, lies the fact that Althusser views science as outside the superstructure.<sup>33</sup> Poulantzas, also, seems to found his criticism of Gramsci on this basis. Both Althusser and Poulantzas accuse Gramsci of "historicism", of conflating the relatively autonomous structures and times of different social practices within one contemporaneous history which moves with a linear flow. Now, indeed, historicism is a grave error for a Marxist to make, but their attribution of the sin to Gramsci's work does seem to hang by the thread of one single, debatable premise: that science is not subject to the "historical contradictions" which, for Gramsci, plagued the "philosophy of praxis". One should note the high level of irony involved here: Althusser is concerned to discover Marx's philosophy and thus save Marx from the ideologies which have enabled revisions of his work. His whole project, therefore, is based on the fact that Marxism, itself, is "lacerated" by the effects of social contradictions. Althusser's theory would thus seem to belie the impetus of his work and scientific production would seem to be part of the superstructure.

Poulantzas puts the Althusserian case in this way:

"This historicism becomes clear in his treatment of the status of ideology, in Gramsci's concept of the 'historical bloc'. This concept allows Gramsci to think the unity of theory and practice, the unity of ideology, encompassing science ('organic intellectuals') and structure, i.e. the unity of a social formation in its ensemble at a historically determined instant. But this unity is precisely the expressive totality of the historicist type, which conflates the ideological and theoretical instances in the ensemble of the social structure."<sup>34</sup> (my emphases - C.S.)

In summary form, Poulantzas thus expresses Althusser's more prolonged discussion in Reading Capital. It seems clear that Gramsci's alleged conflation of ideology with science in the practice of the intellectuals

33. *ibid.*, p.133.

34. (1973) *op.cit.*, p.200.

is the burning issue.

Althusser's critique of Gramsci is itself (paradoxically) generous to the context (historical and practical) in which Gramsci developed Marxist science. The weight of his condemnation is directed at one clear thesis in Gramsci's work: that the science of Marxism is not a separate "theoretical practice" (Althusser's concept) but an integral part of political and intellectual practice and that as an element in superstructural practice Marxist science is not absolutely free but restricted by the "necessity" of "historical contradictions". Althusser complains that Gramsci treats science as if it were merely an ideology and that, once formed, science in fact has a life of its own disconnected from the "structure" of society.<sup>35</sup> As we have seen, "structure" is Gramsci's term for the social relations of economic practice. Thus it is clear that Althusser holds that scientific knowledge is different to superstructural forms which form a "bloc" (Gramsci's term) with the structure:

"The reduction and identification of the peculiar history of science to the history of organic ideology and politico-economic history ultimately reduces science to history as its 'essence'." <sup>36</sup>

In short, for Althusser, to conceptualize Marxist scientific knowledge as an integral aspect of the social structure, whilst maintaining its scientificity, is to produce a view of that science as a direct expression of real history. In my view, the consequence does not necessarily follow the premise and Althusser seems to want to say that scientific practice is absolutely, rather than relatively, autonomous.

It may seem odd that Althusser describes Gramsci's conception of science as empiricist since it "reduces the (theoretical) object of the science of history to real history".<sup>37</sup> One would have thought that to produce a science that did grasp "real history" in its inner mechanisms was an achievement, not a disaster! Althusser here exemplifies his constant tendency to idealism. Built into his theory is a neo-structuralist notion of the pure internality of a systematic body of concepts

35. (1970) op.cit., pp.131,133.

36. *ibid.*, p.133.

37. *ibid.*.

(science). For Althusser, scientific theory is the theory which explains its theoretical object, and it is "empiricist" to attempt to relate theory to the appearances of reality. The concept of "empiricism" in Althusser's problematic is so broad that it can be applied to any attempt to relate theory to data. Theory must keep to itself and not dirty its hands with apparent reality. Thus the science of history must not study "real history"! What is it supposed to study - false history, invented history or the unreal history of the Idea?

Althusser's idealism in protecting the purity of science from the dirt of the social formation requires him to provide a cradle in which his saintly offspring can rest in security. That cradle must be the cradle of a practice, for the history of scientific knowledge could not go on within a metaphysical vacuum. Thus a practice is duly constructed: theoretical practice. Throughout Althusser's work (and that of his followers<sup>38</sup>), this practice is defined as a process of transformation whereby scientific theory works upon ideological concepts and facts from previous sciences to produce scientific knowledge.<sup>39</sup> This process takes place purely within knowledge. The means of production are scientific theories and their raw materials are ideologies. No mention is made of any human scientist who operates the instruments of production nor of the social location of this 'practice'. More importantly, no mention is made of the social relations which structure this practice; surely this must constitute a terrible, theoretical error? Surely the social structure of scientific production, the social functions of science and the social ideologies in the scientist's head would all affect the final product and render it, without doubt, only relatively autonomous of the social structure? I am left with the impression that 'theoretical practice' is merely a pure movement of ideas in a social vacuum. It seems that the purity and internality of science in Althusser's Marxism belongs with this apparent notion of the autonomous movement of ideas. Surely this is an idealism of the most blatant kind? It seems that Althusser is positing a dialectic within ideas isolated from the full weight of social determinations.

38. See, for example, B.Hindess "Materialist Mathematics" Theoretical Practice (Autumn 1971) 3/4 p.82.

39. See especially Althusser (1969) pp.182-193.

It is true that Althusser, in another part of Reading Capital,<sup>40</sup> did note that Marx's theoretical development was conditioned to a limited extent by his practical experience in the 1840s. He argues that Marx's journalistic experiences did intervene to lead him from theoretical ideology to scientific theory. But, and Althusser emphasized this, these experiences intervened in Marx's work only "in the form of new thought objects, 'ideas' and concepts".<sup>41</sup> The only interventions in the intellectual practice of a social theorist are thoughts!? Marx would have something to say about that, after living in poverty for twenty years, harassed by landlords, beleaguered by visits from 'revolutionaries', brutally criticised and ignored in turn by orthodox intellectuals and journalists, hounded by the law, etc.,etc.. If the production of science only took place in the mind, life would be easy for any budding thinker! In passing, it is worth mentioning that it is not coincidental that Althusser and his followers often refer to Marx's "genius". If there are no constraints upon converting ideology into science other than those in the brain, the man who does produce a science must have an exceptional brain - he must be a "genius". Marx himself lends weight to this conception of the necessary condition for scientific production in his frequent references to the cerebral deficiencies of his opponents. Despite that, however, any notion of science as the pure product of a powerful intellect must be rejected as thoroughly ideological.

In short, Althusser has converted science into scientific practice without specifying the social conditions of this practice. The abstract body of systematic concepts, which constitutes a science, becomes the organic body which guides and propels theoretical practice. Althusser extracts men from the process and substitutes concepts, which themselves transform ideology into scientific knowledge. In For Marx, Althusser himself seemed vaguely conscious of what he was doing:

"What is the moment, the level or the instance which corresponds to the means of production, in the theoretical practice of science? If we abstract from men in these means of production for the time being ...."<sup>42</sup>

40. (1970) op.cit.,p.60.

41. *ibid.*

42. (1969) op.cit.,p.184.



And so the error was first made. Men were extracted "for the time being" and never came back.<sup>43</sup>

In my view, Althusser has not made out a case for a relatively autonomous theoretical practice of science. He has argued for a totally autonomous, mental practice of science, but this is totally unacceptable. The production of ideas, scientific or otherwise, is part of the structured social practice of intellectuals and that is a definite instance within a social formation, with a definite relationship to economic and political practice. Althusser has only made out a reasoned case for his concept of the mechanism of the knowledge-effect; he sees the latter as the 'fit' between theoretical concepts and their theoretical object. But, as I have argued already, here and in chapter 6, even that case is weak because it places the solution to the question of the "cognitive appropriation of the real" totally within the field of the "cognitive", instead of within the field of the relation of appropriation between the two. Science is not constituted internally within a social theory just because different social theories have different criteria of proof. Every social theory must face up to the changing and conditional appearances of reality if it wishes to attain any scientific credibility beyond the group of the faithful who are satisfied by the consistency of their thoughts.

In conclusion, Gramsci may well have made historicist errors, but Althusser has not founded a strong case to prove that. Certainly I do not think Gramsci can be accused of economism or idealism, whereas Althusser's concept of science is thoroughly idealist. Science is, indeed, not the same as ideology. The latter is a partial view of social phenomena from the spontaneous standpoint of a particular social practice. Science is more than a mere part truth, it is the full explanation of the different appearances of things within different social practices. Science explains the conditionality of spontaneous impressions - to put the argument in blunt form. Each science is the most adequate available explanation of the conditions of existence of a particular set of immediate appearances. But, just because ideology is spontaneous, practical consciousness and science is the product of rational deliberat-

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43. The relation between Althusser's theoretical problematic and the politics of the French Communist Party is beyond the scope of this thesis. For some caustic remarks, see J. Rancière "On the theory of ideology (the politics of Althusser)" *Radical Philosophy* (1974) 7 pp.2-15.

ion which explains the forms of that practical consciousness, just because ideology and science are different, it does not mean that they must be produced in fundamentally different forms of practice or that they cannot co-exist within the same practice. Obviously it is true that to elaborate a science or to obtain the information to be explained by science, the 'scientist' must have time. But that time is only provided within the space of definite social practices in specific material and structural conditions, conditions which reflect various forms of spontaneous consciousness, ideologies. The space to produce science is not a pre-given conceptual fact waiting to be exploited, it is a hard, material fact of social life varying in extent and quality (economically, politically and ideologically). Even Marx could not have accomplished so much, and, perhaps, in such a manner, had he got his job as a railway clerk and provided his beloved wife and children with the material conditions which he thought they deserved! Scientific production and science are not as magical and ephemeral as Althusser implies. Both have very concrete roots in the social practices of everyday existence. The important question to answer is not: what produces the knowledge-effect within a science? That is easy - the ability of its concepts to explain the apparent changes and variations within social phenomena. The key questions are: Why is science the privilege of certain social classes and not others? What is the relation between a scientist's social ideologies and the concepts of his discipline within the context of the practice whereby science is produced? Do certain ideologies accelerate the development of science? What are the political circumstances determining the ability of the scientist to purvey his discoveries to a wide public? Why has 'science' lost its practical roots and become a magical form, like money, dazzling the masses with its glittering powers?

So far I have evidenced the tendency to idealism in one Marxist's analysis of science and absolved another of economism. In doing this, the thesis that ideology is an integral element in all social practices has hopefully been developed. Further clarification can be achieved by examining illustrations of economism.

Althusser has lumped Gramsci together with the economic Marxism of the Second International, yet his own work is not unambiguous

in this respect. We have already seen<sup>44</sup> that Althusser tends to reduce 'non-economic' ideologies to those "great themes" of bourgeois ideology arising within the capitalist infrastructure. The ideological state apparatuses, are said to be steeped in the ideology of the ruling class and, thus, the "regional ideologies" within those apparatuses succumb to its power:

"While discussing the ideological state apparatuses and their practices, I said that each of them was the realization of an ideology (the unity of these different regional ideologies - religious, legal, political, aesthetic etc. - being assured by their subjection to the ruling ideology)." <sup>45</sup>

The concept of "regional ideologies" is promising (and ambiguous) but it is basically undone by the fact that Althusser does not grant each "regional ideology" its specific unity as an element within a structured practice. The unity of "regional ideologies" is produced externally by the "ruling ideology" generated in the economy. Althusser fails to face up to the question of a contradiction between a "regional ideology", unified in its own practice, and the dominant ideologies in economic and political practice. The result is a defeat for the regions and the omission of class ideologies and class struggle and an economistic model of the diffusion of 'ruling ideology'. That famous postscript to the essay fails to rescue Althusser, it merely demonstrates his undoubtedly powerful analytic reflexivity.

Maurice Cornforth's introductory work on dialectical materialism<sup>46</sup> provides us with another example of this tendency of economism. Cornforth, paraphrasing The German Ideology closely, begins by vaguely locating ideology within specific forms of social life and continues by talking about "the development of production". From the context of the passage, "the development of production" clearly means the development of economic practice and no more. Given this definitional point, we can see his tendency to negate the autonomous structuring capacity of forms of super-structural practice:

44. In chapter 2, supra.

45. Althusser (1971) op.cit., p.156.

46. M. Cornforth Dialectical Materialism (3 Vols.) (1974 London: Lawrence and Wishart).

"Ideological development is, then, governed by the material developments of society - by the development of production, of the relations of production, and of classes and the class struggle."<sup>47</sup>

Cornforth only qualifies this position with two points: (a) the mode of economic production is said to be determinant "in the last analysis"<sup>48</sup> and (b) ideologies must reflect reality according to "the laws of logic" and the experience of the people concerned.<sup>49</sup> What happens in the first analysis thus seems to be that the coherence and sensibility of the ideology for its bearers (social classes) governs its continued existence. Consequently, Cornforth's economism, and his sensitivity to the problems it creates, lead him to the vague position that ideologies are born in the economy but must make sense. It is of little consequence for the present discussion that Cornforth clearly defines an ideology as "a systematic view". Like Gramsci, I would reject the notion of an ideology as a conceptual system<sup>50</sup> and insist on its amorphous existence as thought-matter linked to social relations.

Cornforth, himself, renounces what he calls "economic determinism", but his renunciation is based only on the weak proposition that economic activity is not the sole determinant of social development.<sup>51</sup> The only advance is made when he argues that "economic determinism" fails "to recognize that in ideology there takes place a process of the reflection of the real world in men's ideas" and that, consequently, it also fails to realize that an ideology must be a "truthful and coherent reflection of the real world".<sup>52</sup> Like Gramsci, Cornforth seems to hold the view that "material forces" are the content and ideologies are the form<sup>53</sup> of social life. This conception of ideologies as the ephemeral "cement"<sup>54</sup> of a social structure is a misleading, economistic metaphor since it fails

47. *ibid.*, Vol.3, p.69.

48. Note the similarity between this phrase and Althusser's "in the last instance". Both phrases, of course, derive from Engels' statement in his famous letter to Bloch in 1890: see Marx and Engels (1973) *op.cit.*, p. 682.

49. (1974) *op.cit.*, pp.69,70.

50. I would reserve that reference for 'theory'.

51. (1974) *op.cit.*, p.73.

52. *ibid.*

53. See Gramsci (1971) *op.cit.*, p.377.

54. Gramsci's term. The ugliness of the phrase reflects the tension in economism - the misty nothingness of ideology and its real, concrete effects.

to grasp the materiality and, consequently, the effectivity of social ideologies. Thus, for Cornforth, ideologies (in classic orthodox Marxist style) are the insubstantial mists produced by the (overheated?) economy which somehow make sense to people in practice. They are, basically, economic effects which mirror 'material reality' and, therefore, make sense. Despite his statements to the contrary, Cornforth has given economic practice the key role, in generating ideologies and rendering people receptive to them. The great sin of economism is to neglect the materiality and consequent effectivity of social ideologies. This is closely followed by its neglect of the ideologies produced in superstructural practice. Any politics based on economistic Marxism is thus likely to wait for "the lonely hour of the last instance" (which never comes, says Althusser) when the rate of profit drops to zero, and to neglect the importance of various forms of social consciousness, either in restricting or accelerating the movement to socialism. Its reliance on the science of the Party could blind it to the material significance of spontaneous consciousness.

It is clear that some Marxists have failed to grasp thoroughly the implications of Marx's concept of social ideologies. All social ideologies derive from social relations and all social relations are dependent on social ideologies. This applies throughout the social totality, throughout the combination of social practices, articulated in a structure-in-dominance. The social structural configuration involves a complex configuration of social ideologies, each with a materiality, a specificity and an historical importance of its own. All ideologies exist within practice and all practices are lived within ideologies.

#### The combination of social practices: Poulantzas and The German Ideology

Nothing I have said hitherto has been closely directed to the concept of 'sociality', the concept of social practice-in-its-social-existence. I have merely outlined a basic, general conception of the relation of necessary reflection between structure and ideology. I have not yet provided any concept of the relations of co-existence between different practices, nor of the concept of the totality of those relations, the social structure. It is necessary to investigate the social

location of social practices because no social practice exists entirely on its own. This theoretical analysis will remind us of the principle that no social ideology can emerge without bearing the marks of the social context of its practices of origin.

It is extremely tempting to define the concept of 'sociality' by means of strings of speculative abstractions which would specify the connections between practices in a definite social formation. We could begin with the concept of 'mode of production' and build a nice, neat system upon it involving concepts like 'dominant ideology', 'class power', 'state practice', 'connections between ruling class and state'; 'connections between intellectual and political practices'. It is worth making it explicit that the first drafts of this section involved the construction of such models. Of course, when this practice of 'construct-your-own-society-in-abstractions' occurs, the result is always a series of catastrophes:

(a) A neat system is created which probably corresponds to nothing ever seen in social life with its awkward facts, irregularities and changes.

(b) Every element becomes functional for the totality. Of course, any good Marxist talks of 'contradictions', but, when that Marxist goes model-building, these contradictions usually manage to serve teleologies assumed a priori.

(c) Strings of abstractions are layered together, and cemented with assumptions, yet without making them explain any historical material, there is no way of knowing whether any of these connections help us to understand our impressions of the real world or whether they are merely speculative.

(d) Model-building involves choosing a real society on which the builder actually constructs his model. This choice usually means that a Western capitalist society is chosen and the chronological cut-off point is always 'the present'. Hence the awkward problems of global development and historical unevenness are unconsciously but remorselessly elided.

The question of the sociality of social practice is deadly in the temptation it presents to the theorist. It is so easy, as Talcott Parsons unconsciously demonstrated in The Social System,<sup>55</sup> for the theor-

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55. (1951 London: Routledge and Kegan Paul).

ist to construct the universal concept of that sociality by creating a model society of his own, based implicitly on his own real society. Moreover, it is easy to avoid showing that this theoretical structure of concepts really does grasp (or reflect) that structure in some way, and to escape the task of specifying the crucial dialectics which would account for the changes (past and future) within that society. Of course, the tendency I am describing is the tendency to structuralism. In the conservative structuralism of sociology, the unifying principle of the abstract social structure is 'order'. In the Marxist structuralisms, it is described as the 'unity of a social formation' or 'its 'articulation'. The net effect is the same; the structure of abstractions is destined to provide an 'explanation' of a pre-given assumption of unity in the social formations. Consequently, an order is created in the concepts, without reference to the nature of any order in historical reality.

Althusser's essay on ideology<sup>56</sup> constitutes a good example of a Marxist structural-functionalism. Nowhere in that essay is the problem of social order or social unity presented as an historically specific problem with different forms in different epochs. Clearly Althusser is attempting to explain the problem of the immobilization of the working classes in Western societies since 1945. But he does not even describe the historical appearances of the problem in any detail, let alone specify in theory why ideological domination should be its answer. The result of the essay (apart from the postscript) is a model of capitalist society as a perfectly ordered system unified by ruling class ideology.

Nicos Poulantzas provides us with another good example.<sup>57</sup> He begins his analysis of "The Marxist conception of ideologies" by specifying the problem:

"In order to reveal the particular political function of ideologies in the case of hegemonic class domination ...."<sup>58</sup>

Thus we see the classic procedure: the real societies dealt with in hypothetical manner are implicitly Western and capitalist, they are

56. "Ideology and ideological state apparatuses", dealt with in chapter 2. (1973) op.cit., esp. pp.206-224.

57. *ibid.*, p.206. Poulantzas defines ideology as a "relatively coherent ensemble of representations, values and beliefs" (p.206). This is narrower than the common view of ideology as a system of concepts, but broader than my position which takes every image or value to have an ideological structure. Poulantzas' "ensemble" is, for me, a collection of ideological formations.

assumed to be unified by the ideology and power of the dominant classes,<sup>59</sup> and the 'revelation' is to be realised purely at the level of theory without any reference to history. Poulantzas proceeds by defining (in vague terms) ideology as a reflection of social relations and moves on to the problem of the "specific unity" between the structure of ideology and the dominant class.<sup>60</sup> Having posed an historical question in an ahistorical manner, he is likely to fall into the trap of structuralist functionalism and very shortly he does:

"As opposed to science, ideology has the precise function of hiding the real contradictions ... Ideology, which slides into every level of the social structure, has the particular function of cohesion."<sup>61</sup>

By thus making ideology's "imaginary" but "relatively coherent discourse" the cover for real antagonisms, Poulantzas grants ideology a general system-function unrelated to any class or epoch. In utilising this abstract a-priorism, Poulantzas, in classic style, begins to resolve the concrete and current problem of the pervasiveness of dominant ideology in European, capitalist societies, without even mapping the historical contours of that problem. Ideology also had a social function for Gramsci, as "cement", but for him that function was historically and geographically located in the role of the intellectuals in the development and consolidation of bourgeois power in Italy in the latter half of the nineteenth, and early twentieth, century. For the abstract Poulantzas (only a few years after May 1968), ideologies are fundamentally related to "human experience", in that they always reconstitute lived relations on an imaginary, false plane. This basic fact, he says, is not reducible to "the problematic of alienation and false consciousness".<sup>62</sup> But does ideology always conceal? Poulantzas himself had earlier implied that this is not always the case, when he argued that "spontaneous" working class ideologies favouring reformism etc. were the effect of the dominant, bourgeois and petit-bourgeois ideologies. He had actually posed the problem of "the permanent possibility of contamination of working class ideologies"<sup>63</sup> (my emphasis); clearly implying that "real" working class ideology was radical or revolutionary. He is obviously aware of Marx's view that contradictory social relations reflect contradictory ideologies.<sup>64</sup> His vacillation between the ahistorical problem of ideology's system-function and the historicity of its class functions has led Poulantzas to see the functions of bourgeois ideology as the functions of all ideology.

