

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN MARXIST THEORIES OF IDEOLOGY

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Discussion of Althusser's essay, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1971) has filled the introductory sections of recent Marxist works on ideology. Despite its provisional and underdeveloped character, this essay has served as both a starting place from which to expand and as the position necessary to criticize in order to break new theoretical ground. Aronowitz recently claimed that Althusser's theory of ideology "is the most advanced point historical materialism has been able to arrive at in the search for a theory adequate to its object: late capitalist society" (1982:120). It has the potential for overcoming the central inadequacies of Marxist theory concerning issues of working class complacency; the failures of existing socialism; the rise of nationalist and religious movements; and the continuing problems of race, sex, and ecology (Aronowitz, 1982:9–12, 68–69, 120–121).

As a primary point of theoretical departure, Althusser's theory has received increasing amounts of criticism (which we will elaborate in the following sections). In general, the theory is marred by a stagnant functionalism which overstates the unity of ideology and conceptually displaces subjection to counter-hegemonic ideologies and resulting ideological struggles. It tends to reduce ideologies of race, sex, and nation to class ideologies and does not come to grips with social relations *outside* of production or the state. The question remains whether the theory's potential can be reached by expanding it to incorporate new concepts which overcome its limitations or whether the basic conceptual framework should be gutted, saving only those specific concepts which have proven useful.

Althusser

The key question which introduces Althusser's discussion of ideology is "how is the reproduction of the relations of production secured?"

(1971:128). He notes that for this to occur two separate conditions must be met: (1) skills and knowledge required for specific positions in the technical division of labor must be reproduced and (2) the submission of laborers to the "rules of the established order" (1971:127) must also be reproduced.

The answer Althusser provides to this question is that the relations of production are reproduced by "the legal-political and ideological superstructure" (1971:141). He retains the base/superstructure analogy since it allows him to represent the relative autonomy and reciprocal effectivity of the three different levels or instances in a social formation (economic, political, ideological),¹ while maintaining the determination in the last instance of the economic base. Two components of Althusser's essay have influenced all subsequent Marxist discussion about ideology: (1) his theory of the microstructure of ideology based on the "creation of subjects" and (2) his analysis of the "Ideological State Apparatuses" (ISAs).² Our emphasis is on the former though we will touch upon ISAs. A full investigation of ISAs would require elaboration of Althusser's theory of the state which is not our subject (and which we find to be a problematic concept).

Althusser begins his discussion of ideology by making a distinction between "ideology in general" and "particular ideologies" (1971:150). The study of particular ideologies is necessarily historical and thus cannot take place outside the context of concrete social formations. Populist ideologies, for example, have in different times and places been associated with fascism, socialism, and competitive capitalism. According to Althusser these particular ideologies always express class position, regardless of their form (1971:150). Althusser's project is to develop a theory of ideology in general, which he argues "has no history" (1971:151). Ideology in general is an omni-historical reality defined by its structure and function in the same manner as is Freud's concept of the unconscious.³

Ideology in general functions to reproduce the conditions of production.⁴ This is done through interpellating subjects such that they come to represent their real conditions of existence to themselves in an imaginary form. This form allows subjects to make sense of their particular lived experiences by making existing social relations seem universal, timeless, and natural (taken-for-granted). The object of ideology is lived experience. Althusser contrasts ideology with science whose object is the structures and patterns of experiences. Scientific practice produces theoretical knowledge while ideological practice only provides "know-how," that is, practical knowledge and common sense.

Constituting Subjects

The constitution of subjects occurs through *interpellation*. Interpellation is a process of “hailing” that precedes the birth of the individual (one is born with a name, sex, family, and so on) and continues throughout one’s lifetime (1971:165). Each individual is “always already” a subject who comes to recognize oneself through various ritual practices (such as naming, greeting, praying, voting, etc.) as concrete, distinguishable, and irreplaceable. This recognition, which transforms *all* individuals into subjects, is the concrete condition for the individuals’ misrecognition of one’s real conditions of existence (or, which is the same thing, the recognition of an imaginary relation to those real relations). Thus, the process of interpellation is a dual process of recognition-misrecognition constitutive of individuals as subjects. The recognition by the individual subject of imaginary relations of harmony, freedom, and individual efficacy entails the simultaneous misrecognition of relations of conflict and exploitation which characterizes all class societies.

The term *subject*, in ordinary usage, has a dual meaning. It means (1) a free subjectivity, an independent center of initiatives, author of and responsible for one’s actions and (2) a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority and is therefore stripped of all freedom. The constitution of subjects is always and necessarily relational since it presupposes the existence of a unique “Other Subject” in relation to whom subjects are defined. We are following Althusser in using *Subject* with a capital “S” to refer to the defining subject and *subject* with a small “s” to refer to ordinary, constituted subjects.

The “*Subject-subject*” relation is both symbiotic and asymmetrical. The existence of the Subject is predicated on the constitution of subjects just as the existence of subjects depends on their relation to the Subject. But the relation is asymmetrical in that being a subject through the Subject entails a relation of dominance-subjection in that a subject can only become such by being subjected to the Subject (1971:167). Althusser takes religious ideology as an example, in which “God” is the Subject through which religious subjects are constituted. The relation “*Subject-subject*” exists within each ideological region (juridico-political, familial, educational, religious, etc.).⁵

Ideology constitutes individuals who will more or less submit to the existing order. The manner in which this subjection is accomplished varies in different types of social formations. In some social formations individuals may be aware of their subjection but accept it as legitimate or at least inescapable. In capitalist social formations the emphasis given

to the individual as subject in the first sense obscures subjection as subject in the second sense; the individual perceives submission as freely chosen. Hence lies the power of ideology in capitalist social formations: the production of subjects whose imaginary relation to real relations is that of initiators of action. The consequence of subjection is thus the "free" choice of continued subjection. This is the material precondition of the reproduction of capitalist relations of production. We find the most obvious example of this ideology in the fundamental assumption of individual choice in neoclassical economics, where, for instance, the unemployed are seen as choosing leisure over wages.

The consequence of subjection for individual subjects is the *guarantee* that everything is as it seems to be. Thus the constitution of individuals as subjects results in the outcome of "*subjection-guarantee*." The outcome of this process is that the individual's imaginary relation to real relations will be materially reproduced.

The Materiality of Ideology

As a process rather than a system of ideas, ideology is given a material existence and can be studied as such. Ideology is material in that it consists of rituals, practices, and actions that constitute the process of interpellation. As such, ideology is ubiquitous. It serves to insert subjects into the practical activities of life according to the relations of the mode of production, thus reproducing those relations. According to Althusser, reproduction is guaranteed by the state through Repressive State Apparatuses and Ideological State Apparatuses. The former function primarily by violence while the latter function primarily by ideology (1971:138). Included among the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) are the educational system, family, religion, trade unions, and communication systems. Of these, Althusser argues that education has become the most important for reproducing the relations of production and interpellating subjects.

Altogether, these ISAs are both the stake and the site of ideological class struggle (1971:140). By inference, RSAs should be the stake and site of political class struggle, though Althusser does not explicitly acknowledge this. An immediate problem with this conception is Althusser's theory of the state. In this instance he has essentially equated state and superstructure. We will examine the problem with this overextension of the state later (in the section on Urry).⁶

Althusser's theory of ideology departs substantially from previous Marxist treatments of ideology. The fact that ideology has a material

existence means that it can no longer be viewed as an epiphenomenal reflection of the economic base. He also broadens the Marxist framework in such a way as to make ideology a central concept. This expansion enables him to incorporate many non-Marxist insights into the theory. In this way he enriches the Marxist perspective while at the same time enhancing the utility of these borrowed notions. One can see Althusser's debt to neo-Freudians, particularly Lacan, in the reconceptualization of ideology as a dynamic, ongoing process through which subjects are created. Althusser has thus laid the groundwork for the development of a Marxist concept of ideology radically different from those theories which preceded it. The number of prominent Marxist theorists who have elaborated on as well as criticized Althusser's theory attests to its importance.