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59. Poulantzas rejects the view that social unity can be cemented purely by ideology; a view, he says, held by Gramsci and Lukacs. See *ibid.* pp. 137-141.

60. *ibid.*, p. 207.

61. *ibid.* 63. *ibid.*, pp. 205, 206.

62. *ibid.* 64. See Marx (1974) pp. 224, 225.



Poulantzas proceeds to outline the nature of ideology's cohesive function within social formations. Ideology is said to act as a unifier by reflecting the real structural unity and reconstituting it on an imaginary plane.<sup>65</sup> In the movement of his analysis 'ideology' has now mysteriously become "dominant ideology" - a predictable enough change:

"Hence, the dominant ideology of a social formation encompasses the 'totality' of this formation not because it constitutes the 'class consciousness' of a historico-social subject, but because it reflects (with those biases of inversion and mystification which are specific to it) the index of articulation of the instances which specifies the unity of this formation."<sup>66</sup>

Ideology is layered like cement throughout the social structure and thus reflects the inequality of power ("the index of articulation of the instances") within that structure. Consequently, dominant ideology is seen by Poulantzas as the ideology of the dominant class. Dominant ideology is no different from ideology-in-general - it mystifies and ensures order - but because it is the ideology of the dominant class, it ensures the domination and elevation of that class. From here the conclusion is obvious: because the bourgeoisie are dominant in the class struggle, they are able to subordinate the dominated classes to their ideology.<sup>67</sup> Allowances are made for the dominant ideology to incorporate features from "ideologies other than that of the dominant class", e.g. petit-bourgeois ideologies, but, otherwise, the model is very similar to Althusser's in both form and content. Economic domination mechanically and ahistorically predicates political and ideological domination.

A unity, 'cemented' in ideology, is established for the social formation, a unity founded on class power. It is worth quoting Marx in full, in order to show how Poulantzas has hardly advanced at all from the general propositions in The German Ideology:

65. (1973) op.cit., pp.208,209. This formulation is more sophisticated than, but, nevertheless, very similar to Cornforth's analysis.

66. ibid. p.209.

67. ibid..

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness and therefore think. Insofar, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch." 68

This can be compared with the account of Poulantzas' discussion above and with his conclusion:

"To conclude: the concept of hegemony as applied to the domination under hegemonic class leadership in capitalist formations here covers the above-mentioned specific characteristics of the dominant class ideology, by means of which a class or a fraction manages to present itself as incarnating the general interest of the people-nation and thereby to condition the dominated classes to a specific political acceptance of its domination." 69

What is objectionable is not so much Poulantzas' lack of advance over the polemical assertions in The German Ideology, as the fact that those assertions are woven into an abstract functionalist model of the unity of capitalist societies. It is certainly true that the statements in The German Ideology are well capable of founding an abstract model of a closed social system. However that is not a good justification for such a model, particularly since The German Ideology is a text at a crucial conjuncture in Marx's intellectual history. Marx clearly specified in Capital the contradictions within the capitalist mode of production which would generate revolutionary ideologies and, ultimately,

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68. Marx and Engels (1970) op.cit., pp.64-65.

69. (1973) op.cit., p.221.

political struggle between the classes which would bring capitalism down. But also, in Capital, Marx specified contradictions within classes and within the social structure as a whole which make the picture in The German Ideology seem fairly crude and polemical. Poulantzas is clearly aware of the role of social contradictions, but he does not build them fully into his analysis. By making the unity of a social formation an ahistorical object in his analysis, Poulantzas elides the transitory, historical nature of any real unity, its specific conditions of existence and its specific forms. An analysis of ahistorical unity must, if it is logical, and Poulantzas is, produce a theory of the eternal unity of a society. Interestingly enough, Marx himself, in the very section of The German Ideology which Poulantzas seems to rely on so heavily, outlines the potential dangers in the analysis of ideologies. I shall now turn to that section.

It is necessary again to quote extensively from Marx:

"If now in considering the course of history we detach the ideas of the ruling class from the ruling class itself and attribute to them an independent existence, if we confine ourselves to saying that these or those ideas were dominant at a given time, without bothering ourselves about the conditions of production and the producers of these ideas, if we thus ignore the individuals and world conditions which are the source of the ideas, we can say, for instance, that during the time that the aristocracy was dominant, the concepts honour, loyalty, etc. were dominant, during the dominance of the bourgeoisie the concepts freedom, equality, etc." <sup>70</sup>

It is almost as if Marx is warning himself not to carry his own polemic too far. I read this passage to say the following: If in our analysis we simply say that bourgeois ideas are dominant when the bourgeoisie is the dominant class, we are in danger of detaching these ideas from their generative and supportive, social relations, and, hence, from their conditions of change. Always, ideologies must be examined in relation to the social structures which sustain their presence in the minds of social classes. Otherwise, if we hold to an historiography which assumes a series of societies united under the sway of particular dominant ideologies, we

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70. Marx and Engels (1970) op.cit., p.65.

"will necessarily come up against the phenomenon that increasingly abstract ideas hold sway, i.e. ideas which increasingly take on the form of universality".<sup>71</sup>

Poulantzas seems to be in this danger when he argues the case for "juridico-political" ideology as the dominant sector of bourgeois dominant ideology:

"It is precisely by this specific masking of class domination that the juridico-political ideology best fulfils its particular cohesive role, which accrues to the ideological in the CMP and capitalist formations. In short, everything occurs here as if the region of ideology which is the best placed to hide the real index of determination and dominance of the structure is also in the best place to cement the cohesion of social relations by reconstituting their unity on an imaginary plane."<sup>72</sup>

Thus the "cohesion of social relations" in the capitalist social formation is always cemented by a particular region of bourgeois ideology, according to Poulantzas. He bases his argument for the dominant position of "juridico-political" ideology on the basis of a mere appearance or impression.<sup>73</sup> He is very able in constructing an abstract case for its domination but there is no historical analysis of the relations which show its truth for capitalist societies. My 'impression' is that, in some periods, ideologies from the economic region are dominant and that, in others, "religious" or political ideologies may ensure "cohesion". Similarly, I have obtained the 'impression' that the situation varied sharply from one capitalist society to another. Is American capitalism after Watergate united on the "imaginary plane" by juridico-political ideology? Is not capitalism in countries of the Third World unified ideologically by nationalist ideology?

To continue with Marx's precautionary tale:

"Once the ruling ideas have been separated from the ruling individuals and, above all, from the relationships which result from a given stage of the mode of production, and in this way the conclusion has been reached that history is always under the sway of ideas, it is very easy to abstract from these various ideas the idea", the notion, etc. as the

71. *ibid.*.

72. (1973) *op.cit.*, p.215.

73. *ibid.* p.213: "It is apparent that ...".

dominant force in history, and thus to understand all these separate ideas and concepts as "forms of self-determination" on the part of the concept developing in history." 74

By marking off "juridico-political" ideologies as characteristically dominant in bourgeois society, Poulantzas abstracted them from an historically determinate stage in a society's development and made them the permanent condition of social order/unity in all capitalist societies. It is true that Poulantzas does not assert the general determination of The Idea or locate Man as the motor of history. However he does undoubtedly make the "juridico-political" ideology the condition of unity in capitalist societies and thus renders ideology as the eternal lynchpin of capitalist history. The class rule of the bourgeoisie is thus seen to be impossible without the function of dominant ideology, dominated by the "juridico-political" region. This condition is anchored by Poulantzas through the concept of the "political impact of the dominant ideology" in establishing the "legitimacy" of bourgeois domination:

"The dominance of this ideology is shown by the fact that the dominated classes live their conditions of political existence through the forms of dominant political discourse: this means that often they live even their revolt against the domination of the system within the frame of reference of the dominant legitimacy. These remarks are of great importance since they not only indicate the possibility of a lack of a 'class consciousness' in the dominated classes, but they imply even that these classes' 'own' political ideology is often modelled on the discourse of the dominant legitimacy." 75

We are left with the impression that the bourgeoisie only survives because the dominant ideology has legitimated their existence.

It seems that Poulantzas is generalizing his impressions of the situation in modern, European, capitalist societies into an abstract model of capitalist unity. This trap, which, it seems to me, he has fallen into completely, is one prepared by his theoretical method of attempting to build models without explicitly referring them to specific

74. (1970) op.cit.,p.66.

75. (1973) op.cit.,p.223.

historical situations. Instead of trying to explain social and historical appearances by abstractions which grasp the real movement of life in that period, Poulantzas, in classic, Althusserian, neo-structuralist fashion, has brushed aside 'data', as 'ideological', and tried to construct a theoretical model without keeping the subject, society, in mind as the presupposition of his theoretical method. Like Althusser, he seems to solve the 'knowledge-effect' problem purely within the realm of theory and refuses, therefore, to link his concepts with the appearances of reality. As a result, reality intrudes unconsciously through the back door of Poulantzas' discourse and ideological impressions proceed to activate and substantiate his discourse historically. With or without his consent, his discourse is thus given a definite historical character, a character at odds with the nature of his concepts.

In the final product Poulantzas has proved "the hegemony of the spirit"<sup>76</sup> by rendering ideological legitimacy the nexus of bourgeois domination. He achieved this by the well-known three tricks mentioned in The German Ideology:<sup>77</sup>

(1) The separation of the ideas from their material conditions and the recognition of the rule of ideas. Poulantzas did this by abstracting 'ideologies' and inserting them into an ahistorical model.

(2) The ordering of this rule of ideas; demonstrating a "connection among the successive ruling ideas". Poulantzas does this but in a Marxian fashion. He makes the regional ideology of the 'juridico-political' the most dominant ideology of all, because of the nature of the "self-determining" Structure of the social formation. This Structure, the concept of capitalism's synchronic articulation, is devoid of any concrete historical reference.

(3) The removal of the mystical appearance of this "self-determining concept" by changing it into a person "or, to appear thoroughly materialistic, into a series of persons, who represent the 'concept' in history". Poulantzas removes the mystery of the apparent magic of the "self-determining structure", the Structure of capitalist society, by changing it into the dominant class. This class have political and ideological power, given by the Structure, and create the permanency of the Structure: thus that Structure is self-determining.

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76. Marx's phrase: (1970) op.cit., p.67.

77. *ibid.*

The combinations of social practices cannot be determined outside their historically determinate forms and contexts. This is a simple point, but it is easily overlooked. Too often, theorists generalize determinate historical situations into permanent universals. In Western social theory this tendency has involved theorists such as Poulantzas and Parsons abstracting their own historical social structures into eternal models with a consequent neglect of such complicated irregularities as divisions within classes, non-class ideologies, and the situation in societies of the Third World. One must admit that Poulantzas is even more guilty of this than Parsons who, at least, attempts to build his impressions of prior kinds of society and different forms of capitalism into his abstract monolith.

The whole question of the articulation of social practices cannot be solved without explicit reference to the historical data of practice. 'Sociality' cannot be defined abstractly on the basis of one particular apparent articulation. Certainly it is necessary to have a concept of 'sociality' but we do not need an empiricist one. The 'sociality' or 'articulation' of social practices is simply the historically determinate combination of practices. That is all we need say. This simple definition is enough to register the Marxian theses that (a) every social practice must not only be understood in terms of inner determinations but also in terms of determination by other practices, and that (b) these determinations are historically specific. In my view, these theses are implicit in Marx's statement that:

"The fact is, therefore, that definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way enter into these definite social and political relations. Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without any mystification and speculation, the<sup>78</sup> connection of the social and political structure with production."

Marxism does not generalize conditional, phenomenal appearances into unconditional, conceptual tower-blocks. It carefully establishes the nature of those social appearances and attempts to understand the social relations which produce and condition them. It never forgets the fact that

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78. *ibid.*, p.46.

things only appear historically in a specific manner, within definite social relationships.

In conclusion, it is wrong to attempt to build abstract models which specify a particular dominant ideology or the effect of practice A on the ideology of practice B. The determinations of the necessary social forms of consciousness and of the dominant ideology are historical matters since societies only exist in movement. Therefore, the correct task is to understand the dialectics of social practice which exist and combine at particular moments to reflect particular social ideologies. The study of the determinations of social ideologies must be an historical and materialist one which begins with the social relations of life (and their peculiar dialectics) and develops from them the corresponding ideological forms of those relations. It is a study which must be careful not to lapse into economism, idealism, empiricism and structuralism.



## 8 IDEOLOGY, SUPERSTRUCTURE AND CLASS

"Yet these people ("the vulgar-marxists of the Second International" - C.S.) fall straight into anarcho-syndicalist 'transcendental underestimation' of ideology when they are told that intellectual struggle in the ideological field cannot be replaced or eliminated by the social movement of the proletariat alone, or by its social and political movements combined. Even today most Marxist theoreticians conceive of the efficacy of so-called intellectual phenomena in a purely negative, abstract and undialectical sense, when they should analyse this domain of social reality within the materialist and scientific method moulded by Marx and Engels. Intellectual life should be conceived in union with social and political life, and social being and becoming (in the widest sense, as economics, politics or law) should be studied in union with social consciousness in its many different manifestations, as a real yet also ideal (or 'ideological') component of the historical process in general. Instead, all consciousness is approached with totally abstract and basically metaphysical dualism, and declared to be a reflection of the one really concrete and material development process, on which it is completely dependent (even, if relatively independent, still dependent in the last instance)."

### Introduction

Continuing our journey towards a Marxian reading of social ideologies, we find conceptual obstacles which must be removed. Ideology is integral to all social practices; but, what are the main forms of social practice? And what exactly are the 'social relations' which structure practices? Marxism is not explicit enough on the types of social practices and the nature of social relations. Too often, what should be a complex analysis is reduced to base/superstructure, bourgeois/proletariat dimensions, or to streams of etceteras following a list of examples of superstructural practice. In this chapter I shall try to specify a clear concept of the superstructural practices and thus, by definition, of the social superstructure. On top of this, I shall attempt to indicate my

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1. K. Korsch Marxism and Philosophy (1970 London: New Left Books) p.71.

conception of the two-dimensional complexity of social relations specified by Marx. In passing, I shall define some basic concepts such as 'dominant ideology', 'social institution', 'class', 'class conflict' and 'class struggle'. And, finally, I shall illustrate how the principles of the Marxian reading, developed throughout the text, might work in practice.

At the centre of this revisitation of some well-established Marxist concepts lies a feeling that really the dialectic has often been taken out of them. Althusser is right to try to restore dialectical materialism to Marxism: without it, Marx's work can be portrayed as a mere determinism of the most one-sided kind. For example, the social divisions arising out of co-operation are so often reduced to class divisions. This reduction is entirely alien to Marx. In Capital, for example, it is totally clear throughout that problems arise out of the co-operative form itself which will live on long after the class divisions have been removed. I have, consequently, tried to construct definitions of the concepts on a properly dialectical basis.

By now it is crystal-clear that the analysis of social ideologies begins with the analysis of social relations. Therefore, this chapter is required to clarify the nature of social relations, their common forms and the kinds of practice in which they exist. It thus constitutes a further rejection of economism and a further establishment of the many-sided, social materiality of ideology. Moreover, it is a chapter which will hopefully give some indication of the immeasurable complexity of the social nature and appearance of ideology. My conception of the literally fantastic difficulty of this field of investigation can be illustrated by a passage from Peter Worsley:

"Thus industrial studies have shown how people import social relations from the outside world into the factory, crossing the 'permeable' membrane between work and non-work: such imports include racist beliefs, ideals of class-solidarity, of orientation towards privatised instrumentalism. But the language of 'export' and 'import' is insufficiently dialectical to catch the interpenetration that occurs ...".<sup>2</sup>

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2. P.M. Worsley "The state of theory and the status of theory" Sociology (1974) 8:1 p.12.

Worsley has grasped the inter-connectedness of discrete practices which, once one allows them their necessary and integral social ideologies, produces an ideological fusion which seems impossible to disentangle. Men, as Worsley puts it, are not abstractions, they carry several "identities" from several forms of practice. My critiques have made it clear that Althusserian Marxism is a neo-structuralism, a fact that has prevented Althusserians from grasping the reality and autonomy of the elements of structures. The structuralist conception of structuration removes the autonomy of the elements or functions. Althusser may have given practices relative autonomy as elements of the social formation but he failed to grant men relative autonomy as elements of practice. His subsequent loss in this field has been the concept of the locatedness of social ideologies. The latter exists in men's brains and they are thus carried from their original practical homes into a wide variety of other social practices. Consequently, no simple, class model of the distribution of social ideologies can be posited.

Complexity and difficulty, however, are no reason to give up the analysis of social ideologies. This chapter represents an attempt to move towards a theoretical sophistication which can address the problem of their entanglement and fusion in social practices and artefacts. I think that the task of extricating the ideological elements combined in a discourse or practice may ultimately be possible; even though, at present, it seems surrounded with problems. If there is a point where scientific analysis can go no further with the question of ideologies, and if we discover that ideologies cannot be determined with the precision of natural science, then Marx will be right.<sup>3</sup> But it is essential that we find out exactly where the lines of demarcation are to be drawn.

So far, I have outlined theoretical principles for the identification of social ideologies; this chapter will hopefully sharpen and develop these principles. On the whole, the journey seems to be making progress, however it must be admitted that a precise technique of identification is not yet developed. I shall merely make some indications at the end of the chapter, in order to point the way forward for empirical

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3. See 1859 Preface in Marx and Engels (1973) *op.cit.*

analysis. I make no apologies for the lack of a specified, technical instrument; that will come later and, when it does, it will be based on the explicit theory developed here rather than spontaneous assumptions. The task of elaborating the theory has delayed the construction of technical procedures, but this elaboration is difficult and necessarily extensive because of the conflicts and neglect within Marxism over the question of consciousness. Moreover, it was vital to place a dialectical concept of ideologies (as reflections of social relations) at the heart of the Marxian thrust in this field. In this concept we now have the theoretical basis for an explanation of the exact forms taken by consciousness in specific social practices. Unlike the phenomenologists, I have developed a theory which will enable us to explain and identify social ideologies: we now have the bases for a theory of 'culture'. Instead of relapsing into an agnostic and empiricist practice of describing the rules of commonsense, I have developed concepts which will found rational attempts to discover the practical histories of those rules and to identify their appearance in particular practical situations. Peter Worsley again supplies the appropriate text:

"They (the phenomenologists) are not interested in sonata form, but in the interpretations of scores produced by different groups of players. Yet every bit as much as formal sociology, the societal production of what is 'taken for granted' by 'members' is also taken for granted in this kind of sociology. Hence it cannot account for the content of what is found in practical situations, i.e., it has no theory of culture. Nor has it any theory of social structure as a societal phenomenon. 'Social' structure is treated as the sum of structured exchanges between interacting participants. How this mutual ordering and fitting of interactions derives from, depends upon, and incorporates understandings whose provenance lies quite outside the situation of use is left unexamined."<sup>4</sup>

The phenomenologists are important because they emphasize the integral place of ideology in social practice, but have failed to theorize the origins, development and location of specific ideologies in any adequate fashion. I hope that I have made some advance in the attempt to contextualize these ideologies in a fully social structural manner. This chapter continues to explore the necessary theoretical constituents of that attempt and is a vital step in moving from the most general principles to the more particular concepts required for technical operationalization.

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4. (1974) op.cit., p.13.

The cell-forms of superstructural practice

I have argued that we cannot construct abstract models of historically determinate articulations of the infrastructure with the superstructure. But, can we not specify, in the abstract, the only logically possible general types of superstructural practice? Do not certain phenomena exist, even if only in embryo form, as a necessary concomitant of any economic practice? Does not economic practice in itself generate material forms, other than economic products, which can, at a later stage of development, be transformed from elements of economic life into the objects (end-products) of new social practices? Given that economic practice is a necessary historical requirement for the development of the human race, surely we can, through the analysis of that practice in itself, in its simplest form, deduce the material forms which can possibly form the objects of superstructural practice and thus establish in principle the only possible general types of superstructural practice? If we can do this, then we can specify the general categories of practice with which to analyse the specific articulations of the social totality. Via this abstract analysis, we will be able to determine the material forms within economic practice itself which will be capable of acting as the objects of non-economic practices, when the historical emergence of co-operation (or sociality-in-itself) creates the material conditions for the development of human labour in non-economic directions.

It might be objected that I have already argued that the necessary articulation of economic practice with the social superstructure cannot be specified ahistorically and that, therefore, the proposed analysis would contradict this. That objection, however, is mistaken. Indeed, given that an economy exists historically within a social totality of practices, it would be methodologically unsound to attempt to determine its precise articulation with the non-economic without reference to historical evidence. What I am supposing, however, is a primeval economy of a non-co-operative nature, an economy without a superstructure. I am supposing, with Marx, that production (and immediate consumption) is the first historical act and that, therefore, we can deduce its necessary material forms even before they begin to exist as objects of specific social practices. In other words, the premise is that the most primitive economic formation involves material phenomena which can subsequently form the basis of superstructural practices.