Poulantzas

Poulantzas' contribution to the theory of ideology is largely that of an elaboration, departing from Althusser much less than the other theorists we will review. Poulantzas elaborates on the function of ideology by developing the theory at the level of the social formation (1973,1974). He is less concerned with the "micro" analysis regarding how class subjects become constituted and more concerned with specifying the relationship between class ideologies and the dominant ideology in a social formation. In doing so he resolves the apparent contradiction between two versions of ideology found in Marxist theory: (1) that social being determines social consciousness and (2) that "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas" (Marx, 1969:47, also 25).

The first version views ideology as lived experience. The different lived relations of each class determine the way class subjects perceive and give meaning to life. The second version is based on the idea that the ruling class is able to impose its belief system on the subordinate classes thus inhibiting the development of a working class ideology. Ideology, as a vehicle of domination, distorts the real conditions of subordination and thereby conceals the real interests of the subordinate classes. In this view, ideology is defined as false-consciousness rather than consciousness. These different perspectives lead to potentially contradictory conclusions. In the first case, one would expect the classes to have very different ideologies; in the second, the ideology of the subordinate class should approximate the world-view of the dominant class (for a discussion see Abercrombie and Turner, 1978).

Poulantzas addresses precisely this problem when he states that most earlier versions of ideology from Lukacs on have serious ambiguities and errors that result from the conflation of several different issues (1973:197–204). Both the above conceptualizations of ideology have been characterized by the failure to allow for the relative autonomy of the ideological instance, resulting in a tendential equating of economic position and class ideology in the first version and dominant class and dominant ideology in the second. This tendency to reduce the ideological instance to the economic instance has consequently obscured the relationship of the dominant ideology to both the dominant and subordinate classes.

Poulantzas argues that there are two levels of ideology: first, there are primary class ideologies and ideological sub-ensembles of minor classes which encompass distinct world views;⁷ and secondly, apart from these class ideologies, there exists a dominant ideology which reproduces relations in the social formation as a whole. Poulantzas argues that the dominant ideology is a product of class struggle. Therefore many ideological elements from the subordinate classes are incorporated into the dominant ideology. Typically though, the dominant ideology is dominated by the ideology of the dominant class since the structure of social relations is such that this class usually prevails in class struggles.

In reality the dominant does not simply reflect the interests and conditions of the dominant class but rather the complex political relationships among the factions of the dominant class and between the dominant and subordinate classes. In this way it serves the dual purpose of organizing the dominant class while co-opting and disorganizing the subordinate classes. This relation is encompassed in the concept *hegemony* whereby the dominant class manages to represent itself both as internally unified and as unifying the general interests of the people.

While the dominant ideology is usually dominated by the ideology of the dominant class, this is not a necessary relationship. It is possible for dislocations to occur due to the relative autonomy of the ideological, the political, and the economic instances. Poulantzas (1974) illustrates an historical instance of ideological dislocation in his analysis of fascism. Fascism in Germany and Italy was the product of a simultaneous political crisis (crisis of hegemony) and ideological crisis (crisis of the dominant ideology). The subordinate classes were then in a position to replace the dominant ideology with one more adapted to their interests. In the case of both Germany and Italy the working class was also undergoing ideological crisis, resulting in the petty bourgeoisie assuming the leading role in forging a new dominant ideology.

Poulantzas' distinction between the ideology of the dominant class and the dominant ideology resolves the confusion entailed in viewing ideology as "lived experience" as well as a mechanism which tends to obscure the real relations of production. Class ideologies are products of the lived experiences of each class. The dominant ideology is a product of class struggle and, by virtue of its function in class societies, must conceal real contradictions. It is through concealment that the dominant ideology functions to maintain the social formation by presenting the particular lived relations of agents as a part of a relatively coherent unity—"as opposed to science, ideology has the precise function of hiding the real contradictions of *reconstituting* on an imaginary level a relatively coherent discourse which serves as the horizon of agent's experience" (1973:207).⁸

That the limited *horizon* of ideology obscures recognition of contradictory class interests does not mean that all struggle is excluded. On the contrary, Poulantzas states that

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: . . . often they live *even their revolt* against the domination of the system within the frame of reference of the dominant legitimacy (1973:223).

Poulantzas criticizes previous Marxist theorizing for generally overstating the function of ideology. What he calls the "Lukacsian problematic" represents ideology as creating the unity of a social formation rather than reflecting it (1973:197–201). It does so by falling prey to an historicist interpretation of hegemony. According to this problematic, a "hegemonic class becomes the class-subject of history which through its world-view manages to permeate a social formation with its unity and to lead, rather than dominate, by bringing about the 'active consent' of the dominated classes" (1973:199). Under such a conception the subordinate classes would have the same world-view as the dominant class. It would be this universal world-view which determined social relations.

Ideological Regions

In describing the dominant ideology of capitalist social formations, Poulantzas notes the particular importance of juridical-political relations. He states that the dominant ideology has a variety of ideological regions such as juridical-political, moral, aesthetic, religious, technocratic, and

so on. The dominant ideology will be characterized by the dominance of one of these regions such that all other regions are articulated in relation to it. This "articulating region" will fall to the one which is best suited to mask the real relations of exploitation and therefore best serves the role of cohesion (1973:210–215). For capitalism, the juridical-political is the articulating region.

In his last book, Poulantzas (1980) discusses the role of the law in juridical-political ideology. He argues that the law "materializes the dominant ideology" (1980:83). It does so in such a way that social relations are mystified as individual relations. Since the law itself is unknowable to all but intellectuals of the state, the people become further mystified. As such the law reproduces the division between intellectual and manual labor, condensing it in the state. In a particularly illuminating passage, Poulantzas points out that

no-one should be ignorant of the law—that is the fundamental maxim of the modern judicial system, in which no-one but the state representatives are able to know the law. This knowledge required of every citizen is not even a special subject of study at school (1980:89–90).

Poulantzas' argument that the juridical-political masks the real relations of dominance/subordination is convincing but is only a restatement of what has previously been pointed out by McPherson (1961) and others. What is less convincing is that the articulating region is necessarily that region which *best* serves to mask these relations. There is no internal mechanism in this schema which explains how such a region becomes the articulating region, only that it will not correspond to the dominant instance of the social formation. Poulantzas' argument is excessively functionalist, lacking class or historical contingencies despite the fact that he cites Weber's historical analysis of the role of juridical-political ideology in the origins of capitalist formations (1973:212).

The articulation of ideological elements within the dominant ideology is a key issue, and, in our view, masking contradictions is not an adequate explanation. Juridical-political notions dominated the ideology of the rising bourgeoisie before the capitalist formation came into being. Thus it could not have been functioning primarily to mask contradictions in this yet nonexistent social formation. The incipient juridical-political ideology of the rising bourgeoisie was aimed as much at exposing and destroying the dominant (i.e., political) instance of the feudal formation as it was at bringing about favorable conditions for a new social formation based on a capitalist mode of production. The articulating ideological region would appear to arise out of class struggle not

structural determinism. Moreover, class struggle between competing dominant classes and class factions may be more important in determining the articulating region than struggle between the dominant and dominated classes (cf. Abercrombie and Turner, 1978).