A science of history does, indeed, refuse to construct abstract, metaphysical histories. However, that science does not stand still. It does not allow itself to drift into an empiricism of the superstructure just because it has so far been unable to conceptualize, with any real clarity, the general conception of that phenomenon. Any developing science requires the construction of new categories out of the established categories through logical inference. Marxism is no exception. In its case, we require that the categories for the analysis of the superstructure be derived from Marx's established conception of economic practice. Why begin with economic practice-in-itself, in its pre-social existence? Because our interest lies in discerning the general categories for analyzing the specific, non-economic, practical conditions of existence of a dominant economic practice in a given historical instance and, therefore, we must grasp, in theory, the inner structure of economic practice in itself, in order to determine the general forms of those conditions; that is, unless we posit these general forms as developments from a source outside historical production such as the Essence of Man or the Will of God. Marxism is a theoretical science of history: as such it is neither an empiricism nor an idealism. Theoretical concepts must be constructed in order to be able to realize the full potential within that science. This process of investigation within theory may seem irrelevant to some, but it is as vital a part of Marxian science as the process of carefully collecting and establishing the conditional appearances (data) of history which the theoretical categories must appropriate. It is to be remembered that Marx, himself, was not only a voracious and careful collector of data (e.g., on Russian agriculture), but also very precise in his formulation of theoretical categories.

I shall attempt to determine the cell-forms of superstructural practice embryonic within economic practice itself. This analysis is an abstract, artificial one from an Althusserian perspective since it presupposes an era when men's practice was pre-social and purely economic. Althusser would not accept that presupposition. He argues that the economy is determinant "in the last instance" and that "the last instance" never comes, and never came in the past either. For him, "the structure is always the co-presence of all its elements and their relations of

dominance and subordination".<sup>5</sup> He is right, of course, when the totality of practices has become a social structure, but wrong for the primeval period of non-social, instinctive practice. If that period existed, and it seems that it did, then the following analysis is abstract but not artificial.

"The value-form, whose fully developed shape is the money-form, is very elementary and simple. Nevertheless, the human mind has for more than 2,000 years sought in vain to get to the bottom of it, whilst on the other hand, to the successful analysis of much more composite and complex forms, there has been at least an approximation. Why? Because the body, as an organic whole, is more easy of study than are the cells of that body. In the analysis of economic forms, moreover, neither microscopes nor chemical reagents are of use. The force of abstraction must replace both. But in bourgeois society the commodity-form of the product of labour - or the value-form of the commodity - is the economic cell-form. To the superficial observer, the analysis of these forms seems to turn upon minutiae. It does in fact deal with minutiae, but they are of the same order as those dealt with in microscopic anatomy."<sup>6</sup>

It could be said that the "organic wholes" of complex social superstructures have been subjected to greater theoretical approximation than have the "cell-forms" of superstructural practice. Just as Marx isolated the cell form of value as the end-product of economic practice,

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5. Althusser and Balibar (1970) op.cit.,p.319 (Glossary). Compare Marx and Engels (1970) op.cit.,p.51: "where there exists a relationship, it exists for me: the animal does not enter into "relations" with anything, it does not enter into any relation at all. For the animal, its relation to others does not exist as a relation." and Marx (1974) op.cit.,p.173: "Labour is, in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature. He opposes himself to Nature as one of her own forces, setting in motion arms and legs, heads and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate Nature's productions in a form adapted to his own wants. By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature. He develops his slumbering powers and compels them to act in obedience to his sway. We are not now dealing with those primitive instinctive forms of labour that remind us of the mere animal."

6. Marx (1974) op.cit.,p.19.

(my emphases - C.S.)

and determined its inner mechanism in Capital, it is incumbent upon modern Marxism to isolate the cell-forms of superstructural practice and determine their inner mechanisms. This is no easy task. However, to determine the fully social nature of any human practice at a given historical conjuncture, I would argue that it is necessary to understand the laws of movement of necessary non-economic practices. Without understanding value, it is impossible to understand the dialectic of an economic practice. Marx could never have explained the mechanism of the capitalist economic formation without discovering the laws of value. Similarly, it is impossible to understand the dialectics of superstructural practices without discovering their cell-forms. This section is a small step in that direction.

The question to begin with is: what are the necessary, logical conditions of existence of economic practice-in-itself?

Economic practice, in Marx's concept, emerges as a thing-in-itself as the appropriation of nature's properties by men.<sup>7</sup> Men, Marx says, do not begin with conscious needs, as Political Economy has tended to assume. They begin by eating and drinking, that is, they begin with production, the first historical act. At this stage of history, labour is instinctive and animal. It is thus the appropriate epoch in which to analyze economic practice-in-itself, in its non-social form.

Economic practice-in-itself, we can say, is constituted by two elements and the relation between them:

1. Nature
2. Men
3. Appropriation.

The inner structure of economic practice is, therefore, the appropriation of nature by men in order to satisfy needs (at first instinctive, later social).

Economic practice is not a static, once-and-for-all thing. It must constantly be repeated to ensure men's survival. Under the process of repetition, economic practice develops its forms. And here is the crux of the matter. What is it that is intrinsic to economic practice

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7. See Marx's Notes on Wagner, in Carver (1975) op.cit., p.90.



that can possibly be developed? The thing that is intrinsic to that practice is the relation between men and nature and, therefore, the material forms necessarily developed out of economic life lie within that relation. I shall now examine this relation of appropriation.

There are two logically necessary moments of the relation of appropriation:

1. The determinations of nature on men, through appropriation.
2. The determinations of men upon nature, through appropriation.

1 The first necessary moment of repeated economic practice involves the effects of the appropriation of nature on men. These effects are necessary consequences of repeated appropriation which, in turn, become part of future practice.

(a) Quantitative effects. This may not seem important but it should not be forgotten. The effect on men in quantitative terms is increased population. Given men's reproductive capacity and inclination, and given a supply of food and shelter, they must reproduce themselves.

Increased population has its qualitative aspect - quantitative changes at a given point pass over into qualitative changes (Marx and Hegel) - the increased numbers enable a new productive capacity, co-operation. The existence of increased population is a prerequisite for the development of co-operation or social practice.

(b) Qualitative effect. The repeated appropriation of nature produces changes of quality or form in the human organism. These changes are of two kinds. Firstly, men develop physical capabilities, or power, which enables them, with the use of material implements, to control nature. Power is a real, material phenomenon which takes definite forms, corresponding to the level of development of men's appropriation of nature. Secondly, appropriation not only develops the forms of physical power, it develops forms within men's brains - forms of consciousness or ideologies.

"Through the repetition of this process (production - C.S.), the property of these things, their property 'to satisfy needs', is impressed upon their brains;"<sup>8</sup>

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8. Marx, *ibid.* p.190.

Impressions are created within men's brains of the properties of natural objects, in terms of their ability to satisfy biological necessity. Men develop the mental capacity to mark objects as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. These material, spontaneous impressions of the external world constitute simple ideologies.

These new material forms, the forms of power and ideology, contained in embryo within pre-social economic practice, are not only inextricably and purely part of economic practice, at this stage, but they are also completely interconnected. Power is advanced with the establishment of accurate or workable impressions. It becomes a directed, rather than random, energy. Ideology directs, and helps to generate the power-forms. On the other hand, new forms of consciousness are a product of emerging power. The range of ideology's variation and the utility of its impressions depend on appropriations enabled by power.

2 The second necessary moment of repeated economic practice involves the effects of men's appropriation upon nature. These effects are again necessary consequences of repeated appropriation and become part of future appropriations.

(a) Quantitative effects. Again this effect may seem unimportant but its existence must be observed - its importance may only become fully clear in subsequent historical analysis. Quantitatively, the effect of appropriation upon nature is the conversion of increasing amounts of natural matter into products (produced utilities or use-values). Combined with increase in population, the increase in produce provides the material basis for the development of a social division of labour and a surplus produce. The increase in produce involves changes of quality: it enables more and more men to convert more and more nature into more and more use-values.

(b) Qualitative effect. Nature is transformed from an external matter into forms of matter internal to human practice. It is converted into use-values or produced utilities - objects which satisfy human wants of some sort or another. Not only is nature transformed into quantities of produced utilities for consumption, but also into means of further production, e.g. tools. Increased power and developed forms of consciousness enable men to use nature itself to produce use-values. In other words, as appropriation is repeated, there emerges a distinction between products: some are directly consumed, others become means of production.

It should be clear that the two sets of effects of economic appropriation are not separate but interlinked dialectically within economic practice (at this stage of history). On one side, the emergence of power, ideology and increased population stimulate and enable the development of increased produce, new raw materials and new instruments of production. On the other hand, the emergence of increased produce, new raw materials and new instruments of production stimulate and further the development of power, ideology and increased population.

To return to our main question: what material phenomena lie in embryo form within economic practice-in-itself which can form the object of qualitatively different forms of social practice? The answers to the question can be seen more easily if, at the expense of some precision, we diagrammatize our conclusions, thus:

<u>The necessary material consequences of economic practice-in-itself.</u>	Man	APPROPRIATION	NATURE
Qualitative	Power and ideology	Differentiated products. Means of production.	
Quantitative	Increases population	Increased products	

Increased population cannot itself form the object of a new practice. Of course, the practice which takes people as its object is sexual reproduction. The 'necessaries' in this instance are people themselves. A practice which employs nature's properties to produce life's necessities is an economic practice. Sexual reproduction is, therefore, an economic practice in this pre-social era.<sup>9</sup>

The means of production and new forms of use-value, also, can only be the objects of new economic practices. Obviously, some might argue, means of production are not consumables and, therefore, they are not "necessaries of life". But what constitutes the "necessaries of life" is not a static group of utilities. Human needs and requirements develop along with

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9. During the pre-social period in question, sexual behaviour, I assume, is purely for reproductive purposes. After the emergence of society, non-reproductive purposes may arise, of course, but then the object of sexual behaviour is no longer the production of increased population and, therefore, is irrelevant to my argument. Sex for 'pleasure' is not a necessary consequence of economic practice-in-itself.

the productive forces and, thus, an increasingly differentiated range of utilities are required, involving increasingly developed means of production. A use-value produced through the human transformation of natural properties is a product of economic practice. Similarly, increased produce can also clearly only form the object of new economic practices. Necessary produce even in increased quantity is still an economic object, a product of the human transformation of natural matter.

What is left? Power and ideology. These are the new material forms, developed in economic practice itself, which can constitute the objects of qualitatively different practices. The deliberate construction of forms of power and the elaboration of social forms of consciousness (or social ideologies) are the only possible types of superstructural practice which can emerge out of the development of economic practice. I shall discuss the nature of these practices in a moment. Firstly, it is necessary to register the fact that the power form and the ideology form are the only things (or matters) produced in economic practice itself which can possibly form the chosen end-products of non-economic or superstructural practices. They are the material forms which thus characterize the generic types of superstructural practice. They are the cell-forms of superstructural practice, embryonic within economic practice-in-itself. The development of social history hitherto is the history of the development of the forms of power and the forms of social consciousness on the foundation of various modes of production, and the field of social dialectics is thus constituted by directed human practices which produce forms of value, power and consciousness.

To specify the historical developments of the forms of power and consciousness is a task even more gigantic than that begun by Marx when he examined the development of the value-form. Some basic remarks may, however, be useful. The emergence of co-operation or social existence is based upon the internal development of economic practice itself. Increased population and produce, the development of means of production and the development of forms of power and ideology, all these things enabled the historical arrival of social co-ordination. As soon as social life arrives, the forms of consciousness and power become the objects of superstructural practices.

At first, ideology is only "conscious instinct"<sup>10</sup> and power is only the capacity of the body and the ability to employ primitive implements. But with the emergence of co-operation, and circumstances of increased need, the forms of ideology and power advance at a pace. Both develop their means of articulation: language and implements. Language emerges out of the grunting of the primeval men, enabling the expansion of consciousness through communication, and implements are carved out of matter to enable body-power to expand its range of achievements. Nature's impressions on the brain become "designated in ideas", and, transformed from mere stimuli to thoughts or mental matter expressed in language.

"... men do not only deal with such things practically as the means of satisfying their needs, but also ... they designate them in ideas."<sup>11</sup>

Language, as Marx says, is simply "practical consciousness"; it is the social instrument adopted by the forms of consciousness when communication between men becomes an aspect of economic appropriation. Implements or tools, at first, are simply extensions of bodily organs, e.g. the hand; it is only later that they lose that form and adopt a radically independent character in the machine.

Once language and tools have come into some kind of developed existence, power and ideology have their first objective forms and can thus become the objects (and means) of new, social practices. Thus in the earliest societies, those of the hunters for instance, we can see the first examples of superstructural practice. The production of necessities is not always successful in this period of history and some natural matters resist men's control. Men develop practical knowledge (literally, useful impressions of the properties of a thing) of matters under their power, but, with regard to things outside their power, they develop mythologies. 'Practical knowledge' is simple enough a concept (but very important nevertheless) and refers to impressions from practice which can be put to effective use in future practice; however, the concept of mythologies needs further comment.<sup>12</sup> The property of objects to remain

10. Marx and Engels (1970) op.cit., p.51.

11. Marx, in Carver (1975) op.cit., p.191.

12. Schmidt confuses the distinction between practical knowledge and mythologies by distinguishing mythologies from ideologies. He fails to see that practical knowledge and mythologies are just two instances of ideology. See A. Schmidt The concept of nature in Marx (1971 London: New Left Books) p.141.

outside men's power is seen as the manifestation of a superhuman external force - a spirit. For example, the sun, rainbows, wild animals, the stars and sky, menstrual blood, and fire all became the focus of myths.<sup>13</sup> They were all seen as representations of a spirit. Similarly, men's own lives were very much beyond their control, and consciousness and power were themselves seen as the manifestation of a spirit. Various superstructural practices called rites of passage were consequently developed to mark the arrival and departure of this spirit. It seems men attributed their own consciousness and power to the objects beyond their control. In other words, a problematic reality was "designated in ideas" which had already been established. Human life itself was already problematic and presented itself spontaneously as the embodiment of a spirit. New instances of uncontrollable nature were seen in the only image available: the embodiment of spirit. In short, an idea was abstracted from one referent and related to another. I suggest that this is the nature of all mythology - it is composed of abstracted ideas (e.g. religion or political propaganda) which designate the uncontrollable. It is important to note the abstracted nature of this form of consciousness. Perhaps controversially, I would argue that we can see all later sciences as combinations of abstracted thought and practical knowledge, and, therefore, that even the very thought-matter at the heart of a science reflects social practice because abstracted thoughts and practical intelligence are always firmly grounded within its forms. It was only through centuries of practical development that these two forms of ideology developed to a level where their combination was capable of founding sciences. Only when practical intelligence is highly advanced and when the logical abstractions of systematic mythology begin to lose their religious shells can science emerge. The social development of the two forms of ideology is the precondition of the emergence of science.<sup>14</sup> The latter is no mystical 'invention' but a natural progression in the social history of forms of consciousness.

13. See C.S. Coon The hunting peoples (1970 Harmondsworth: Penguin Books) ch.13.

14. Only two basic forms are possible - the practical and the mythical - and they reflect the power or impotence of men in controlling natural objects. Although scientific thought is a form of consciousness it is a form which has superseded the two basic, ideological or spontaneous forms (practical intelligence and mythology). Thus science is a higher level of thought, but has practical roots (a) in the specific practices which produce it and (b) in that it emerges out of the combination of the two forms of ideology which closely reflect the structure of mundane social practice. In precisely this sense, science is a higher form of ideology, which always bears the birthmarks of its conditions of origin.

This history is directly related to the development of men's power over nature. The more material substance came under men's control, the less the social extent of magic and religion:

"All mythology overcomes, and masters, and shapes the forces of nature in and through the imagination: it disappears therefore when real mastery over those forces begins." <sup>15</sup>

Enveloping religious or totemistic mythologies, the early superstructural practices, such as rites of passage, act as necessary conditions of existence of a limited stage of development of economic life. These practices produce social forms of consciousness as their objects; they are instrumental in socializing the ideologies of a people. That is, through these superstructural practices, ideologies reflecting social relations became concretized and institutionalized as the ideologies of the society. The socialization of ideologies in superstructural practice thus provides a second, social source of ideological materials. After existence has become social, men receive impressions not only from practical appropriation but also from the institutions for the expression of social ideologies. From this point on, men's brains are not simply full of the impressions and ideas generated in their own individual practice, they are also full of the impressions and ideas expressed in the social practices of the superstructure. <sup>16</sup> There is a constant tension in the history of ideologies between these practical sources. Personal experience and socially legitimated ideologies have rarely been happy bedfellows.

There are two points to insist on here: (a) At no point, in my conception, does the brain become anything more than a brilliant material computer. It can choose but never create its received impressions or ideas. Only the structure of social practice can create the forms of social consciousness. Certainly, the brain can resolve contradictions within itself (e.g. between practical impressions and abstractions), but its

15. Marx A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859), quoted in Schmidt (1971) *op.cit.*, p.141.

16. This clash between an individual's situational experience and the socialized ideologies of his society has not normally been captured within the concepts of Marxian or phenomenological analysis.

resolutions are never framed within forms of consciousness outside the complex realms of social relations. The brain does not invent new forms of consciousness - it only receives and manipulates them. At first, this may seem absurd, because men have produced all kinds of brilliant discoveries apparently 'out of the blue'. However, I would emphasize that social relations are complex and therefore that 'inputs' to the brain are complex; and, moreover, that the brain is not only a well-programmed mechanism but also a mechanism with historically increasing powers of manipulation, developed in increasingly complex social circumstances. My contention, on these assumptions, is that even unexpected scientific discoveries and highly idiosyncratic personal ideologies are based on the complex programme of forms of social consciousness established in men's brains, and on the increasingly powerful capacity of those brains to resolve problems set within the parameters of that programme.

(b) One should not reduce the process of ideology formation to a sensuous materialism, at least, once existence has achieved social form. Men do not possess empty brains waiting for new imprints from materials confronted in practice. The ongoing development of practical impressions, abstract mythologies and sciences means that the brain (always) contains already a thought-framework in which to file and manipulate new impressions and ideas. In contemporary sociological language, men, as social beings, (always) already have taken-for-granted assumptions with which they encode the appearances of the world of their practice. New impressions and ideas are not necessarily allowed unconditional entry by the extant mental set. The consequences of this fact have not often resonated through the formulations of Marxist theory. What is important, in my view, is that the complex subjectivity of each individual is a determinate material element in all forms of social practice. Men are never the simple playthings of structures of practice. They carry specific forms of consciousness - ideas and impressions - which will play a part in the process whereby the elements of a practice affect its structure or social relations. Moreover, the ideologies reflected by the social relations of a practice do not enter men's brains as water enters an empty vessel. Pre-existing ideologies, carried by the agents of practice, will confront the necessary ideologies of that practice, and will not necessarily reinforce its structure. It cannot be emphasized too much that



subjectivity is a determinate, material force in all practices and must be seen as vital to any practical process. To reduce society to the play of structures is to produce a structuralism which loses the complexity involved in considering the effects of subjectivity (a material element of practice) on the structure of a practice.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, to take modes of subjectivity out of the structure of social practice is to produce a humanism which abandons structural determinations. Always, and this applies to both the above points, we should remember that the formation of ideologies is inextricably part of practical processes carried out within historically determinate social relations and material circumstances.

Power, also, becomes the specific object of social practice once co-operation is established. Marx notes that:

"Linguet is probably right, when in his 'Théorie des Lois Civiles', he declares hunting to be the first form of co-operation, and man-hunting (war) one of the earliest forms of hunting."<sup>18</sup>

The establishment of social power by men over other men, using the material instruments produced in economic life, is the second type of superstructural practice arising under the conditions of co-operative existence. New forms of power are sought through territorial aggression, and old forms are institutionalized often in the shape of rituals for settling quarrels over adultery.<sup>19</sup> Given that the sexual division of labour exists as a 'technical' aspect of class divisions (if only at first), and given the low level of productivity, the early conflicts of power (or political relations) often seem to take the form of physical feuds over women and territory. The institutionalized resolution of social power conflicts represents the socialization of a people's collective political muscle. Whatever forms the early political institutions took, it seems clear that they served primarily to maintain peace and to direct economic production. They crystallized the existing collective, social power of the people in new social practices. From this point on, social power was not simply a matter of individual strength developed in appropriation but also a social

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17. See the description of the structuralist concept of material functions on p.124, supra.

18. (1974) op.cit., p.316, fn.2.

19. See Coon (1976) op.cit., ch.11.

matter of combined capacities institutionalized and concretized in the form of rituals, chiefs and armies. A dialectic thus arose between the power of the individuals and the power of the social polity - a dialectic which favoured the individual less and less as society's productive technology became more and more advanced. Such progress corresponds to the increased material power of the political leadership of a society.

In this text, power is not as vital a concern as ideology. However two final comments must be made. Firstly, social power never becomes anything else other than the combined energy of a people, whatever complex forms it takes during later periods. Whatever direction it takes, however divided it is, and whatever form it is institutionalized in, social power is always the combined energy of the people.