We find the lack of historically contingent, causal arguments to be the central problem with the theory of ideology as elaborated by Althusser and Poulantzas. As a result the theory tends to lapse into explanations based upon stagnant functionalism or simple domination by capital and/or the state. We agree with Giddens (1981) who claims that under this approach human agents tend to appear "as 'cultural dopes,' not as actors who are highly knowledgeable . . . about the institutions they produce and reproduce" (1981:18; see also 15–25, 42–47, 215–220). Of particular importance is the lack of an adequate analysis of ideological struggle as a causal factor in theory. This is especially true of Althusser, but even Poulantzas' analysis of struggle (most evident in his later works) is plagued by severe limitations. In general these limitations are the ultimate reduction of all struggle to class struggle and the placing of class struggle within the framework of the dominant ideology.

Before reviewing recent works which start with the insights of Althusser and Poulantzas, we will briefly outline the key elements of their theory (condensed from Poulantzas, 1973:199–224; 1983:63–93).

1. Ideology consists of a relatively coherent ensemble of representations, values and beliefs. This ensemble reflects the relations of agents to the conditions in which they live in an *imaginary form*.

2. At the level of *lived relations*, ideology serves as the horizon of agent's experience. Thus ideology is necessarily false and inadequate for providing scientific knowledge.

3. Ideology is *materialized* in rituals, rules, styles, fashions—i.e., the way of life for a society. It is present in all activities and indistinguishable from one's lived experience.

4. These material practices *interpellate subjects* so as to insert them into practical activities which support the social structure while the structure itself remains opaque.

5. At the level of a social formation, there are ideologies which correspond to classes and the *dominant ideology* which is a product of class struggle. The dominant ideology typically will be most consistent with the ideology of the dominant class.

6. The unity of the dominant ideology reflects the unity of the social formation reconstituted on an imaginary plane. By presenting their lived experiences to subjects as part of a relatively contradiction-free coherent ensemble, the dominant ideology provides *cohesion* to the social formation.

7. The dominant ideology is characterized by an *articulating region* which best serves to conceal social contradictions. Under capitalism, this is the *juridical political* region. It is materialized in the law.

It is clear that Althusser and Poulantzas have overcome many of the shortcomings that have hindered Marxist theoretical development. The following theorists attempt to reconstruct this theory of ideology in such a way as to resolve some of the remaining shortcomings. To a notable degree each work stresses the causal importance of human agency, non-class ideologies, and multi-faceted struggles.

Recent Theoretical Developments: Therborn, Laclau, and Urry

Therborn

Goran Therborn, in *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (1980), has both expanded upon and trenchantly criticized Althusser's (1971) theoretical work on the structure and function of ideology. Although he locates his essay in a theoretical "conjuncture of Marxist discourse on ideology opened by Althusser" (1980:7), Therborn notes the necessity of "a break from the lingering restrictions of Althusser's problematic" in order to facilitate "a shift or broadening of the object of inquiry from the role of ideology in the reproduction of exploitation and power to the generation, reproduction, and transformation of ideologies" (1980:10). Note that Therborn has shifted the object of study from both "ideologies in general" and the "dominant ideology" to particular ideologies and their interrelations. This theoretical departure allows Therborn to address conflict between ideologies and ideological transformations. This is accomplished by (1) introducing into the notion of interpellation the potential for conflict, (2) noting the material forces which govern the relative power of competing ideologies, and (3) distinguishing between various dimensions of ideology and the manner in which these enter into ideological debate.

Therborn (1980) accepts the Althusserian emphasis on ideology as a process of interpellating subjects through largely unconscious psychodynamic processes (1980:2). He defines ideology as "that aspect of the human condition under which human beings live their lives as conscious actors in a world that makes sense to them to varying degrees" (1980:2). However, Therborn develops a very different sense of the duality of that process. He argues that Althusser's couplet subjection-guarantee "allows no room for any dialectic of ideology" (1980:16) and should be replaced by "*subjection-qualification*" (1980:17).

Subjection-Qualification

For Althusser, the definition of a “subject” as an actor or creator of something is an imaginary relation that makes the real relation of subjection possible. Therborn argues that subjects really are creative actors in that ideology not only subjects them to relations of exploitation but also *qualifies* them to “take up and perform (a particular part of) the repertoire of roles given in the society into which they are born, *including the role of possible agents of social change*” (1980:17, emphasis added). For example, although the educational process subjects students to a “hidden agenda” which serves to reproduce acquiescence to exploitative relations, it also qualifies students as agents of social change by providing them with the writing and analytical skills necessary for the development of counter-hegemonic ideologies.

Ideological conflict is generated by a lack of correspondence between subjection and qualification. This can happen in one of two ways. “New kinds of qualification may be required and provided, new skills that clash with the traditional forms of subjection. Or, conversely, new forms of subjection may develop that clash with the provision of still needed qualifications” (Therborn, 1980:17).

Therborn has improved upon Althusser’s static notion of subjection-guarantee by allowing for change through the actions of “qualified” subjects. The potential for change corresponds to the degree of non-correspondence between the mechanisms of subjection and those of qualification.

Another important theoretical advance is Therborn’s conceptualization of the individual character of all ideologies. According to Therborn, each particular ideology includes a simultaneous definition of self and other, which he refers to as *ego* and *alter* ideologies, respectively. For example, Therborn refers to sexist ideology which requires both a positive definition of the male “ego” and a negative definition of the female “alter” Therefore, feminist ideological struggles entail a simultaneous redefinition of both alter and ego and, thus, potential conflict between men and women. Yet ideological struggles are never this clear-cut. Each individual subject consists of the articulation of multiple ego and alter ideologies. The crucial aspect of ideological struggle is the articulation of a given ideology with other ideologies.

The functioning of subjection-qualification involves three modes of ideological interpellation which correspond to the answers to three fundamental questions: (1) What exists?, (2) What is good?, and (3) What

is possible? The answers to these questions provide “successive lines of defense of a given order” (1980:19). Therborn uses poverty to illustrate his point. First, the existence of poverty can be denied (or minimized). If this fails and the existence of poverty must be admitted, it can be argued that poverty is just since the poor are all inept or lazy and deserve no better. Third, if the existence and injustice of poverty must be admitted, it can be argued that a better social order is not possible or at least not under current conditions.

Therborn’s typology points out the limitations in other theories of ideology which do not recognize the distinct ways these levels function. The traditional “liberal” approach to the study of ideology concentrates on “legitimation” and “consensus” or, in the above terms, on “what is good,” ignoring the fact that this question is premised on a certain definition of reality, that is, “what exists.” The traditional Marxist critique of “liberal” theory recognizes this problem and has been generally successful in reintroducing debate concerning the first question. Yet, Marxists have often intentionally de-emphasized the question of “what is possible?” due in part to the criticism of nonscientific Utopian Socialism found in Marx and Engels (1969:134–136). We feel this is a mistake and that Therborn has opened up an important arena of debate for a theory which is aimed at pressing beyond “liberal” reforms (for example, see Kiser, 1985; Kiser and Baker, 1984).

The Material Matrix of Ideology

Therborn defines ideology as a discursive practice that is inscribed in a non-discursive material matrix of affirmations and sanctions. Discursive and non-discursive practices are always empirically intertwined, however, he argues that analytically separating the two is essential to an understanding of ideological conflict and transformation (1980:33). Any ideology disposes the actor to develop certain modes of thought and rationalities deriving from that ideology. Acting upon these rationalities will result in material consequences. The consequences of one’s actions are evaluated along the dimensions of whether they were advantageous or disadvantageous in comparison to an alternative set of beliefs. It is this material matrix which determines the relative power of ideologies (1980:33–35).

The concept of a material matrix of affirmations and sanctions gives substance to the notion of the “materiality of ideology,” while avoiding Althusser’s radical claim that ideology is only material practices and not

ideas. It also provides a framework for Althusser's notion of "guarantee," addressing the material conditions which contribute or do not contribute to the achievement of this guarantee.