"The social power, i.e. the multiplied productive force, which arises through the co-operation of different individuals as it is determined by the division of labour, appears to these individuals, since their co-operation is not voluntary but has come about naturally, not as their own united power, but as an alien force existing outside them, of the origin and goal of which they are ignorant, which they thus cannot control, which on the contrary passes through a peculiar series of phases and stages independent of the will and the action of man, nay even being the prime governor of these." <sup>20</sup>

With the emergence of society, we have seen that the forms of power and consciousness, originating and continuing within economic practice, are established as the means and objects of new social practices. It is necessary now to give these two generic types of superstructural practice formal definitions and titles.

### Political practice

This can be defined as the transformation of institutionalized forms of social power into new forms through the exercise of individual

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20. Marx and Engels (1970) op.cit.,p.54.

or collective power in a direction defined within the forms of consciousness (ideologies) of that individual or group. Althusser's definition of 'political practice' limits it to revolutionary struggle.<sup>21</sup> Poulantzas saw the object of political practice as

"... the 'present moment' (as Lenin said), i.e. the nodal point where the contradictions of the various levels of a formation are condensed in the complex relations governed by over-determination and by their dislocation and uneven development. This present moment is therefore a conjunction, the strategic point where the various contradictions fuse in so far as they reflect the articulation specifying a structure in dominance."<sup>22</sup>

Thus, for Poulantzas, in capitalist societies, the state is the site of "the present moment". Why it must always be so is never made clear, although it is clear that Poulantzas is trying to reconcile two contradictory Leninist theses (that the object of politics is the present moment and that the state must be the first target of proletarian insurgency). The net effect, in my view, is that Poulantzas' general concept of political practice is far too restrictive. It would exclude all political practices not directed at the immediate capture of state power. Such a definition of the political, in my experience, is entirely typical of a male, European, orthodox Marxist and implicitly defines struggles revolving around sexual, racial and national oppression as non-political. "In the last instance", it is, indeed, vital to capture state power to create the possibility of social revolution. But that does not guarantee that revolution will take place. Poulantzas, along with many Marxists, seems to neglect the fact that the object of politics is ideologically defined. Given the wide variety of social contradictions, power struggles will take a variety of forms before and after revolution. Moreover, the very exercise of seized state power will be guided by the prevailing forms of revolutionary consciousness:

"... the fate of the revolution (and with it the fate of mankind) will depend on the ideological maturity of the proletariat i.e. on its class consciousness."<sup>23</sup>

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21. Althusser and Balibar (1970) op.cit.,p.316 (Glossary).

22. Poulantzas (1973) op.cit.,p.41.

23. G. Lukacs History and Class Consciousness (1971 London:Merlin Press) p.70.

Poulantzas and Althusser tend to forget that the objects of all practices are erected in ideology beforehand; the political is no exception. Their definitions, limited a priori to revolutionary practice, even limit the latter to the organized struggle of the proletariat against the state machine. The only way that their definitions can include the politics of gender, regional government, morality, race, etc. is by defining the state very widely, which, of course, Althusser does.

On the premises outlined here, political practice includes any practice which has as its object existing institutions and structures of social power. Its purposes are defined in ideology, and its material instruments are those available to a group at a given level of development of the forces and relations of production. It is one of the two general types of superstructural practice. Probably its most important, dominant class forms within modern capitalism are the practices of legislation, armed repression and propaganda-dissemination carried out by the executives and agents of the state. As an outcome of co-operative economic production, political practice is thus a vital element in any society hitherto and its concept is therefore essential for the analysis of the historical articulation of social practices. An analysis which ignores the level of political practice cannot claim to be an examination of the social totality.

Regarding the study of social ideologies, there are four specific implications of political practice:

- (1) Specific ideologies will emerge within specific forms of political practice, which will reflect the structure of those forms.
- (2) Ideologies produced in other forms of practice may be adopted in political practice and take corresponding political forms.
- (3) Ideologies produced in political practices may be adopted within other social practices and take economic or intellectual forms.
- (4) All ideologies must be considered for their potential bearing on the divisions and balance of power within a society.

### Intellectual practice

This can be defined as the transformation of social ideologies (social forms of consciousness) into new forms through the expression,

via definite material means, of an individual or group's thoughts, for purposes defined in his or their ideologies.

Althusser's "ideological practice"<sup>24</sup> is a slightly different concept. He defines it as "the transformation of one relation to the lived world into a new relation by ideological struggle."<sup>25</sup> To my mind, this definition is too restrictive as a general formulation. It seems to imply a conscious fight against opposing ideologies and, thus, to be equivalent to the practice of perpetrating political propaganda. Intellectual practice, on my premises, must include all practices specifically and exclusively aimed at communicating thought. These practices are not necessarily part of power struggles, and, in themselves, merely processes of communication, ranging from conversation and speech-making to news-gathering and book-writing. They are specific forms of production and must not be confused with 'cultural practice', which today is a common term conflating both the forms of intellectual production and the forms of unproductive consumption (such as 'gang behaviour' and listening to music).

Althusser distinguishes scientific practice as a qualitatively different form of practice. As I argued earlier, this stems from a faulty analysis. Scientific knowledge is produced in intellectual practice because science is ultimately a social form of consciousness and intellectual practice is aimed at the transformation of social forms of consciousness. Science can only emerge from intellectual work; the latter can also mystify or destroy it. Intellectual practice can express practical knowledge or abstract mythologies (or theoretical ideology). However, after a certain level of social development, it can also produce scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge is, originally, a profound combination of abstraction (where its religious aspect has disappeared) and practical knowledge, and, as such, a new form of consciousness developed out of ideology. Thus, in agreement with Althusser, I would maintain the qualitative difference of science - but, in disagreement with him I would say that we can do that within the category of 'intellectual practice' and do not need to set up another practice.

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24. The concept used hitherto in the present text.

25. See Althusser and Balibar (1970) op.cit., p.316 (Glossary).

The social practice which produces scientific knowledge is not a purely cerebral, private one. My definition of intellectual practice includes the social means of externalizing or expressing theories and ideas and implies that, within a given social context, there are certain economic, political and intellectual conditions which determine the ability to externalise mental produce. In class societies, the social aspect of externalization is mainly (but not exclusively) structured by class. Thus the dominant mode of social externalization involves forms of technology, power and communication which are available to and approved by the dominant class. For example, no matter how scientific a theory is, if its producer cannot articulate it because of its political unacceptability, because of his inability to find a publisher due to the unprofitable nature of his work, or because he cannot write or speak in the accepted fashion, then it will not be externalised socially and remain an individual, private product. Similarly, no matter how manifestly illogical a theory is, if its producer has money at his disposal and/or political backing and if it is expressed in dominant communicational forms, then it can be externalised in a fully social manner. Externalization of intellectual produce is a social matter and, in a class society, it reflects the class structure and the consequent material wealth, political power and communicational means available to the constituent classes and groups.

It is also vital to note that scientific conceptions are born out of historical conjunctures of theoretical ideologies and practical intelligence. Scientific theories are not pre-given; they must be constructed through the discovery of the weaknesses in prior theoretical ideologies in the light of practical impressions. Nor are they eternal truths - subsequent investigations often find them to be partial conceptions, sometimes to the point of being primitive. Sciences then are products of a form of intellectual practice - the form which is concerned to investigate the veracity of prior systematic theories in the light of practical knowledge. They emerge out of the combination of the two forms of ideology, as higher forms of consciousness. Scientific discoveries themselves, that is, are ultimately grounded in practice. The forms of thought constituting a specific scientific theory are only possible under definite historical, structural and material conditions.

This last point is an important one because it counters the view that science is purely cerebral. Scientific thought does not simply emerge out of theoretical ideology through a pure dialectic of ideas. It must be constructed in intellectual practice by a human being working within definite social relations and under specific material conditions. The intellectual social practices in which thought is produced may provide the right conditions for the solution to a problem that has remained unsolved through many epochs. Of course, the reverse is also often true. For example, an intellectual working within an established scientific field may be unable to advance any further because the general forms of consciousness reflected in his brain and the material circumstances of his work do not allow the solution. The structure-consciousness connection also accounts for the fact that a great physicist, for example, might solve complex scientific problems one after another and yet his spontaneous social conceptions may be more primitive than those of the lowest manual worker. Once a particular intellectual practice has developed a framework of thought, it may well, of course, become entrenched within that practice and thus have a relatively autonomous dialectic of its own. This fact may conceal its practical, social base. Not for one moment am I suggesting that it is necessarily economic social relations alone which provide the conditions or obstacles for the development of theoretical systems. Nor am I suggesting that it is only social structure which underpins the development of the theoretical consciousness - material conditions, such as the availability of ideas, practical knowledge, time, money and space, are often crucial. The crucial point is that science, just as much as simple ideology, is dependent upon the practical circumstances of its production and development. Where the two forms of consciousness differ is simply, and crucially, upon 'the knowledge-effect', a phenomenon to which Althusser addressed himself. If 'the knowledge-effect' is to be comprehended in its social specificity, however, we must begin analyses which escape the theoreticism of the neo-structuralist problematic.

On the premises outlined here, intellectual practice includes any practice which has as its object existing social forms of consciousness. Its purposes are ideologically defined and its material instruments (language, laboratory equipment, pens, paper, television and radio, for example)

are those available at a given level of productive development and at a given societal location. It is the second general form of superstructural practice. Possibly its most important dominant class forms in modern capitalism are television, scientific research, newspapers and books. As an outcome of co-operative economic life, intellectual practice is a vital element in any known society and thus its concept is essential for the analysis of the historical articulation of social practices.

Regarding the study of social ideologies, there are several distinct conclusions to be drawn from this elaboration of the concept of intellectual practice:

(1) Specific ideologies will emerge within intellectual practices which will reflect the social relations of those practices.

(2) Ideologies produced within economic and political practice may be adopted within intellectual practice and take intellectual forms.

(3) Ideologies produced within intellectual practice may be adopted within the other social practices and take on economic or political forms.

Before I continue further, it is necessary to define economic practice formally: the transformation of new materials into new forms through the use of human and material properties for what are ideologically defined as the necessities of life (or means of subsistence). Like the superstructural practices, it is a determinate process in definite material conditions with specific raw materials, instruments of production, and end-product.

Hitherto, all societies have been constituted by a combination of distinct economic, political and intellectual practices. These combinations have taken specific historical forms and cannot be described abstractly. We are now concerned with the three categories of social practice which will enable rigorous historical analysis. Two final comments are necessary on this point. Firstly, each general form of practice conditions the nature of the other two. Thus the movement of economic practice predicates certain necessary political and intellectual forms, intellectual practice conditions certain economic and political effects and political practice affects economic and intellectual practice. The forms of social practice are all effective and exist co-determinately in the social totality. Secondly, the three practices are distinct but they often exist within one another in a given empirical instance. For example,



to produce national news, in capitalism, it is necessary to run a newspaper company without going bankrupt. Thus there is a co-existence of intellectual and economic practice in the news production process. Similarly, conversations with co-workers in a factory is an intellectual practice within an economic one. Many examples could be given. The point, however, is clear and simple. When considering any one empirical practice, it should not be assumed that it falls neatly into any one general category. In historical research, the categories will often need to be combined to fully comprehend a given situation.

### Social divisions and class formation

All social practices are carried out within specific social relations. Therefore, the nature of 'social relations' is crucial to the theory of ideology, because the social forms of consciousness reflect the relations of social practices. It is thus necessary to examine briefly the concept of 'social relations'.

Marx and Engels have said that, hitherto, history has been a long sequence of class struggles. Marxists have often taken this premise too narrowly and ignored the social divisions that cut across class boundaries. A 'class' has been defined as a group of people with a particular relation to the means of production of socially necessary goods and historical analysis has attempted to explain and describe the superstructural effects of class divisions. Political imperatives and a desire for expositional simplicity have operated to produce a view that the main differences in social ideology are given by the economic divisions between people.

Social ideologies, of course, do reflect the relations between classes. Social relations are relations between classes over the material means of social practice. However, that is only one side of the coin, a side based on the class nature of social relations. Marxists, and social scientists in general, who stop at this point will produce a view of classes as football teams with ideological numberplates on their backs.<sup>26</sup>

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26. Poulantzas' metaphor. See Poulantzas (1973) op.cit., p.202.

Poulantzas criticises Lukacs on this score. However he himself does not get much further than the concept of class ideologies. He mentions class fractions - that is all. Indeed, the reverse problem is fully applicable to Poulantzas: for him, all ideologies appear to have class number-plates on their backs. Poulantzas, too, seems to be fully caught within the vice-like grip of the class-ideology connection.

Jacques Rancière has reminded us that the technical and social divisions of labour are jointly articulated.<sup>27</sup> However, he has not specified the consequences of that correct Marxian thesis for the theory of ideology. He pointed out to Althusser that the university is not only based on a technical division of labour between lecturers and students, but also on a social division of labour between the ruling educating class and the educated classes, and that this double moment of the division of labour in educational practice is always jointly articulated. Thus, Rancière objected to the form that the teacher-taught relationship took within the bourgeois university.

Rancière is, of course, absolutely right. Marx very clearly sees the double articulation of the division of labour, in technical and social forms, as a conjoint existence.<sup>28</sup> The division of labour in the capitalist factory reflects the division of labour as a whole, and vice versa. Many Marxists have mechanically identified class and consciousness, resulting in a simplistic conception where all ideologies are class-based and all classes have different ideologies. They have forgotten that class relations only exist within technical relations and that social relations are thus two-sided. Bearing in mind that social structures are doubly articulated, we must illustrate the possible complexity of the distribution and differentiation of social ideologies. I shall take the Western capitalist mode of production as my example, since Marx has done the work for us here in some depth.

If we examine the social division of labour in the capitalist social formation, we must map its forms on two jointly articulated axes: the technical divisions and the class divisions. Each axis has its own

27. (1974) op.cit.

28. See (1974) op.cit., esp. pp.331-339.

field of articulation, which means that, again, the two divisions are articulated on two conjoint fields.

#### The technical axis

The substantive divisions on this axis are the divisions between teachers, dockers, carpenters, politicians, financiers, general labourers, housewives, fitters, scientists, technical workers and so on. These divisions take general forms such as industrial, financial, agricultural, political, intellectual, etc.; or, mental versus manual labour. Such general forms can be summarized as expressions of a general division between productive (productive of socially necessary means of subsistence) and unproductive labour. The field of articulation of this technical division of labour is the socio-geographical one. Thus we can say that this axis is mapped on the field: town-countryside.

#### The class axis

The substantive divisions here are well known; for example, capitalists, proletarians, petit-bourgeoisie. However, from a reading of Capital, and on the grounds that this present analysis is an analysis of the total social division of labour, I would suggest that there are also intellectual and political classes. Marx mentions the concept of "the ideological classes" to refer to "such as government officials, priests lawyers and soldiers etc."<sup>29</sup> I would suggest that his examples are slightly confusing because his concept of the "ideological classes" is not well-developed. Given that the class axis ranges over all types of practice (i.e. economic, political and intellectual), I think that his examples of the "ideological classes" include groups which are really instances of the political classes. Marx does not use the concept of political classes but I would provisionally submit that it is a useful one. Examples of the intellectual classes would include priests, lawyers, teachers, writers, journalists, artists and scientists. The political classes would include politicians, judges, administrators, trade union leaders, soldiers and policemen. Both these classes are groups of people whose activities, in the spheres of intellectual and political practice, are not directly productive of surplus value. They are defined by their locations in the structures of intellectual and political practice as

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29. *ibid.*, p.420.

these locations relate to the circulation of capital and labour-power.

The substantive class divisions in capitalist society can be summarized in formal terms by the general division: labour which is productive of surplus value/labour unproductive of surplus value. The field of articulation of the class division of labour is a socio-practical one: this axis is mapped on the field of differences between the production, distribution and consumption of all social products.

The current movements of the joint articulation of these two axes.

The two axes of the social division of labour in capitalism are conjointly articulated, but this joint articulation is not a static one. It exists in process. Currently the process takes three aspects. Firstly, on the substantive level, the movement is towards increased class polarization (involving increased proletarianization of the 'middle' classes) and towards increased technical specialization (increased technical division of labour). Secondly, on the formal level, the movement is towards increased amounts of labour which is unproductive of surplus value and towards increased 'intellectualization' of labour. Thirdly, on the level of the field of articulation, the movement is towards increased urbanization and increased consumption.<sup>30</sup>

Manifestations of the double articulation

On the technical axis, there are many examples of ideological differences reflecting this fact of the double articulation of the division of labour. At the substantive level, there may be class divisions within technical groups. Thus, the people working within a factory are all members of the same productive process, yet their relation to capital differentiates them there and then. Such relations between owners of capital, agents of capital and victims of capital, generate fundamental differences in ideology. The same idea can take entirely different forms within each of these classes. Similarly, within the technical field of news-production is mapped a definite class axis reflected in the different backgrounds of editors, journalists and print-setters. These class divisions may produce class ideologies which complicate and cut across any shared ideologies due to joint co-operation in the same technical process. On the formal level, ideological differences may arise

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30. It is to be remembered that this 'trend' analysis might look quite different for capitalism in the Third World.

between groups of productive and unproductive labourers. Although, technically, both groups may produce the same thing, they are structurally divided by their production or non-production of surplus value. This division or relation may be reflected in opposing ideologies. Thus the company chemist and the chemistry lecturer may both produce the same substance, yet their structural difference (and its effects in terms of income, housing, etc.) may produce quite different social ideologies. Similarly, on the basis that a housewife is an unproductive labourer (in the Marxist sense) and her husband is productive (of surplus value), there may arise sharp ideological differences in some situations (e.g. a strike). Finally, on the level of the field of articulation, it is possible to see production/distribution/consumption divisions mapped on the field city/town/countryside. For example, in a seaside town with a rural hinterland, there are structural divisions between those who produce there (e.g. farm owners, labourers), those who consume there (e.g. holidaymakers), those who distribute commodities there (e.g. shopkeepers) and those who produce for the holidaymakers (e.g. hoteliers). These relations may be reflected in differences in ideology which may cut across ideologies shared by common residence, differences further complicated by the class divisions within each of these groups.

On the class axis, double articulation means that technical relations within or between classes can be reflected in ideological differences which are not available to analysis which limits consciousness to class boundaries. Thus, the technical divisions between the financial and industrial bourgeoisie cut across their shared class position and can generate ideological conflict. Technical differences between skilled and unskilled labourers, supervisors and workers, executive politicians and back-benchers, headmaster and junior teachers, and professors and junior lecturers produce concrete effects which are often the material basis of an ideological difference. Differences in detail function within a class, in some situations, may be explosive contradictions which set a class against itself in political and intellectual practice. Class and class consciousness are by no means synonymous. Until technical divisions within the Western working class have been reduced through developed automation, and until their political concretization in trade unions has

been removed, there seems little hope of a united class, conscious of itself. Similarly, on the formal level, the fact that both labourers and capitalist share in the same surplus-value producing process may generate a shared ideology which blurs reflected differences in class ideology and contrasts with the social ideologies of capitalism's unproductive classes. On the level of the field of articulation, town/countryside divisions may separate people in the same class and produce differences in (for example) political ideology. For example, agricultural labourers in Western societies of the twentieth century, have been politically more passive and ideologically more reactionary than urban factory workers. At the same time, the fact that all people are involved in a national network of production, consumption and distribution practices may generate nationalist or patriotic ideologies which neutralize class ideologies. Patriotism or nationalism is often amusingly dealt with by Marxists. If it occurs in the Third World, then it is seen as proletarian class consciousness, but when it occurs in European countries it is seen as the consciousness of the bourgeoisie implanted in the heads of the uneducated masses. In my view, if production is organized on a national scale then national and nationalist ideologies are inevitable. Internationalism only begins to arrive with the mature development of international social relations of production.

A cursory glance at this double articulation of the social division of labour within Western capitalist society indicates the naivety of posing class relations as the only basis of divisions between people in that kind of society. Obviously, the 'technical' relations are also operative. All these technical relations generate similarities and differences in social ideology, which do not necessarily fit neatly with class boundaries. Relations between men and women, city-dwellers and country people, producers and consumers, intellectuals and manual labourers, one detail labourer and another, etc. are all active structures which reflect contradictory ideologies. Of course, it must be remembered that the two axes are never separate and the above-mentioned technical relations are only articulated in class-specific forms. On the other hand, it must also be remembered that class relations are only articulated in technical forms. Classes are not abstract collective subjects riding through history in a vacuum, they are groups of people engaged in specific practical

processes. Marxism has tended to reduce the division of labour to class antagonisms, thus going to the opposite extreme from Durkheimians who reduce it to occupational differences. In advanced capitalist societies, imperial wealth has meant a highly differentiated division of labour involving both complex class formations and complex technical formations. For such societies, no simple class or occupational model could be adequate to found an analysis of their ideological formations. Above all, we should never forget that the general map of social relations is constantly in movement and that the complicated field of ideological differences will reflect these trends.

If we remember that class relations are only mapped out in technical terms on a definite geographical field of social labour, we may be able to attain the degree of specificity and sophistication required for a satisfactory analysis of the increasingly complex forms of social consciousness. Moreover, such a stance provides us with the valid theoretical concepts for understanding the existence of antagonistic structural relations between people in societies where class divisions are being abolished. Thus, in China, there are still antagonistic social relations in the economy outside any existing class relations, e.g. between intellectuals and labourers, peasants and factory-workers, townspeople and country-folk. Also, in the field of social relations within superstructural practices, there are definite political relations between Party members and non-Party members. All these social relations generate ideologies and, without the simplistic class-consciousness connection, we are in a position to begin to understand the sharp variations in forms of ideology in such societies. Social structures are the basis of ideologies and they are doubly articulated on a technical and a class level. Until a stage of society is reached where class relations have disappeared and 'technical' relations have been relegated to the divisions within the daily round of all people, there are bound to be sharp divisions within the social forms of consciousness.

Utopianism, in the current analysis of social ideologies, in my view, is largely the consequence of defining ideologies simply as "the site of class struggles",<sup>31</sup> and failing to see the mesh of technical and

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31. Callinicos's phrase. See A. Callinicos Althusser's Marxism (1976 London:Pluto Press), p.100.

class structures which reflects a complex field of ideological differences. Callinicos's critique of Althusser provides a good example of the tendency to view ideologies one-sidedly as the site of class struggle. He argues, crudely, that, in class societies, ideology is:

"... essentially a means by which the ruling class maintains its position by obscuring the conditions of exploitation and oppression at the heart of society. The working class's need for such an ideology does not exist, since its interests lie in the abolition of all class society." <sup>32</sup>

Consequently, he must attribute the continued existence of ideology (in general) in the U.S.S.R. to the alleged fact that it is not 'really socialist' but rather a form of 'bureaucratic state capitalism'. His historicism requires him to tend to view all socialist societies as problem-free utopias and, where there exists political totalitarianism or mystifying mythologies, he is forced to deny any socialism at the economic level. In this way the problem of ideologies and ideological conflict in socialist society is brushed under the carpet. The key reason for this simplistic approach and its political effects is the one-dimensional concept of the class-ideology connection. Its inevitable consequence is the view that ideology will naturally disappear as such with the abolition of class relations. From the analysis above, I think it is clear that such a view is theoretically wrong. If we take Marx seriously, and view the forms of social consciousness as reflections of social relations, it is obvious that no simple class model of ideology is permissible. Many social divisions apart from class must disappear before mystificatory ideologies can vanish.

In political terms, the double articulation of the division of labour, in capitalist societies, has produced several notable ideological effects; effects which considerably hamper the emergence of a politically united, class-conscious proletariat. For example, there are technical divisions within the Western working classes which have engendered a variety of sharply opposed ideologies, e.g. those ideological divisions over wage differentials, modes of consumption and political action. Divisions

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32. *ibid.*, p. 99.



at work between 'youth' and 'adults', produce different ideologies of consumption and consequent 'political' conflict. The street gang may be 'doing nothing' whilst the parents prefer to watch the television at home: a difference that may only be soluble through the exercise of parental or state power. Divisions between the sexes in the labour process have resulted in a percentage of female wage-labourers and intellectuals blaming men, implicitly or explicitly, for various practical problems of female existence under capitalism. Similarly, divisions between intellectuals and wage-labourers are reflected in workers' ideological opposition to the Left politics of student "layabouts". Relations between the races over matters of employment, housing and schools have produced a great deal of racist ideology throughout the working classes. Militants can ignore these structural ideological divisions, which cut across class and class consciousness, if they wish - but at their peril. Nor is it any use blaming the existence of non-socialist ideologies, in the brains of the proletariat, upon the media of mass communications. The news editors did not invent the social relations which generate and sustain these ideologies, even though they may usually purvey materials which do little to contradict them. Moreover, there is some truth in the journalists' argument that 'they can always switch the T.V. off'. Although the media do produce the consumers they require, it is also true that the social conditions of capitalist society generate both the media and the consumers required for a happy interconnection. Workers do not watch T.V. all night just because they are ideologically 'hooked' by its products, but also because they are tired, bored, unsatisfied, poor, lacking in the education required to find books interesting, lacking decent social facilities to go out, and isolated within their nuclear families.

Callinicos thinks that Althusser's work implies a politics which sees the intellectual institutions as the first target of revolutionary struggle rather than the "smashing of the capitalist state".<sup>33</sup> He describes this as "reformism". I doubt if Althusser would have suggested this. He merely proposed that the key "ideological apparatuses"

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33. *ibid.*, p.105.

in modern capitalism were the schools.<sup>34</sup> Certainly, to obtain socialism, the capitalist state must be destroyed. But the destruction of that state will not be achieved until socialists develop strategies which take into account the depth of the divisions, both structural and ideological, which fragment working classes already deterred by Stalinism. Even if a section of the present British working class arose and 'smashed' the British capitalist state, I doubt if the society it constructed would share any more than the economic means of production. Unfortunately for political militants, social relations in modern capitalism are very complicated and generate a mesh of complex ideologies which have a firm practical grip. Without the advancement of the decline of British capitalism and the consequent simplification of the technical division of labour, corresponding to an increase in the political awareness of the working class, there can be little value in simplistic slogans. Ideology is a vital element of any social formation and its importance has never been so pronounced as today. The socialist movement must reject economistic adventurism and dedicate itself to work that is aware of the depth and complexity of ideologies predicated by the current configuration of capitalist social relations. The plurality of differences in social ideology in modern, capitalist Britain, corresponding to the complex class formation and highly differentiated technical division of labour, is such as to transform pleas for a united, revolutionary class into simple slogans with no grip on the complex structures of practical reality. Moreover, this transformation is probably not just an objective effect, but one which is also subjectively realized in the minds of many workers as 'the utopianism of marginal sects'. In the current Western situation, class pluralism is real, and political ideologies which assume united classes must, therefore, appear as fanciful and unreal. The pluralism in class structure and class ideology may be declining but, for the moment at least, it must be recognised as a fact and political strategy must be moulded accordingly.

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34. See (1971) op.cit., pp.145-149.

Dominant ideology, class struggle and the social totality

It has been presupposed throughout the above analysis that the most general dialectic in class societies is the dialectic between social unity and class struggle and that this dialectic operates in concrete forms in all three modes of social practice.<sup>35</sup> To say, as Rancière does,<sup>36</sup> that Marxism does not concern itself with "social cohesion" is one-sided. Social totalities based on class divisions move through an interaction between class struggle and social unity (in their various practical forms). Thus it is important to talk about "institutions" as well as "contradictions". The institutions of economic, political and intellectual life can be seen as 'monuments' reflecting the social dialectic between conflict and unity. These monuments are the social battle scars of the struggle between classes in the different spheres of practice.

Class 'conflict', a concept referring to purely structural antagonisms within social practices, and class 'struggle', a concept referring to conscious, actually fought battles, are features of all social practices within class societies. Social institutions, such as the state, therefore, should not just be seen as simple manifestations of economic contradictions, but also of political and intellectual antagonisms. Like revolutions, they are fully social effects of a fully social, class war. In research, Marxists have spent some time attempting to demonstrate the role of social institutions, such as the state, the church and the press, in creating forms of social unity. Such analyses have often tended to take on abstract structuralist-functionalist forms since they have ignored the other side of the coin, which is that these social institutions have arisen out of the ashes of class conflict and class struggle. Only when both sides of the analysis are put together will we get an historical picture of the movement of social totalities. Both sides will only meet if we begin with determinate social relations and move forward through history, rather than beginning with institutional effects and working backwards to their social functions.

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35. I use 'class' in this section to include technical groups, i.e. groups united by their detail function in the social division of labour. This simplifies the discussion, although I recognize that it indicates that questions raised by the last section have not been fully resolved. It is interesting that in Capital Marx uses 'class' many times in exactly this double sense.

36. (1974) op.cit.,pp.2,3.

Class struggles are fought out over the matters of wealth, power and ideas; none of these struggles should be overlooked. Each social practice has its own law of movement and thus historicist attempts to render practices contemporaneous should be rejected. However two theses of Lenin should be remembered. Firstly, the destruction of class society is impossible without the political dictatorship of the proletariat. Class differences within ideas and the economy cannot disappear unless the class, whose object is a classless society, establishes itself in the seat of social power peculiar to the society it overthrows. Thus, a proletarian revolution against a capitalist totality must seize the state institutions before all else. Of course, as Lukacs noted, if the revolutionary class is not wielding socialist ideology, then that seizure may be the first step towards establishing a new form of class society. Secondly, there are occasional collisions between the relatively autonomous moments of the social totality which produce an historical conjuncture of a revolutionary nature. For reasons peculiar to themselves and to their structural interconnection, each type of social practice may collapse into disarray, leaving space for social revolution. The full development of every single social practice is not vital, in the Marxist conception, for a social revolution to be possible. However, as Marx pointed out, people only set themselves problems that they can solve. Thus the conditions (economic, political and intellectual), inherited by the revolutionary class in such a situation, may not correspond to the ideal conditions for the creation of true communism (in Marx's conception). The short-term effect, as in the U.S.S.R., may be a socialist economy with non-socialist political and ideological structures: a condition vitally affected by inherited economic and political circumstances, but also by the social forms of consciousness that were bound up with the emergent Russian communism. Such societies must undergo further political and intellectual ('cultural') revolutions before socialist development can advance on the right track. On the other hand, of course, their economic socialism may be destroyed because of their non-socialist politics and ideologies. Intellectual practice is a vital part of 'premature' socialist societies - just as much as it is in declining capitalist societies.

We arrive now at the hoary old question of 'the dominant ideology'. It seems to me that the controversies amongst modern Marxists over the consequences of dominant ideology are too often underpinned by a lack of its concept. It is therefore necessary to define a concept of 'dominant ideology' in terms of the arguments advanced so far in this text. Firstly, we should talk of 'dominant ideologies'. Definitions in the singular assume a coherent body of ideas manipulated by the ruling class: this is a wholly unMarxist assumption. Ideology does not usually exist in systematic theories but in mobile mists reflecting constant developments in social relations. Moreover, it is the unconscious reflection of structure and not the chosen symbol of a creative, asocial subject. Quite simply, the dominant ideologies are those ideologies reflected by the dominant social relations. These relations in all societies are the relations of economic practice (the mode of production). Thus in capitalism the dominant ideology is composed of forms such as Equality, Property, Liberty, Right and Self-Interest; forms all reflected by the key economic relation of exchange.<sup>37</sup> However, as we have said all along, the forms of consciousness take their contents from the elements of social practices and their internal structures. Consequently, although the specificity of the capitalist epoch is reflected in the general ideologies of Property, Freedom etc., these ideologies take particular contents within specific classes engaged in specific practices in definite social structural locations. Thus, for example, one dominant ideology, for the capitalist class, takes the shape of 'freedom from workers' or state interference with the production of profits' etc., whilst in proletarian terms, that same dominant ideology takes the shape of 'the right to work' and 'freedom from exploitation'. These examples are very basic and the more obscure, yet equally extensive forms adopted by the dominant ideologies (for example, the role of Property and Self-Interest in academic and lay philosophy) need to be determined, since without them the concept of 'dominant ideologies' loses its bite. The varied appearances of dominant ideologies throughout the dark corridors and dusty niches of the social

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37. See Marx (1974) op.cit., p.172.

formation need to be specified before the concept can regain a sharp, political value - but, when recovered, that value will be more profound and critical than before. Previous conceptions of 'dominant ideology', as the ideology of the bourgeoisie or as the ideology of a particular non-economic practice, have had immediate attraction, not least because of their simplicity, but they lacked depth and accuracy. The concept proposed here will hopefully remedy that.

Finally, there is the question of the 'society-effect' investigated by Althusser. Sociologists have frequently located social unity within the cement of ideology and, as we have seen, Poulantzas did much the same. Althusser, in his essay on the Ideological State Apparatuses,<sup>38</sup> steeped all men in 'the ideology of the ruling class' and thus immobilized the society, until the profit rate dropped to nothing. In Reading Capital, Althusser locates the mechanism of the 'society-effect' in the mode of production - the capitalist mode of production is thus said to be the mechanism which produces the existence of a society.<sup>39</sup> If Althusser is arguing that what primarily differentiates types of society is their modes of economic production, then he is undoubtedly correct. But if he is proposing that social unity is established in the mode of production, I would disagree. Social unity is the result of a particular combination of economic, political and intellectual practices. Wealth, power and ideas are all important in the establishment of social cohesion; as they are in the creation of class conflict.

### Reading ideologies - a new direction

The basic premise running throughout this work has been that the historical, materialist reading of ideologies must begin with historically determinate social relations. Historical specificity and structural

38. See ch.2, supra.

39. Althusser and Balibar (1970) op.cit., see pp.64-68.

determination have been the axioms. From social relations, between definite material elements of particular practices at a definite historical moment, we can discover the essential nature of an ideological formation. From this historical beginning, we can move to the precise forms of existence of an ideology displaced into other social practices.

Just as value presents itself as an intrinsic quality of the commodity which embodies it, so too an ideology appears as an intrinsic quality of the individual carrying it. All too often, the analysis of forms of consciousness has failed to separate ideology from its conditional appearances. For example, journalists who are active in the dissemination of pro-status quo ideologies are often seen by the Left to be conscious agents of the bourgeoisie. An ideology, a form of consciousness, thus presents itself as a chosen attribute of an individual (a 'prejudice') or group (a shared 'norm') rather than what it really is, a reflection of a social relation. A social relation between men over the material means of practice thus takes on the character of an objective attribute of an individual subject.

As I have argued throughout, the mechanism which gives any form of consciousness its appearance as an objective attribute of individual subjects is social practice. Like value, an ideology is a result of a human labour-process under certain material conditions and, again like value, it appears as separate from that process. What is for the labourer a thing in movement appears in the final product as a fixed quality without motion.<sup>40</sup>

It is necessary to break through this ideology of ideology and reach the fact that ideology is always in motion, as an element of a human practice reflecting the social relations under which that practice is carried out. Ideology is integral to all social practices and thus it is located throughout the social formation. Any ideology is a product of social relations and at the same time it reproduces those relations in practice. The specificity of any ideology is, therefore, only recoverable on the basis of a knowledge of its generative social relation. Specific ideologies are a necessary element of a human practice; without them that

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40. Paraphrasing Marx (1974) op.cit., p.176.

practice cannot continue on a regular basis. Determined and yet determining, men's ideologies constitute an integral part of the material conditions which they inherit from the dead hand of history.

The Marxist reading of a specific ideology in a specific discourse must begin with the social relation that grants the ideology its specificity. That is the first methodological principle. Problems immediately arise: Which social relation? Past or present? The first question is easily answered by saying that the researcher must follow his nose until he has found the relation which necessitates the ideology. The second question is more difficult. Normally, one would expect a living ideology to reflect a living social relation; however, it is perfectly possible for an ideology to survive its relation of origin within a new relation, the relation of adoption. One principle is clear here: no active ideology exists without a necessitating social relation. Of course, a 'dead' ideology can be 'preserved' in books, films etc. - but even there, it would take a 'live' social relation to reactivate it.

All scientific analysis, as Marx noted,<sup>44</sup> begins "post festum" with the "results" of a "process of development" at hand. As I have maintained throughout, we must not confuse the present appearances with the process of development. The apparent form of an ideology, such as 'political demonstrations' may not be the essential form developed throughout history. This alerts us to a third methodological principle which is not to forget that current appearances may conceal altogether different processes.

Of course, the problem is that an ideology rarely resides in its 'practice of origin' alone, more often (especially if that practice is economic), it will also live within other practices. The worker does not only produce and consume, he engages in thought and political activity. Ideologies born in productive practice will be displaced into non-productive practices such as sport, child-rearing, trade unions, politics, and so on. Clearly it is useful to continue by talking of 'practice of origin' and 'adopted practice'. This analytic distinction should help us to clarify a way forward since it indicates the historicity of structural configurations and anchors the emphasis on process.

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41. *ibid.*p.80.



It is important to register the fact that the displacement of an ideology is not something that happens by magic; it is a structural process carried out by people. Magical categories, supposing the self-acting omniscience of abstract structures, must give way to the categories of historical materialism which recognize the materiality of subjectivity and its elemental nature in all social practices. Subjectivity, and the degree of variation in an individual's daily practices must guarantee that some ideologies will travel far and wide. Where people can vary their activities, to any reasonable degree, we can expect the entangled fusion of ideologies, relating to different technical functions and class opportunities. In Victorian Britain, one would expect the class-consciousness connection to be much more rigid because the working classes lived in conditions which limited the variety of their practices and which involved the prolonged centrality of economic practice. On the other hand, in a declining, post-Imperial Great Britain, still enjoying the benefits of previous exploitation, the class-consciousness connection is quite flexible. Conditions permit more variety of activity and the working day, for many, has shortened. The social practices available for each person are, in any class society, limited primarily by the material conditions of existence of each class. Thus, the analysis of ideology-displacement processes requires a structural analysis of the total society - something that is distinctly overdue in Marxist analysis.

So, an ideology may be displaced. It is crucial to consider the possible consequences of displacement. The first principle of this type of analysis is that every practice contains its own necessary ideologies and, therefore, there may arise a contradiction between the adopted ideology and the 'resident' ideology. All other things being equal, the continued activity of the 'resident' social relation must neutralize or destroy the adopted ideology for the individual. Such a process of annihilation however may leave, as residues, the images or content of the adopted ideology: these may live on within the resident ideology thus bearing a new form. This is an example of how a form can be separated from a content - a possibility alien to structuralist analysis of ideologies. Other things, however, are not always equal. Because of the relations between the adopting practice and other social practices, the

adopted contradictory ideology may be maintained. In such a case, a contradiction will exist between the ideologies within the adopting practice. This contradiction may be resolved in that it forces changes in the social relations structuring that practice - thus producing a contradiction between the resident ideology and the structure of the practice. (Such a situation must be 'impossible' for the subject caught within it). As regards the content of an adopted ideology, contrary to a resident ideology, it may undergo some change, reflecting the material elements of its new home, or it may force changes within the content or imagery of the resident ideology. The material and structural circumstances producing the acceptance of an ideology contrary to a person's practical experience needs historical investigation.

There may, of course, be a situation of non-contradiction. In this instance, the resident and the adopted ideologies can happily take on new contents and become, like gases, thoroughly mixed in an expanded form. Such a situation may produce a condensation of images and an ideology of some strength and flexibility. It is also feasible that only the form of an ideology (its inner structure) may be displaced, leaving its contents (or images) behind. This possibility is a case of form-displacement whereby a thought-structure is displaced without its images. Such a case is an instance of abstracted modes of thought. In this situation, an adopted form can take on new substance from the material elements of the adopting practice. Is form-displacement characteristic of the work of theorists or scientists? On the other hand, it is also feasible in theory that only the substance of an ideology may be adopted - a case of adopted imagery. Is this content-displacement characteristic of artistic or journalistic work? Art seems to acquire its nature from the combination of images bearing several forms of thought. This situation, again, is a possibility unthinkable in structuralism: a situation where a significant function may be displaced without its structure because of its significance for another social practice.

Ideologies may not only be displaced into existing practices however. They may act as structuring elements in the constitution of a new, hitherto non-existent practice. In such a case, there is the very real possibility of an ideology founding social relations. Given, however, that all practices within a social formation must interact, the relations

of consistency/contradiction with other social practices will affect the development of the new practice. New practices may thus be crushed or bent out of shape; or, if the circumstances are ripe, they may live and flourish. But, in general, it is important to register this possibility of ideology structuring a new practice. New practices do not simply emerge in forms demanded by social structural determinations: they must be created by men carrying determinate forms of consciousness, specific social ideologies.

Thus, we can conclude that it is a methodological principle in the historical materialist reading of ideologies that a displaced ideology must be considered in its complex relation with the relatively autonomous structuring capacity of the adopting practice and its integral ideologies.

Now, it is clearly not going to be easy to follow the historical movement of an ideology when it is regularly displaced from practice to practice. But there is no apparent reason why the science of ideologies should be easy. It is simply clear that methodological problems of profound complexity exist within this field. For example, if we consider the apparent ideology of 'political demonstrations', existing in news reports, with all its condensed, constituent structures and images, we might hypothesize that it is a determinate form of a key political ideology of all ruling classes - 'resistance to authority, or power, is a bad, futile, unnecessary, misguided thing'. This ideology may perhaps be characteristic of all societies based on economic social relations of domination or exploitation. But how does such an ideology become active in news reporting? Is the ideology displaced into news reporting through the practical entry of the dominant economic and political classes and their offspring into newspaper companies? But today not all editors and journalists are sons and daughters of capitalists and statesmen and ruling class ideologues; many journalists come from petit-bourgeois and working class backgrounds. Perhaps, the examination of media dissemination of ideology, with its effects on the brains of the consumers, requires us to assume that the journalists themselves have already been 'well socialized'? Miliband points to the fact that, in capitalist societies, many forms of mass media are profit-making enterprises themselves and thus their owners and top executives tend to suppress ideologies which run contrary to the

ideological principles of capitalist production.<sup>42</sup> He argues that, apart from this financial interest, these men are often committed conservatives anyway and that their interests and political ideologies "seep downwards" to structure, restrictively, the imagery and ideology of the products. No doubt these arguments are valid, but they do not, in themselves account for the specificity of ideologies in the media. The arguments merely explain the non-existence of generally radical ideologies and the existence of generally conservative or liberal ideologies: they do not explain the existence of specific conservative (or radical) ideologies within media products. Likewise, Miliband's statements about the 'influence' of advertisers, in dictating policies, and of governments, in obtaining favourable access, are probably true but limited. Comments he could have made, on the need of commercial media to sell their produce to a wide, yet (given competition) shrinking, market, and the structuring effect this has, in terms of which stories are left in and which are left out,<sup>43</sup> would have suffered from similar defects.