Therborn retains Althusser's conception of ideology as lived experience but rejects the implication that experience of social relations is necessarily imaginary. Ideology for Therborn is not restricted to illusions and misrecognition. Therefore he rejects the distinction between science and ideology (1980:4). He notes that the science-ideology dichotomy rests on the notion that an individual's perception of one's lived relations either corresponds (science) or does not correspond (ideology) to reality. Therborn criticizes this opposition between science and ideology as only echoing the traditional distinction between true and false consciousness. He claims these are a "utilitarian residue in Marxism, which should be rejected, explicitly and decisively, once and for all" (1980:5).

Therborn's argument (1980:4-10) leads to a position we can characterize as "normative relativism." He holds that it is an untenable assumption "that normative conceptions . . . are given in the reality of existence and are accessible only through true knowledge of the latter" (1980:5). Instead, Therborn states that interests are constituted in and by ideology depending upon the material matrix of affirmations and sanctions. Consequently, all class interests are only subjective, there being no objective interests determined by real conditions which lie beyond conscious recognition.

We consider Therborn's point to be well taken, but it has two major shortcomings. First, he does not sufficiently specify the relation of the matrix of affirmations and sanctions to the "real" structurally determined positions of classes in production. Secondly, Therborn's theory suffers from not incorporating Poulantzas' conception of ideology as constituting the *horizon* of one's experience. Because of this omission, he cannot explain how one's lived experience does not provide adequate knowledge of the "real" social structural relations, such as classes and modes of production.

Although much of Therborn's work on ideology suffers from his emphasis-abstract classification at the expense of detailed analysis, he has advanced the discussion of ideology in significant ways. His choice of taking particular ideologies and their interrelations as his object of analysis, as opposed to Althusser's emphasis on "ideology in general," has allowed him to theorize about ideological conflict and change. In denying the idea of real class interests, he also denies that ideology involves misrecognition. The concept of ideology, broadened in Althusser's

reconceptualization from false consciousness to recognition/misrecognition, is further broadened by Therborn's conceptualization of it as definitions of reality, their normative evaluations, and the assessment of conceivable alternatives. Therborn's work is also characterized by a movement away from an exclusive emphasis on class ideologies. This tendency is taken further in the recent work of Laclau and Urry.

Laclau

The work of Ernesto Laclau (1977a, 1977b, 1982) epitomizes the transformations that have occurred in Marxist theories of ideology within the Althusserian framework. Laclau retains Althusser's emphasis on the ideological interpellation of subjects as the unifying principle of ideology. However, he argues that the process of interpellating subjects through "hailing" does not always result in subjection to the existing social order but also characterizes anti-hegemonic ideologies. Laclau claims, for example (1977a:101), that hailing occurs in communist discourse, such as Marx's famous finale to the *Communist Manifesto*: "Workers of all countries unite!" He criticizes Althusser for reducing all ideology to the dominant ideology by concentrating on "ideology in general." Laclau is more concerned with how particular ideologies are created and transformed and with specifying the interrelations between these diverse subjectivities.

Laclau also broadens the referent of ideology (even more so than Therborn) to include non-class interpellations such as those which form the basis of popular-democratic struggles. These are struggles between the power-bloc and "the people" (all groups outside the political power bloc), as well as struggles against racial, sexual, and ethnic oppression. According to Laclau, this is a complete break with the class reductionism which characterized Althusser's theory.

Ideological Articulation and Hegemony

For Laclau, the meaning of particular ideologies depends on their position within the totality of ideological discourse. Therefore the most important feature of an analysis of ideology is an explanation of the nonarbitrary ways in which various ideologies are interrelated. In order to do this Laclau implements and elaborates Gramsci's concept of hegemony. According to Laclau, "hegemony is not an external relation between preconstituted social agents, but the very process of discursive construction of those agents" (1982:100). This process of constructing social agents involves the unification of the diverse interpellations

(gender, class, race, etc.) which characterize any individual by a “specific articulating principle.” This gives each of these interpellations a specific meaning in relation to all other interpellations. Hegemony is the imposition of an articulating principle upon an ensemble of social relations linking them together.