It is not difficult to locate the institutions of mass communication in the total structure of social practices or to describe the expressed political ideologies of the proprietors and senior executives. Nor is it too difficult to discover the economic relations within media institutions. The difficult thing is to identify the specificity of the ideologies embodied in media products. One thing is certain and that is: the final specificity of any ideology and its substantive imagery in news reports is not given by the practices of origin of that ideology. That final specificity is only achieved in the structure of news production at a particular historical moment in a definite social context.

Ideologies are elements in all practical processes and disappear in the final product of the practice. Any scientific analysis begins "post festum". The science of ideologies must explain and identify the place of specific ideologies in the concrete result, the product of the

42. See R. Miliband The state in capitalist society (1970 London: Quartet Books).

43. During my 1973 semiological analysis of 1 month's national press, there were 5 reports of 'political demonstrations' in the Daily Mirror, and 6 in the Sun, compared to 32 in the Guardian and 43 in the Times. The former papers had circulations in 1972 of 4,289,233 and 2,625,532 whilst the figures for the latter two were 341,075 and 345,016 respectively.

practice which is

"... the concentration of many determinations, hence unity of the diverse."<sup>44</sup>

It must abstract the determinant moments of the processes of development, examine them, and, finally, resynthesize them into a unity "which appropriates the concrete, reproduces it as a concrete in the mind."<sup>45</sup> In this way, the nature and effects of specific ideologies resting within specific practices can be determined. I began this work with the press reports of 'political demonstrations': "the point of departure in reality and hence the point of departure for observation and conception".<sup>46</sup> I continued by attempting to develop some of the abstract categories which would enable a full historical synthesis of moments concretized in those reports. That synthesis has not yet been achieved; however, in the following pages, I shall try to lay down the methodological principles necessary for its realization. The nub of this attempt must be a further examination of the concept of 'ideological formation'.

Firstly, it should be clear that an ideological formation is different from a theoretical formation. The latter is a systematized composition of ideological formations and abstracted thought-forms. An ideological formation is a practical impression or collection of practical impressions. How is it constituted? Through the practice of observation. What is observation? I would suggest that we can only really comprehend observation if we distinguish its two separate moments. At this point, the available terminology seems less than adequate, however, it can be improved by subsequent analysis. I submit that observation has two conjoint moments: physical and social. On the physical level, a living being uses his eyes and sees physical substances. On the social level, we must say that an agent of a social practice, through the grid of specific social ideologies, sees objects with determinate social forms of appearance and that this vision is conducted within particular social relations. These two moments are crucially different but doubly articul-

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44. Marx (1973) op.cit.p.101.

45. *ibid.*

46. *ibid.*

ated in an inextricable conjunction. The relation between subject and object is thus inconceivable outside its specific social location.

What is it then that is actually observed? For any given social situation, the answer must be that the observer sees the social forms of appearance of a thing which are visible through his ideological grid. An ideological formation, therefore, is a practical impression constituted by the manifest forms of a thing, as seen through the filter of determinate social ideologies. The observer does not see the thing-in-itself but only the thing-in-its-social-appearance. But, no social being is ideologically tabula rasa and, so, the only manifestations actually observed are those visible through the grid of his social ideologies. On the other hand, it is untrue to say that the observer only sees what is already in his consciousness: the Husserlian "intentional object". He does not invent the thing-to-be-seen, it exists outside of his vision. The appearances of a thing are visible to anyone with eyes, they are external to the observer. This does not mean that he sees all there is to be seen, but that the forms of appearance of the thing only impress themselves on his brain if they are visible through the spectacles of his ideology. To summarize, a thing is only impressed on an observer's brain through the double mediation of his ideological grid and its own social 'charaktermasken'. The subject-object relation is real therefore, but the object does not present itself directly to the subject and the subject does not view the object with a pure vision.

Practical impressions or ideological formations are thus the ideologically filtered appearances of material reality. They are the product of a practice of vision, conducted by a being employing determinate biological and ideological means, whose raw materials are the social manifestations of a particular thing; a practice structured by determinate social relations. This theory opposes one-sided conceptions which think of the product of observation either as the creative results of the 'interpretative' vision (phenomenology) or as the true nature of the observed thing (empiricist epistemology). Ideological formations are neither the invented falsehoods of imaginative subjects nor the hard truths of transparent realities. Rather, they are the products of an historical conjuncture between an ideologically structured vision and a socially disguised object.

It should be obvious that the key distinction in my conception of ideological formations is that between ideological formations and forms of appearance. One of the typical assumptions in the conceptions of ideology of many Marxists is that the forms of appearance of a thing are received directly, and are not filtered through the grid of an observer's social ideologies.<sup>47</sup> Such an assumption leads to the mechanical notion of 'reflection'. For, if one assumes that the observer is tabula rasa, the social relations and conditions within which he acts at any given moment must directly produce his current thoughts. Unless one remembers to include the materiality and specificity of subjectivity within the theory of ideology, an over-crude picture will result. Such a picture excludes the possibility of contradictions between displaced ideologies and those reflected by the social relations of the moment. These contradictions, in my view, ought to form the central focus of the developing Marxist science of ideologies. To begin to understand these conflicts is to begin to arrive at the meat of all current issues involving ideology.

It is true that Marx argues that social phenomena present themselves in particular forms, but this should not be interpreted to mean that the observer sees all these forms or that he can never see through them. If that was the case then the Marxian theory of ideology would preclude a theory of revolution and would constitute a theory of closed normative orders. Such a Marxism results in a political strategy which is based on the need to change social relations in order to 'demystify' consciousness, and which is thus plagued by the problem that men with 'mystified' minds do not wish to change social relations. It often occurs to me that, rather than investigating the reasons for the working class's inability to recognize capitalist exploitation, research should be directed to the reasons for the fact that recognition of that exploitation does not necessarily lead to insurrection, or for the fact that contradictions exist within working class consciousness. Much Marxist theorizing tends to 'oversocialize' the working class and thus loses a grasp on the complex connections between ideologies and social relations.

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47. See for example J. Mepham "The theory of ideology in 'Capital'" W.P.C.S. 6 (1974), pp.98-123. Mepham merely hints at the mediation of the observer's ideologies in the observation of forms of appearance.

For example, John Kephau hints that the conservative nature of the consciousness of the English working class is overdetermined, that it is an effect of a condensation of ideologies (from everyday economic practice, from the mass media and from the success of the unions in entering the institutions of power).<sup>48</sup>

Overdetermination in itself is an important possibility to be investigated, as is contradiction between displaced and resident ideologies. However I think it is necessary to open our minds to the possibility that the working classes can often see through the mystifying appearances of bourgeois society and yet do not wish to take state power. I think that this 'possibility' is actually more of a fact than is commonly thought. A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since Marx wrote Capital. Class struggles at home and socialist revolutions abroad have frequently shredded the masks and disguises of Western bourgeois societies, the development of education has forced new questions and the continuation of profits has brought new and more commodities. What is now at stake in the theory of ideology is why so many people are aware of economic exploitation (and/or political domination, and/or cultural hegemony) and yet still say 'We can't do anything about it' or 'there's no point'. The structures of bourgeois society contain contradictions which have produced opposing sets of ideologies, notably those revolving around class divisions. Radical ideologies, and inherited pre-bourgeois ideologies, may be just as operative, in the readings of forms of appearance, as those ideologies which reflect and reproduce the structures of bourgeois society. Hence, it is vital to maintain a clear, theoretical distinction between the observer's subjective grid and the object's forms of appearance. They are by no means the same thing, as Marxists tend to assume.

Marx's Capital tends to divert our attention from the subject's ideologies to the forms of appearance of the thing. That is hardly Marx's fault, nor is it any weakness in his theory. He demonstrated that bourgeois social relations appear in disguised form and implied that

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48. *ibid.* pp.117,118.



this fact is vital to the comprehension of their social invisibility. His task was to investigate the economic formations of capitalist society; so he inevitably and simultaneously developed a theory of their forms of appearance because the latter were his starting point in reality (especially, as they were described, or transformed into theory, in bourgeois political economy). Marx did not need to consider the ways people read those forms of appearance because his object was the economy-in-itself. My task is to investigate the emergence of specific ideological formations and so I need to do more than consider the forms of appearance of real phenomena. Because an ideological formation is established in a person's brain through the mediation of his ideologies, I must take the latter into account. The ideologies which act as the receiving filter are vital to the constitution of our theoretical object.

There is no time here to engage in a full historical analysis of the conditions of emergence of any ideological formation. However, from the discussion above, it is now clear that we can only comprehend the practical impression (or ideological formation) by thinking of it as a product of a practice of observation.<sup>49</sup> The value of this somewhat obvious basic premise will, hopefully, soon become clear. Observation is a practice, like any other, and has a definite structure. It is not simply a physical process, or automatic mechanism, with no social content. Observation has its 'labourer', raw materials and instruments of production, all being interconnected by definite social relations at a specific historical juncture.

(a) The observer. As a social being, he not only has physiological capacities, but also thinks and sees within the terms of social ideologies. These ideologies structure his sensual capacities, just as much as his sensual capacities determine his ability to carry ideologies.

(b) The instruments of observation. Often these will be constituted purely within the observer himself by his senses. But, of course, there are also external means which enable him to observe e.g. microscopes, money to enable him to travel, political access to situations, etc.

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49. For the moment, I shall ignore mythologies. This is possible because they are merely abstracted thought-forms; that is, they are developments from existing ideological formations. Mythologies are founded on thought-forms which are abstracted from their practical homes and applied to uncontrollable realities.

(c) The raw material. This is constituted in the practice of observation by the objects observed, reality as it manifests itself socially in certain structural, material and historical circumstances.<sup>50</sup>

(d) The social relations. Observation, or vision, is a structured practice; it is only conducted within definite social relations. These relations must be understood strictly within the terms of the Marxian conception of social practice. Thus, there are 'technical' relations between the observer and social reality which limit the scope and quality of his vision (e.g. the ability to observe a large street procession from a given physical location). There are also 'class' relations. These are the connections of appropriation between the observer and social reality which constitute his membership of a definite class within a given mode of production.

It is not easy to think the concept of class appropriations of social reality in relation to the practice of observation; it appears quite different from the question of class appropriation of value, the social form of economic practice. First of all it is vital to distinguish the class relations of observation from class ideologies. The latter are versions of an ideology held by people at one class pole of its reflected social relation. Class relations of observation, however, are objective connections of social appropriation between an observer and social reality. This concept involves the question: what direct social function do observed impressions serve for a given observer? Class relations in (say) food production serve to reproduce and augment the capital of the owners of the means of food production; they constitute those owners as a class. The field of study I am raising here concerns the direct social functions of the class relations of observation. It does not concern us with the technical quality of particular camera angles or spectator positions, but with the question of the objective, social purpose of that vision.

I shall fill out these remarks shortly, using the example of journalism; however, for the moment, I must finish this discussion of the social relations of observation by registering the fact that these social relations must themselves necessitate specific social ideologies. In

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50. I shall abbreviate such 'reality' in future to 'social reality'.

other words, not only does an observer see social reality through the extant social ideologies of his mind, but, also, his very relation to the observed reality in the practices of observation will, necessarily, reflect ideologies which will be effective in mediating the impression of social reality on his brain. Observation is, thus, a very complex social practice. Even sophisticated analyses within subjectivist sociology have left unnoticed the question of the social relations of observation and the effect of their reflected ideologies on vision.<sup>51</sup> Such analyses have pointed to the effect of pre-observational ideologies on the subject's interpretation of reality, but they have been unable (as far as I know) to unearth the concept of 'observational ideologies', the thought-forms necessitated by specific, practical, social relations of observation. Through the conception of observation as a practice, I have produced a distinction between pre-observational and observational categories and the (implicit) concept of their conjoint effectivity in socially structuring the product of observation practice. Armed with this theoretical development, we can go on to examine the specificity of vision in given practical contexts without reducing it to a function of the received 'normative order' or 'ruling class ideology'. At present, however, my task is to exemplify the concept of observation as a social practice, and to specify the moments of an ideological formation. For this purpose, I shall use the practice of news reporting in the capitalist press.

As social beings with their own particular biographies, people who become news reporters (the 'labourers') bring various social ideologies to the job, both at the point of entry and in the course of doing that job. Experiences at home, in prior work, in education, and in politics will be effective to one degree or another in structuring their general observational perspectives. The other characteristics of the reporter's labour-power relates to his biological or sensual capacities. It is perhaps worth noting here that his observation-senses are probably sharpened through their constant employment in his work.

The reporter's instruments of production include not only the obvious things such as telephones, pencils, notepads, expenses, etc., but also less tangible things such as 'goodwill', 'contacts', and official

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51. For example, H. Garfinkel (1967) op.cit..

access. His 'raw material' is social reality, the manifestations of social life. Reporters do not usually imagine the substance of their reports, the latter are accounts of some thing as it appears in particular local and historical contexts.

Social relations, I have already argued, can be seen to exist in a technical and a class mode. The technical relations of reporting social reality are of little concern to us here. Problems of physical observation, photographic angles, etc., are not, in themselves, crucial; although it is very necessary to note that these technical relations are conjointly articulated with the class relations of observation, and that, therefore, their content is not simply determined by the laws of nature but also by (in this case) the laws of news-appropriation. What I have called 'the class relations' (the inadequate terminology becomes manifest here) is constituted in this case by the fact that, for the reporter, reportable social reality serves as a commodity. Quite literally, it has 'news-value'; it can be exchanged for money on the information market. The reporter 'works up' a set of social appearances (as he sees them) into a value-laden utility, a news report. That report is developed, polished and finished in the newsrooms of his company before finally being sold as part of the final product, the daily newspaper. In capitalist societies, the observation practice of news reporting is a moment in the production of newspapers for exchange and, consequently, news is reported for exchange rather than use. The basic question for newsmen must always be: will the story maintain or increase circulation, will it sell? In such circumstances, the question of the accuracy, depth, and context of the information must always be secondary.

As an agent of capitalist news production, the news-reporter must deal with social reality as a miner deals with coal. For any man in such a position, social reality must, of necessity, serve as a commodity, (in this case, a commodity which becomes part of a larger commodity). It must act as an exchangeable utility. Any journalist knows that this is true; if the story does not attract the readers' money, it will never reach the presses. This is an objective fact in a capitalist newspaper company.<sup>52</sup>

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52. Certainly, 'news' in all societies must by definition be 'interesting'. But only in capitalist societies does one class define what is 'interesting' and then sell it to the other classes. I doubt (provisionally) whether this is true of transitional socialist societies where the relation between producer and consumer is political rather than economic.

Thus, the relation between the reporter and social reality is that he must observe those bits of it which will serve as exchangeable news.

This class relation between the reporter and social reality is crucial to the internal dynamic of the news production units. There is no need here to dwell on the effects of competition between capitalist newspapers on such matters as printing technology, journalists' invasion of privacy, and so on. Nor is there room to develop an analysis of what pieces of social reality are typically attended to as 'newsworthy'. All I want to bring out now is the point that this social relation between reporter and social reality necessarily reflects a particular ideology. That ideology is the ideology of 'news-value'. To report news for the capitalist press, the journalist requires a conception of what constitutes exchangeable news. With repetition, this conception is sharpened and becomes clearer. It is operative, therefore, in the observation-practice of news reporting.<sup>53</sup> Which social realities penetrate the reporter's brain, and the way they are received, are issues determined, partly, by this ideology of news-value.

The ideology of news-value is not operative outside other, more general, social ideologies carried in the reporter's brain. It is probably right to say that usually the two are thoroughly interpenetrated. In the case of the journalist who regularly produces exchangeable news written in terms alien to his own ideologies, I suspect that he must live under considerable psychological strain.

Why can I call this relation to social reality a 'class' relation with any degree of sensibility, whilst still finding the term inadequate? It is because the relation is based upon class divisions within the social production of national news. News reporters only have to view reality in terms of exchangeable news when they are working in a system where the means of production and distribution of national news are privately owned by one class.<sup>54</sup> When news is not capital it need not be

53. Previous sociological approaches, whether Weberian or ethnomethodological, have failed to grasp the central significance of the relation between agent of capital and commodity in generating the conception of news-value. They have rendered the latter in a way which did not clearly connect it with any particular social relations. See Halloran et al., (1970) op.cit., and G. Tuchman "Making news by doing work", A.J.S. (1973) 79:1, pp.110-131.

54. The working class newspapers of this country once had sizeable circulations. These were smashed by the bourgeoisie in the 1830s and 40s, through the application of a tax: see P. Hollis The pauper press (1970 London : Oxford U.P.).

exchangeable and can take much wider and more profound forms. It is not a central point of my argument that news must be interpreted and defined ideologically, in capitalist societies, by the owners of the means of news production, but, rather, that news is defined by the process of capital expansion within which it exists. News must sell and that is the definite imperative. The process is more crucial than the ideas of its beneficiaries, the owners. It is this process which requires news to be exchangeable for the money of the news-consumers. The appropriation of social reality in terms of its news value is thus a social relation which can only exist in class societies: it is a class relation. In socialist societies of the future, national and international news stories will not need to be exchangeable before they are reported and published. The popular press of the future will not need to ignore topics which today are under-reported because they do not sell. News could be defined, in wider terms and interpreted in a variety of ways, directly (not by proxy as today) by both its producers and its consumers. When the fetters of the capitalist relations of production are taken off mass news dissemination, there need be no economic limits to the variety and depth of news reports. Not only could a wide variety of issues be dealt with, but they could receive their full historical context and their concrete social implications. News could cease to be ahistorical snippets of uncontextualized, social processes and become a fully social piece of information.<sup>55</sup> Where it is produced for exchange within a system of class divisions, news must remain a shrivelled piece of information, and social reality must remain unreported unless it can be packaged and sold as a daily novelty.

In short, the class relations of news production do not in themselves involve the subjectivity or ideologies of the newspaper owners, but rather the objective relations between news reporters and social reality. It is in this sense that the social relations under which observation takes place are crucial to understanding that observation is a social practice. It is these social relations which reflect definite

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55. Need I say that, for various reasons, the press of the existing socialist societies seems to have as limited a range of coverage and width of ideological expression as the existing capitalist press.

observational ideologies that combine with pre-observational ideologies, in the brains of their agents, to form definite observational 'grids' or 'perspectives'.

I have thus exemplified the conception of observation as a social practice. We can now return to the nature of the products of observation: ideological formations. I have argued that the impressions we receive in social practice (ideological formations) are the ideologically filtered appearances of material reality, they are the forms of appearance visible to and interpreted by our spontaneous perception. They are the effects of a conjuncture of structured vision and disguised reality. They are, moreover, not the same thing as ideologies.<sup>56</sup> The latter are the forms of consciousness which structure vision. Ideological formations are the products of observation, carried out under definite social relations, which are composed by combinations of ideologies and social appearances, in the manner suggested above. They are constituted by selected (or 'filtered') appearances and 'interpretations', they are ideologically structured impressions. Ideological formations are doubly the effect of the social structures of daily practice. Firstly, the ideologies colouring the subject's vision are reflections of social relations and, secondly, the forms of appearance of a thing are necessitated by its structure and its position within social relations. Practical, social structures thus determine both the field of vision and the field of the visible. These determinations are separate, of course, and probably take quite different forms, but nevertheless, generally, it is still true that social relations condition both vision and visibility.

What are the consequences of this conception of ideological formations for the reading of ideologies? They are quite fundamental. Most centrally, it is now clear that there are no rational grounds for attempting to extract an ideology from an ideological formation unless one has a theory of

- (a) the specificity of that ideology;
- (b) the specificity of the forms of appearance of the observed thing.

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56. Earlier on, I may have implied this, but, now that the conception has been developed, it is clear that they are distinct phenomena.

Unless the analyst can identify both components, he could not possibly claim to have found the ideologies in a discourse. For instance, concerning my 1973 reading, how did I know when I read these cuttings that my classifications of ideology were not classifications of the forms of appearance of political protest in the particular historical context of March/April 1973? To put the point at its strongest, how can I legitimately argue that the ideological structure "militants' demonstrations are outbursts of futile, mindless militancy leading to trouble" is indeed such a thing, and not merely a form of appearance of political protest in the 1970s? Does not the kind and frequency of demonstrations staged by the various Left groups give the impression that they are merely a mindless ritual? As such, of course, their stated motives become questionable by the press and the Left is open to daily ridicule and criticism. It is clearly beyond my scope to explain why political protests should present themselves in disguised, misleading forms. That is a matter for detailed historical analysis of the development of political protest and orthodox politics since the war. All I want to register here is that the social forms of appearance of material reality and the social forms of consciousness are matters which are distinct but inextricably interwoven in the substance of an ideological formation, and that, therefore, a spontaneous reading of a discourse will have no theoretical categories or methodological instruments with which to separate these elements. An ideological formation is the concentration of two determinations, a "unity of the diverse" (Marx). When it finally appears in words (or pictures) within a discourse its constituents have disappeared in the product. As elements in observation practice, the ideologies of the observer and the observed manifestations of reality fuse and meld into the final concentration, just as red and green paint mix and vanish in a concentration of brown.

In the light of this analysis, the practices of semiology and content analysis seem to be very, very wrong. As regards semiology, how can one invent any abstract principles for separating the myth from its reference? Unless one knows the historical specificity of both ideology and appearance, any attempt to define these things must be abstract. As we saw earlier, of course, semiologists cannot do their readings without effective assumptions about the historical nature of both ideology and



appearance. Without these assumptions, they could not possibly even begin to separate ideology from forms of appearance. Unfortunately, even as they stand, their efforts to describe ideologies are weak because they have no clear concept of the social reality of the referent appearance. Consequently, an analysed text is reduced to the status of a myth-container and its relation to social reality is ignored. Such an ignorance, in the case of literary criticism, must necessarily result in an absence of 'sociological' understanding of a novel's appeal and artistic quality, and, in the case of newspaper criticism, it must lead to a myopic vindictiveness towards journalists. As regards content analysis, it also fails to understand the conjuncture of ideology and appearance as the basis of discourse. Counting certain words or column inches can tell the analyst nothing about the nature of any ideologies or appearances embodied in the discourse. Even less than semiology, content analysis makes no rigorous attempt to separate ideological form from the substance of social appearance. In short, any spontaneous reading must, by definition, lack the categories and instruments necessary to separate out the diverse elements concentrated and unified in the ideological formations expressed in a discourse. Nor have spontaneous readings any sure means of comprehending the fact that pre-observational ideologies and social appearances conjoin in a particular way, which expresses the 'work' of definite observational ideologies, reflecting the social relations under which observation took place.

The present work has developed some of the concepts necessary to a Marxist theory of ideology and to a rational reading of the presence of specific social ideologies within discursive products. I have developed a clear theory of reading ideologies. We need to know the specificity of the particular ideology as a necessity of a particular social relation, the specificity of the social manifestations observed and the social relations of observation; then we can start separating the forms of consciousness from their contents in a specific discourse. This required knowledge, in short, is a knowledge of the social practice of observation which produces the ideological formation; that practice is the mechanism which determines the nature of its produce.<sup>57</sup> To understand why ideologies appear to us as

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57. It is important to remember that the appearances of reality under observation are an integral part of the practice, as its 'raw materials'.

they do in definite discourses we need to understand the mode of production in which they are immediately active.

All social phenomena are the products of specific social practices carried out under definite social relations. To understand why particular ideologies exist at all, we need to find the social relations (the 'modes of production') which necessitate them in an ongoing social practice. In the instance of the press reports of political protest, therefore, my earlier readings were spontaneous, and useless as scientific work because I took the form (the ideologies) away from the content (the appearances) arbitrarily and failed to separate the two on rational grounds. Each of those press reports should now be seen as a composition of ideological formations and, to determine the presence of dominant ideologies of particular classes within them, one would need to know the following:

1. The nature of the dominant social relations, i.e. what Marxists usually call The Mode of Production.
  2. The specific ideologies necessarily reflected by these relations.
  3. The different, class versions of these ideologies reflecting the different positions of the classes within the relevant social relations.
  4. The specific social relations of observation involved in news reporting and their necessary ideologies.
  5. The extent and nature of the presence of dominant, class ideologies in the heads of the various groups of news producers (i.e. reporters, sub-editors, editors, proprietors).
  6. The nature of the news production process, especially the power relations involved between the different classes engaged in that process.
  7. The inner structure and forms of appearance of the reported reality.
- Given these knowledges, we could then go on to discern the presence of specific ideologies (both pre-observational and observational) within those press reports.

If these preliminary investigations seem to show that reading ideology in a scientific manner is an extremely complex and arduous practice, that is no illusion. The task of understanding and identifying the nature of social ideologies has been long neglected and heavily glossed. This is an underdeveloped area of social science research and I make no apologies for indicating the immense difficulty of the tasks ahead.

Scientific knowledges of particular social ideologies and their forms of appearance are a long way off. I would like to think that I have clarified the theoretical grounds upon which they can be produced.

Two things should finally be clear. One is that the effect of particular class relations of observation may be that certain 'events' may be ignored by the capitalist press. I think this may be the main reason why political protest and militancy is, today, systematically under-reported in the popular newspapers. The necessity to produce news for exchange may act as a mode of censorship of far greater effect than the class ideologies of the proprietors or journalists. In connection with this point, we can also note that when political opposition of an illegitimate nature is finally reported, it will be seen through the spectacles of the class ideologies of the newsmen. In short, calls for the better sociological education of newsmen are not entirely hopeless, but it would be much more important to fight for the complete socialization of the means of news production in order to remove the adverse effects of capitalist social relations in the dissemination of important, daily information. Secondly, on my analysis, we do not need any false distinctions between words with given, shared meanings and words with various 'subcultural' meanings. Each ideology has its own vocabulary and discourse is merely the embodiment of ideological impressions. Thus the concept of language as 'tongue' (e.g. English) is valid, but of limited significance in the reading of ideologies. These readings and their objects take place within a specific tongue and so, given a theory of its specificity and a theory of the reported forms of appearance, any ideology is immediately readable from its text. 'Denotation' and 'connotation' are inextricably interwoven in the vocabularies of any given ideology. Language, like time, is a social structural phenomenon with definite rhythms, relations and elements peculiar to determinate ideological and structural contexts. We do not need the concepts of 'true' and 'false' meaning, introduced by Barthes, since all meaning belongs to the forms of consciousness and social realities that give it existence in specific, practical contexts. Each ideology has its own language and, therefore, a theory of that ideology is, at the very same time, a theory of its language.

## 9 , WHITHER DEVIANCE ?

### Introduction

I have outlined some basic theoretical principles for an historical materialist analysis of social ideologies. In the course of this discussion, I have defined the concept of the ideological formation - an impression formed in a subject's brain through the ideological interpretation of particular social appearances in a practice of observation under definite social relationships. Earlier I had argued that Hirst had produced the concept of deviance as a "practico-social ideology" and that, as such, deviance was an ideological formation. Hirst had produced the concept but not realized, or developed, its position within the Marxist problematic. I have attempted to show that Marxian analysis does involve a concept of ideological formation. Deviance is a specific type of ideological formation and this theoretical exploration can be concluded with the development of the concepts of that specificity.

### Negative ideologies and social censures

In chapter one, I concluded that probably the greatest source of theoretical confusion within the sociology of deviance was the conflation of the question of behaviour with that of ideology. I drew the distinction between behaviour and ideology in order to separate 'deviance' and 'behaviour' from their marriage in the questionable, sociological concept of 'deviant behaviour'. I was attempting to indicate that deviance itself was an ideological matter and that there was nothing intrinsically 'deviant' in the behaviour. Of course, it should not be implied from this that 'behaviour' is a Marxian concept. Marxism thinks in terms of social practices, as human activities carried out under certain social

relations in particular material circumstances. No human 'behaviour' exists outside specific social relations, forms of consciousness, and material conditions. Thus, the break with existing sociologies of deviance can be reformulated: sociology has failed in theory to separate questions of ideology from questions of social practice. Becker certainly conceived of deviance as an ideological label but even he failed to theorize adequately the connections and differences between the label and the practice labelled. Outsiders leaves one with a feeling that labels are arbitrarily applied and that, eventually, the labelled practice becomes defined by its own agents in terms of the label. Ultimately, for Becker, deviance was an outcome of empirical interactions between rule-makers and rule-breakers.<sup>1</sup> And, therefore, he lost the social structural connections between the ideology of the rules and the practices of the 'deviants'.

What kind of ideologies constitute the phenomenon of deviance as an ideological formation? Ideologies which specify the unacceptability or offensiveness of particular things, ideologies or practices. We can call such forms of consciousness: negative ideologies. An ideological formation, we may remember, is also composed of social appearances (observed under particular material conditions and social relations). Usually the appearances constituting an ideological formation of deviance are those of a particular social practice. The practices whose manifestations constitute part of an ideological formation of deviance can be termed: censured practices. These are practices that have been subject to social disapproval or repression. The practices which employ, as part of their inherent structure, the negative ideologies of a society or community can be called: the censuring practices. The specific, structurally contextualized product which results from the initial application of a negative ideology to a particular social practice, either in the form of words or force, is an ideological formation. This ideological formation is composed of the relevant negative ideologies and the manifestations of the censured practice; it is a practical impression produced by an observer

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1. See H. Becker Outsiders (1963 New York:Free Press),p.14: "Deviance is not a quality that lies in the behaviour itself, but in the interaction between the person who commits an act and those who respond to it."

filtering definite social realities through definite negative ideologies. Until now, this ideological formation has been termed (somewhat unhappily) a 'deviance'. I shall in future refer to it as a censure. This term captures the practical, contextualised conjunction of ideologies and appearances much better than the term 'deviance'. Once a practice has been censured, there exists within the minds of people in the society (or community) a definite social, ideological phenomenon: the censure. This censure is the locally and historically specific social form of appearance of a particular negative ideology. As such, naturally, the censure conceals, to later observers, the operative, negative ideologies, and the appearance of the social practice to which they referred in the process of censure. One other great weakness in the existing sociologies of deviance is the lack of a theoretical distinction between a negative ideology and a censure. This distinction is so important since it encapsulates both the wider, social relations and the specific, contextualized forms which their reflected ideologies take in the course of censuring practice. Becker's type of analysis tends to concentrate on specific contexts of censuring practice and loses sight of macro-structural considerations. Interactionism, in the field of deviance, must focus on the censure, thus neglecting structurally necessary, negative ideologies and the structural preconditions of censured practices.

The concepts just outlined are those which more adequately map the field of study than those of existing sociologies which tend to confuse some issues and ignore others. I shall say more about them in the following pages; however, it is vital to make some general observations on the concept of censure. This concept supersedes that of 'deviance'. It is the concept of the specific form of appearance of a negative ideology, just as profit is a form of appearance of surplus value. It is a concept which refers to the localized, historical substance of a particular negative form of consciousness. Any one censure is the outcome of a particular censuring practice which, under definite social relationships, censures another social practice. It is in this sense that deviance is an historically specific ideological formation. It is important to note that a censured practice is not directly proscribed as such within a negative ideology. The latter is merely a general form of consciousness.

A censured practice is one which has actually been censured in specific historical circumstances. It is too easy to think of a censured practice as one which is abstractly antagonistic to a negative ideology. As research in the sociology of deviance has shown, it is too easy to conflate abstract and practical negation: what is forbidden in theory is not necessarily forbidden in practice. Instituted, social practices of repression and censure do not necessarily employ negative ideologies in their most developed forms. They have their own movement and conditions, reflecting class divisions of wealth, power and ideology, which give negative ideologies specific forms of use and substance as practical censures.

I would suggest that future research in this field should be historical and should focus on explanations of the conditions of emergence, the development and the social functions of (a) specific negative ideologies, (b) particular institutions and practices of repression and censure, (c) particular censures and (d) specific censured practices. Some general remarks on the nature of these directions will now follow.

Like all forms of consciousness, negative ideologies are necessary reflections of determinate, social relations and act as integral elements of their practices of origin. We saw earlier how the social relation of commodity exchange, if it was to exist as a regular (or social) relation, necessitated various positive ideologies, such as property and contract. However, that same relation also necessitated a negative ideology: the ideology negating the non-consensual appropriation of another's property. Negative ideologies are also necessary outcomes of social relations. Each negative ideology, to put it descriptively, is the converse side of a positive ideology: where there is to be a 'contract' there can be no 'theft'. In this sense, one can think of negative ideologies as the counterparts of positive ideologies - where there is a positive ideology there must, at least in theory, be a corresponding negative ideology. This fact, that positive rules exist beside negative rules, has been mistakenly identified by sociologists. They have often argued that deviance functions to maintain the territories of the normative order. For example, Albert K. Cohen states:

"In censuring another's deviance, we are by implication contrasting him to ourselves and rewarding one another for our superior merit. A certain amount of controlled deviance, then, may provide an anchor or reference point against which conformity can be measured, make conformity meritorious rather than commonplace, enhance the sense of community amongst the conforming members of the group, and in general contribute to the satisfyingness of life in the group." <sup>2</sup>

Thus, in structural-functionalist sociology, at least, a degree of deviance becomes a 'system-function' which clarifies and sustains virtue. This function is alleged to be a character of all human societies. Consequently, a characteristic of social relations is converted into a characteristic of all social systems. It is not the case, in my view, that 'we' require 'deviants' to shore up our 'virtue', but rather that the positivity of the ideology of 'virtue' corresponds to the negativity of the ideology of 'evil': both gain their substance from the same historical relations. Every positive has its negative and ideology is no exception. 'Property' requires 'theft': that is not a general systems-need but a necessary correspondence of ideologies reflecting the social relation of commodity exchange.

It goes without saying that an ideology exists simultaneously in its practice of origin in both its positive and negative modes. However, this is not to say that these two modes cannot be separated through their discrete displacement in other social practices. For example, the law of contract and the law of theft have relatively autonomous histories today, institutionalized in the distinct practices of the civil and criminal law.

Negative ideologies are fundamentally integral to determinate social practices and, therefore, they have a materiality and historical specificity which should not be generalized into a universal 'law' or a 'systems-need'. Such ideologies are historically specific in nature, development and function. Certainly, some negative ideologies, such as that proscribing the taking of another's life, may be common to all known societies, but that fact should not blind us to the radically different

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2. A.K. Cohen Deviance and social control (1966 Englewood Cliffs:Prentice-Hall), p.10. I only found out that Cohen used the term 'censuring' after I had decided to use the term 'censure'. His usage illustrates the problems of the sociology of deviance.



practical forms those ideologies take, as censures, within different kinds of society. This leads us on to the question of censured practices, which can be best dealt with next.

An interesting and valuable illustration of how Marxists might analyse the emergence of new social practices, which subsequently receive censure, is provided by an article by Phil Cohen.<sup>3</sup> There is no space to discuss the weaknesses of his analysis, but it can be said that Cohen correctly emphasizes that the emergence of social practices can only be properly understood when the researcher has grasped the variety of structures and ideologies operative in a specific locality during a particular period. His analysis stands opposed to purely general explanations of totally specific, localized phenomena. Moreover, it stresses the need to understand the social ideologies at work as well as the social relations. Cohen would reject any kind of one-sided, economic determinism, whilst at the same time placing the structures of social practice at the basis of his work. For Cohen, new social practices are products of a localized combination of economic, political and ideological structures during a particular moment of history. New practices are neither economic 'effects', nor ideological 'choices', nor activities 'forced' by power relations. They are a complex combination of all these three things. The type of work done by such as Cohen could be the starting point of Marxist analyses of the emergence of social practices which subsequently become censured.

Having said this, our break with existing sociologies of deviance has sharpened. Even the most radical sociological approaches believed that 'deviant behaviours' were a theoretically valid group. Classifying censured practices as a coherent group of practices is the basis on which sociology sought general explanations of deviant behaviour. Their task had been to look for the common etiological features of diverse deviant behaviour. Thus some stressed the deviants' poor socialization, others pointed to deviants' shared internalization of censures, and others saw all deviance as purposive reaction to inhuman social conditions. It is significant that all the characteristics allegedly unifying deviant behaviours

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3. P. Cohen "Subcultural conflict and working class community" W.P.C.S. (1972) 2 pp.5-52.

as a category are, in my terms, features unrelated to the essential nature of deviance itself. Instead, they are simply potential features of censured practices and are not in any way features of a censure. People engaged in censured practice may well have failed to understand the censure, they may have thoroughly internalized it, or they may reject it altogether. Whichever is the case in any one instance, it tells us nothing about the censure, its social origins and functions.

What is common to all hitherto sociological analyses of deviance is the implicit view that deviant behaviour emerged, on a regular basis, because the deviant chose it to happen. Thus Taylor, Walton and Young are entirely in line with Parsons and Becker when they say that "most deviant behaviour is a quality of the act".<sup>4</sup> For all these diverse writers, deviance is motivated action. This is true despite the fact that Parsons seems to frown upon the motives of the deviants and that Becker seems to overstress the 'push' of the labelling interaction. But why should the rationality, or motivated nature, of any 'deviant behaviour' tell us anything about the nature of deviance? The fact that all social practices involve purposive human actions as part of their total nature is a fact of human existence and is not particularly informative about social censures. Hitherto, in this strict sense, sociology has said practically nothing, in terms of general theory, about the historical materiality of specific social censures. It has failed to separate the causes of specific social practices from the causes of specific negative, social ideologies and censures. By viewing 'deviant behaviour' as a coherent category of analysis, it has devoted its empirical research to the discovery of common causes of that 'behaviour'. Precisely because of this it is doomed to eternal failure. Censured practices are not a coherent group with anything in common other than (a) the fact that they have been censured in some way and (b) the fact that they share the general features of any social practice. There is nothing within this group to be 'discovered' which will tell us anything about the general nature of 'deviance', or, for that matter, about the general nature of censures or negative ideologies! Their nature as social practices is eternal and their nature as victims of censure is historically specific; there is thus simply

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4. (1973) op.cit., p.147.

nothing common to them that can found a general theory of social deviance. If one wants to understand the secret of social censures, it is necessary not to focus on the shared characteristics of censured practices; the latter focus will merely produce information about social practice-in-general and about the general effects of censures on social practice. What is really necessary is to study the structural determinations of, and connections between, negative ideologies and censured practices in specific historical and local situations.

When one examines the sociology of deviance in the light of the concepts developed here the idea that 'deviance' exists ultimately because people regularly chose to do it seems somewhat primitive and absurdly simplistic. For a long time, Marxists have rejected the idea that things exist simply because people want them to. Sociology has rarely got the message and, whilst Marxists have underscored the importance of ideologies, sociologists have overplayed them. In this particular field (of 'deviance') it should now be clear that the historical analysis of any particular practice cannot tell us anything about the general nature of social censure. All it can do, and this is its proper purpose, is to provide information on the objective dangers that the practice posed to the classes controlling the agencies of control and censure, and on its forms of appearance, which were a part basis of the ideological comprehension of that practice by the censoring classes. Knowledge of the historically contextualized growth and functions of specific social practices can only partly enable us to understand their historical problematicity. If we wish to understand the full nature of that fact, we also need to know about relevant negative ideologies and their class forms, objective class interests, and the nature of any existing social censures. If we wish to know something about the general nature of censure, then we must first develop a theory of its specificity. That I have done here and found that it is a type of ideological formation. The sociology of deviant behaviour always lacked a rigorous concept of its theoretical object. That is why it lies in ruins, and why the new criminologists could not get beyond it, without rethinking that object.

Every particular instance where a practice is censured is a discrete, historical event. That must be obvious. Equally clearly, within specific modes of production, there will be some common features of censured practices. For example, in capitalism, they will often objectively threaten

the material basis of the bourgeoisie. But that tells us nothing about censured practices in general, it merely indicates their historical specificity. One thing is vital: we must not look to any common features of the censured practices of an epoch in order to find out the nature of that epoch's negative ideologies. The latter search requires an analysis of the specific social relations that generate those negative ideologies.

The third new direction of study concerns the emergence of social censures. A social censure is the specific form of appearance of a negative ideology. It is an ideological formation: a unity of ideology and appearance. That unity is moulded in the fire of an historical conjuncture between a negative ideology and a social practice. To look for that unity within the negative ideology alone would be to proceed metaphysically since that ideology (or form of consciousness) only finds its specific contents within the context of specific, historical practices which employ it (the censoring practices). To hold the concrete phenomenon as a reflection of an abstract structure, without dealing with the mediations of that structure's substance in a given social context, would be a typically structuralist venture. Social censures are, indeed, embodied negative ideologies, but the specificity of the substance of the ideology in question can only be understood against the historical background of previous embodiments. Thus, if we examined the fifteenth century English law of 'theft' (to give it its modern, developed term) in a metaphysical manner we would 'explain' its specific forms (for example, the laws against trespass) as manifestations of the negative ideology disapproving non-consensual appropriation of commodities. This would not be full but partial explanation, and partial description. It would not explain why the negative ideology took that specific content. To do this we would need to look at the historical conditions of feudal production, such as the significance of land and the struggles between landowners. Social censures contain social realities as well as negative ideologies; both of these being intimately connected with the structures of social practice of a particular mode of production. Censures are rich with the history of their period. Similarly, to look

for the unity of a social censure within the censured practice alone would be equally mistaken. Such an approach could only present an account of that practice and its objective relations with other practices. It would be unable to explain the ideological composition of the applied censure. For example, it would be forced to argue that the practice of non-consensual appropriation of goods in bailment, which led to the change in 1473 of the English law of theft, was the cause of the new law (a form of social censure) because it posed an objective danger to the interests of the increasingly powerful bourgeoisie.<sup>5</sup> Such an argument cannot appreciate the specific, ideological manner in which the bourgeoisie censured that practice in *The Carrier's Case*. It would be unable, moreover, to describe the shift in legal censures because, of itself, it does not take into account the existing censures and their inadequacy for the new problem.<sup>6</sup> Social censures have ideological foundations and, thus, the investigation of censure-emergence must observe their existence and the extant forms of that existence. Objective relations and conflicts are played out in the realms of ideology.

Analysis must not elide the historical specificity of censures. They are constituted at definite moments in history when one practice collides with another and is dealt with in terms of the prevailing negative ideologies as they exist concretely in particular substantive forms. The origins of social censures cannot be separated from historical class conflicts and their corresponding forms of consciousness. Censures are the outcomes of collisions between classes as they are resolved in ideology.<sup>7</sup> The objective forms of appearance of the censured practice impress themselves in the mould of an existing class ideology and the extant censures of that class are thus developed and modified. Apart from its historical specificity, a social censure has a definite materiality. It exists as a real phenomenon

5. See J. Hall (1952) *op.cit.* for an account of this type.

6. Hall actually does take this into account, but does not explain why the shift occurs within the sphere of a particular negative ideology.

7. I am using class here in the wider sense defined earlier: see p. 318, fn.35.

with real effects; as all thieves of goods in transport found out to their cost after The Carriers Case. Analysis of social censures must, therefore, examine the effects of the censure on its object practice. The investigation of these effects is the central topic in the important question of the social functions of censure in the history of class struggles.

Regarding the institutions and practices embodying social censures, it should first be noted that a censure need not be adopted by the political practices of class domination. It could exist, simply, as an ideological formation within the minds of the classes or communities in question as an active feature of mundane social practice. As such, it could exist as an 'informal' sanction. In conventional language, its prohibited practices would be deviant but not criminal. If social practice maintains the existence of the censure (as an informal ideological formation) over a period of time, it could take on the appearance of a 'custom' or 'tradition'. As a 'custom', it can later be seen as an 'eternal law', or a 'belief' sanctioned by the "universal consent of mankind" (Marx). The fact that it is a product of a conjuncture of class practices, or conflicts involving specific material conditions and ideologies, becomes lost to view and disappears in the product. It becomes a feature of folk-lore or the collective consciousness of a class, community or even a whole society. For example, I think it is true to say that the censure and execution of peasant women in the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries was an outcome of class conflict, dealt with in terms of the religious/demonic ideologies of the day. The context of that censure of 'witchcraft' has been lost to view and the censure subsequently took on a life of its own, even surpassing the abolition of the witchcraft laws. The ideological formation of witchcraft still exists today in collective ideology and operates in a number of ways far removed from its generative historical context. We should always remember that, if an ideological formation lives on, it exists as a material reality and can be manipulated or resurrected for radically different contexts from the context of its generation. This is, of course, also true of censures which are made into laws. In my view, what is particularly interesting here is the question: what social relationships maintain an ideological formation that has outlived its

practical context? It is too often said that a 'belief' exists because it is 'traditional' - but what keeps it alive?<sup>8</sup> 'Witchcraft', for example, is maintained today by the entertainments industries in films and books. The question of the displacement and sustenance of ideologies and ideological formations, is, indeed, an interesting one.

A social censure can, of course, be adopted in the political practices of repression and propaganda by the dominant classes. Its most significant form here, perhaps, is its embodiment as law. The need to impress a particular censure on the practice of subordinate classes may require the development of the means of political power. Clearly, the development of the state and extensive legal codes in capitalist societies is the most central historical change here. When it is embodied in the practices of political domination, a censure remains an ideological formation but it takes different material forms in the shape of trial and punishment. The end of a gun is the bloody end of the apparently dry, abstract concept of negative ideology.

As a legal enactment, a social censure often reveals its historical specificity when social changes render it ineffective or inappropriate. Always it stands as a monument to the class conflicts and ideologies from which it emerged. Laws are no magical, 'right reason', expressed through legal codes. They are historical signposts, products of class conflicts fought out within definite forms of consciousness. Lawyers merely paint the signs, they do not make them. The making of a law, however, is, of course, a different process to the conjunctural production of a social censure. Legislation is a process subject to the circumstances of exercise of dominant, political power. Whereas a censure could emerge outside the political institutions, a law only exists within their territory. The conversion of a censure into a law is a process with its own peculiar, political circumstances. Research has enlightened the nature of this process, but all too often it is focussed on the empirical interactions involved in legal reform and loses sight of macro-social features, the classes and ideologies involved in struggle.

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8. Chambliss's account of the development of the vagrancy laws is suspect on this point. He says that the laws remained "dormant" for a time but does not say exactly why they lived on. Was it simply their institutionalization in unrepealed laws? See W.J. Chambliss "A sociological analysis of the law of vagrancy" *Social Problems* (1964) 12 (1) pp.67-77.

One thing must be stressed here: it is not negative ideologies that are transformed into laws but their concrete, historical forms of appearance - social censures. No law exists before the censure has emerged: just as no censure can exist before a negative ideology. Negative ideologies are general forms of consciousness and only materialize in shapes fashioned by the conjunctural conflict producing the social censure. They can achieve their fullest development in a definite, material sense. For example, the ideology against non-consensual appropriation has now got a more or less full, concrete form in European legal codes on theft. These codes, however, are scarred with the marks of historical conflicts and development, as well as the marks of bourgeois control of legislation.

Whether a social censure exists as a law or as a customary belief, if it is sustained for long enough the censured practice can come to be seen as an eternal evil, and the censuring practices can appear as the neutral media of universal virtue. The legitimacy of a censure, whatever its conditions of existence, reduces the agents of the censured practice to agents of the devil, or pathology, and elevates the agents of censuring practice to representatives of God, truth, sanity and civilization. Hence, to raise the question of the historical specificity of social censures is, in itself, to criticise the cosmologies of legitimacy.

Radical sociologies of deviance have questioned the universality of laws and 'moralities' and raised the issue of the 'interests' of their beneficiaries. But they have never reached the root of the matter in empirical research because of the deficiency of their theoretical instruments of production. All too often a law or moral prescription has been simplistically reduced to an effect of objective class conditions. The ideological dimension is frequently dealt with inadequately. Structure has not been given its extensive significance because the ideologies which it reflects have not been properly understood and taken into account. To my mind, an analysis of social censure has a radical, political edge when it can demonstrate the connections between social structures, classes, and the ideologies which are the basis of censures, laws and punishments. Such an analysis does indeed, as Hirst argued, submerge the sociology of deviance into the general concerns of Marxist theory. Contrary to Hirst, however, that submergence has been achieved here through the theoretical supersession of the concept of deviance.



Latent concepts of Marxian analysis have been brought forward which collapse deviancy theory by analysis and not by legislative fiat. The study of deviance is now the Marxian analysis of the connections between the structures of social practice, social classes and forms of consciousness, an analysis guided by a need to understand the significance of social censures for the development of the socialist movement and of socialist societies.

Rarely have radical sociologists of deviance grasped social ideologies and their forms of appearance in their complex, historical specificity. Spontaneous readings of them, as they appear in particular practices or discourses, have been carried out and they have been of value in various political struggles. But their lack of theoretical guidance or rigour has left these sociologies in a state of exhaustion after initial gains. Too often, the 'sectional' nature of a censure has been pointed out, only to be followed by a romanticisation of the censured practice, as if it was innately liberative or political because the rulers crushed it as criminal and degenerate. Similarly, the historicity of a censure has sometimes been observed, only to be followed by a declaration that it will inevitably disappear under socialism. Real problems within socialist societies of today have consequently been neglected. The practice of 'prostitution' may disappear quickly in Vietnam but I doubt if the censure against it will; and would it be a good thing if it did? The 'new criminologists' replaced the "artificially segregated specifics" (Taylor, Walton and Young) of dominant criminology, but only with vague talk about the "fully social" nature of 'crime' and 'deviance'. New "specifics" are required, in the way of theoretical categories dealing with ideology, the key concept for the questions asked by Marxists about the nature of 'crime' and 'deviance'. I hope that this present analysis has developed some of the necessary categories, with sufficient precision, to open up the questions of the ideological constitution, repression and masking of class conflict for Marxian analysis. If class conflict presented itself to view as it really was then our interest would be redundant. However, class antagonisms are lived out in complex, localized and mystificatory ideological forms. Stripping the mystical veils from class conflict is a political practice which must have rigorous theoretical assistance.

The problematics of 'deviance' have been supplanted by a Marxian problematic whose particular focus of enquiry is mapped by the concepts of negative ideology, social censure, censoring practice and censored practices. All these phenomena are to be understood in their historical, material and structural contexts.<sup>9</sup> Only when such historical modes of investigation are instigated can we go on to study the maintenance and development of negative ideologies and their contextualized censures and, thus, the varying social functions they perform. For example, in relation to theft law, without a knowledge of the origins of the negative ideology proscribing non-consensual appropriation, the legal forms it took before 1473, the social relations and material conditions which predicated that ideology and its legal forms, the relations and conditions which left many people without immediate means of obtaining subsistence and without any alternative to non-consensual appropriation, the increased amount of trade involving the long-distance carriage of goods, the threat that non-consensual appropriation of goods by bailment agents presented to men of commerce, the fact that it was wool that was stolen, the fact that the wool trade was central to the emergence of the English bourgeoisie of whom the King was a leading member, the fact that the stolen wool belonged to a merchant whose trade was desired by the Crown, and the fact that the Crown had great influence over the courts - without this theoretically grasped knowledge of the structure and conditions of the historical conjuncture, we would be unable to understand why the law was transformed in *The Carriers Case* in a particular manner and, thus, how the ideological censure of non-consensual appropriation took on an extended social form of great historical significance.

#### The maintenance and development of negative ideologies

Negative ideologies, like all ideologies, can be born within one practice yet developed within another. Thus, the ideological negation of non-consensual appropriation of property is born within commodity exchange yet its development can be formalized within the political practices of legislators and judges. Similarly, it can obtain an informal

9. Although I am not familiar with it, it is clear at a glance that Hay et al., in *Albion's Fatal Tree* (1975 London: Allen Lane), and E.P. Thompson, in *Whigs and Hunters* (1975 London: Allen Lane), have produced historical work close to that demanded here, in that they seem to maintain (implicitly) the vital separation between negative ideology, censure, censoring practice and censored practices.

development within the communicational practices of a people. The displacement of an ideology into a multitude of social practices raises the question: what are the main modes of maintenance and development of an ideology?

Ideologies can be maintained in a variety of receptive social practices. That is a first principle. However, a second principle is that an ideology can exist in contradiction to its adopting social practices and thus be expelled. It would seem that today the general ideology against non-consensual appropriation of commodities does not match with the spontaneous experience of many people in capitalist societies and, so, does not act as a determinant of their practice. Where an ideology does gell with the experiences of a people, in a variety of social practices, it will act as a widespread determinant. In such an instance, no social problem arises. However, if that ideology is important, because it reinforces fundamental social relations, yet still does not wield a wide sphere of influence, then a social problem does exist, especially for those groups who benefit most from those relations. For example, if the negative ideology of theft is important in a capitalist society it will not prevent people, from various classes, from appropriating 'property' without consent. For various reasons, pertaining to their life conditions, the dominant classes might find this to be a great, practical problem. Similarly, if the negative ideology disfavours non-Parliamentary political practice is ineffective, specific social classes or groups might be presented with threats to their conditions of existence.

Although, in the first instance, the widespread adoption of a negative ideology in social practice is the strongest basis for its maintenance and development, there often arises the need to reinforce that ideology. An important ideology which flags in its social potency can be raised with the backing of power or with sustenance from repetition in the mass media. Therefore, on the whole, there are two types of practice which act to maintain and develop consequential negative ideologies on a social basis: the practices of mass communication and of legislation.

Mass communications can reinforce an ideology that in some sectors of the social totality is losing its resonance. The success of daily rehearsals of that ideology depends on many circumstances and the question cannot be dealt with here. However the first principle is always that an

ideology must exist within a practice, and therefore, the receptiveness of the media's consumers depends fundamentally on their practical conditions of existence. For example, one might speculate that, in modern Britain, many workers may be aware that they are exploited economically and politically yet maintain classically conservative attitudes, richly sustained by the mass media, because their current experience in practice is, on the whole, not an uncomfortable one. The important issue is: which class/group version of an ideology is purveyed by those who operate the means of mass communication? Ideologies only exist in forms corresponding to the social division of labour and so, if a dominant class form of certain ideologies is disseminated on a daily basis, these ideologies may attain a semblance of universality or impartiality whilst still retaining their class character. The ideological component of the produce of the mass media may be so consistently one-sided that many receivers may be reluctant to believe the experience of their own practice - especially if they live isolated from the 'ideological realism' sustained within the collective, economic and political organizations of their class. Obviously, class, sexual, racial and other bases within media ideologies are only discernible on the basis of a theory of the specificity of those ideologies as reflections of specific social relations. But, apart from this, to begin to understand the maintenance and development of specific ideologies, in definite class versions, by the mass communication institutions, it is necessary to study the processes of historical development, whereby the means of mass communication became concentrated and centralised in the hands of some classes at the expense of others, and the processes of everyday life which make those class ideologies acceptable to the subordinate classes.

Legislation provides the bodyguard of power to protect a weakening ideology. Law hitherto has been the formal or institutional expression of ideology by the agencies of dominant class power. Embodied in law, an ideology carries the weight of sanctions, the potential exercise of social power. The possibility of being the object of socially instituted force can sustain a subject's obedience to the ideology - even if only by default. Where ideas fail, force can ensure the appropriate practice. Having said that, no amount of force could maintain an ideology that has been widely abandoned by the people because of its lack of

significance in their everyday practice. Even a reinforced ideology must have some degree of practical 'grip' on the minds of a people if the reinforcement is to have any effect. Hence there is an important connection of function between the legal agencies and the agencies of mass communication. They are both in the business (inter alia) of directing and producing a social consciousness threatened by class conflicts.

In short, an ideology can be sustained outside its practice of origin through the practices of mass communication and law. Within these practices it will take on new forms reflecting their inner structure and social location. It can thus be maintained and developed in an extensive manner. One question must be raised at this point: what happens if the social relations necessitating a specific ideology disappear? From what I have said already, two things are clear. Firstly, there is no firm social basis for this ideology. It lives on borrowed time in an artificial world. Secondly, that artificial existence within communicational and legal practices is nevertheless a reality and the ideology could continue to be effective, although it would increasingly appear to be 'old-fashioned' or 'absurd'. From this, we may conjecture that such a displaced ideology with no lifeblood in social structure would eventually be transformed through the existence of new social relations, which generate new ideologies. However, that transformation may be a slow process, and, unless social relations of communication and legislation were also transformed, great social problems could arise. On the whole, the main point to remember is that researchers should not expect a ready made one-to-one correspondence between an ideology and its practice of origin. Displacement means that, like the proverbial cat, an ideology may have nine lives. Each of these lives may have its own logic and subsistence.

Having mentioned the legal process, a word is necessary on the concept of 'crime'. After Paul Hirst's critique, many deviancy theorists have wanted to retain 'crime' but have not easily conceptualized it in Marxist terms. On the present analysis, 'crime' should be used to refer to a social censure institutionalized as law by dominant political practice (i.e. the work of legislators, politicians and judges). 'Crime' could not refer to a form of practice; such a reference would be ridden with problems. For example, would the many practices which technically (or formally) infringed legal requirements, be classed as 'criminal'?

even when they were rarely suppressed by the law enforcement agencies? I would suggest that what is predominantly seen as 'criminal' in a society is only partly a reflection of the institutionalization of social censures within penal codes, and is partly a reflection of the practices of those charged with the enforcement of those censures. Thus, today, breaches of the Factories Acts are rarely seen as criminal practices and rarely repressed as such. 'Crime' is a social and legal censure, an ideological formation in law, not a 'behaviour'. Thus its concept must reflect that fact.

How then can we think the apparent phenomenon of 'organized crime'? I would suggest that this is simply a form of economic practice proscribed by the criminal law and its agents of enforcement. If we want to study practices which consciously infringe the criminal law, we are concerned not so much with 'criminal behaviour' as with specific social practices with definite economic, political or ideological purposes which infringe the criminal law. The latter fact is not central in a Marxian analysis to understanding the origins of these practices. In dominant criminology, of course, it was a vital fact; one that diverted the study of the origins of these practices into the ideological cul-de-sac of 'criminogenic factors'. However, I would add that, equally obviously, the fact that a practice is known to infringe the law (or widely held 'norm' for that matter) is important in determining the developed forms of the practice. Elements of an actor's consciousness are always determining moments of any social practice.

'Criminal behaviour', like 'deviant behaviour' is an inadequate theoretical category for Marxian analysis. It conflates a number of practices which have nothing in common but the features of all social practice and the fact that they have been legally censured. One can certainly rationally study the effects of legal censure upon particular social practices; just as one can show that all legally censured social practices involve definite 'purposes', raw materials, instruments of production, classes of people and social relations. But, to search for the origins of criminal activity by conflating all legally censured social practices into one category of 'crime' is to search for the non-existent. Each practice which has been legally censured has its own historical, structural and material conditions of emergence and existence. Thus, if we want to study 'crime', we must examine the historical emergence of the relevant social censure and its legal institutionalization. If we want

to study practices currently censured in law as 'criminal', we are in the business of investigation of specific social practices and therefore, we must take each one separately and examine its own peculiar, local and historical specificity.

Deviancy theorists have constantly stressed that the study of 'crime' is important. I would rephrase it. The study of the origins and functions of legalized censures is important because it contributes to an understanding of class struggle and class domination. The study of the origins and functions of particular censured social practices is important because it contributes to an understanding of the weaknesses and inequalities within social systems. If you like, these fields of study are comparable (although more precisely defined) to the extant studies of criminal law and criminal behaviour. Comparable, but not similar: they are tied to different political practices and defined in sharply different ways.

#### The direction of future research

The field of Marxian analysis outlined here must make the following topics items of empirical, historical research:

1. The determination of the essential nature of a negative ideology, reflected by particular social relations, and its constituent content corresponding to its existence within particular social practices.
2. The identification of specific adopted forms of that ideology, when it is displaced into other social practices.
3. The study of the social divisions arising out of a particular economic formation and their corresponding effects within political and intellectual practice.
4. The identification of particular class versions of a negative ideology.
5. The study of economic, political and ideological structures and conditions which promote particular censured practices.

6. The examination of the objective threat posed by censured practices to specific social classes or groups.
7. The investigation of the conditions surrounding an historical conjuncture which produces a social censure.
8. The study of the part played by the continuation of that censure in concealing the historical specificity of negative ideologies.
9. The critique of social 'sciences' whose work mystifies the historical and structural origins of negative ideologies.
10. The analysis of changes in social structure which sustain or remove the foundation of existing negative ideologies.
11. The analysis of changes in the form of displaced negative ideologies effected by changes in their adopting practices.
12. The investigation of the success of practices of mass communication and law-creation in sustaining negative ideologies and social censures.
13. The historical analysis of the economic, political and intellectual functions of negative ideologies and social censures, especially in relation to class struggles and conflict.
14. The determination of different class readings of ideologies in discourses, especially mass-produced ones.

All these topics must be pursued with an emphasis on the historical specificity of negative ideologies and their material existence as reflections of contradictory relations between social classes and groups over the means of social practice. It is in this dialectical, materialist sense that the study of negative ideologies and their social functions is fundamentally an integral part of the study of social development. In conventional sociological terms, the sociology of deviance is



part of 'development studies' and must be realized as such in practice. What appears as 'deviance' must be comprehended through the perspective of a thoroughly historical materialism. Negative ideologies are integral to all processes of social development and crucial in some. Previous investigation in the sociology of deviance have rarely obtained a firm grasp of the economic and political contexts, and functions, of negative ideology - just as students of development have rarely managed an explicit grasp of the ideological moments of economic and political change. The real basis of 'deviance', the social relations which necessitate negative ideologies and create class conflict, has eluded sociology and it has never been theoretically possible to insert 'deviance' into its right place within the analysis of class societies. That place has now been thoroughly conceptualized from basic, Marxian principles.

One might agree with Paul Hirst that many practices censured as 'criminal' or 'deviant' are in no way revolutionary, political practices. However, ideology is important, as an integral part of all societies. Ideology, in general, is a vital element in any social practice and thus its negative forms are equally vital. The general analysis of ideologies is not an esoteric, academic hobby with no implications for political practice. What has preceded us in this text may at times have appeared as very inconsequential, abstract critique and exposition. However, I myself, have no doubt that the issue of ideology is becoming one of the utmost practical importance for Marxist political practice, and that historical research based on a developed theory of ideology can only help such practice.

Too often, Marxist militants have reduced the issue of ideology to a question of the ability of the ruling classes to 'imprint' their ideologies upon people's brains. Consequently, most of the world's population have been relegated, in political dogma, to a state of 'false consciousness'. The practical nature of ideology, is rarely understood. Militants often seem incapable of grasping the fact that ideologies have an extended existence in people's practices because they reflect, or resonate, the social relations in which those people live. They seem to prefer to believe that people freely choose the ideologies which guide their practice. Certainly, the startling power of Marxist theory is such as to induce the belief that those who cannot agree with it must be mad,

bad or indoctrinated. However, the conceptual substance of that theory should remind those militants that forms of social consciousness correspond to forms of social structure, and that ideologies are thus firmly rooted within the structures of everyday practice. It is to this profoundly practical aspect of ideology that Marxist theory must turn its attention. Perhaps now more than ever, it is daily becoming more obvious that the production and conservation of socialist revolutions hinges upon the practical resonance of class ideologies as well as upon the developments in economic and political practice. Marxist theory must grasp the profound significance of the structure-consciousness connection that Marx constantly forewarned us would determine the process of future social development:

"... mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve ...".<sup>10</sup>

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10 . Marx, 1859 Preface, in Marx and Engels (1973) op.cit.,p.182.

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