In his earlier works (1977a:108–109, 1977b:164) Laclau argues that this articulating principle must belong to a class defined by its position within the dominant mode of production in a social formation. More recently (1982:100), he has allowed for the possibility of nonclass articulating principles becoming hegemonic. In doing so, Laclau stresses the importance for Marxist theory to incorporate the analysis of nonclass subjection and struggle. He leaves open the question of ultimate class articulation to historical rather than functional analysis.¹⁰ This is a vast improvement over Poulantzas’ analysis of the “articulating region.”

The implications of Laclau’s discussion of hegemony is that ideological struggle cannot be viewed as a process of counterposing a pure Marxist-Leninist “working-class” ideology to the dominant “bourgeois” ideology. Instead it involves (1) dislodging certain elements that have been articulated into the discourse of the dominant class (e.g., democracy) and (2) defining these elements in relation to a new articulating principle. We find Alan Wolfe’s (1977) analysis of the contradictions between liberalism and democracy is an example of the former, while Herbert Gintis’ (1980) discussion of the meaning of liberal democracy is a proposal to do the latter.

Laclau views the dominant contradiction in the social formation as that between “the people” and the power bloc (1977a:108).¹¹ Therefore, the outcome of ideological struggles between classes depends on the ability of each class to present itself as the authentic representative of “the people” (i.e., the “national interest”) (1977b:161). Through his reconceptualization of the nature of hegemony, Laclau is able to account for both the existence of many competing partial ideologies (pluralism) and the fact that the articulation of these ideologies in a specific manner is accomplished via struggle and the resulting hegemonic ideology.

Urry

Although Laclau rejects much of Althusser’s theory of ideology, he retains the definition of a social formation as consisting of three levels or instances: economic, political, and ideological. John Urry’s (1982) recent analysis of the structure of capitalist social formations abandons this classification for one that stresses the importance of Gramsci’s (1971)

concept of civil society. Urry severely criticizes Althusser's basic theory of the instances of a mode of production, particularly the concept of an ideological instance. Whereas Althusser (1971:129, 131; 1970:138, 178–179, 320) was attempting to rescue the base/superstructure analogy from its stagnant Stalinist interpretation, Urry is arguing that the “notions of base/superstructure, or of the economic/political/ideological, should be placed once-and-for-all in the dustbin of history” (1982:153). These notions lead to three crucial problems in Marxist theory: (1) the failure to recognize the importance of separating reproduction from production, (2) the improper conception of an ideological instance (or dominant ideology) as unified in the same sense as the state or production, and (3) the overextension of the state to include all ideological apparatuses.

According to Urry, Althusser's three relatively autonomous instances can be abandoned without falling back into economic reductionism.¹² Capitalist social formations should instead be conceived of as comprising the state, production, and civil society. Urry claims that the concept of civil society avoids the problems associated with the ideological instance. We will review this concept and examine its implications for the theory of ideology.

Civil Society

Urry defines civil society as the “site where individual subjects reproduce their material conditions of life” (1982:6). It consists of three spheres—circulation, reproduction and struggle. Jointly these spheres comprise that set of social practices in which agents are constituted as subjects. Under capitalism, these spheres of civil society are separate from production (and the state). The separation of civil society from production derives from the fact that surplus labor takes a value form which creates “a separate realm of circulation in which surplus-value is realized, a sphere of exchange in which all commodities, including that of labor-power, are bought and sold” (1982:29). Furthermore, capitalist production and the state each have a distinct unity, based on the production of surplus-value in the former and a monopoly of organized forces in the latter, but civil society has no such unity. Urry argues that Althusser's concept of the ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) overextends the state, depriving it of its distinct nature and robbing theorists of an important conceptual tool.¹³ He suggests that much of what Althusser considers ISAs and most of what orthodox sociology is concerned with (such as relations of race, religion, gender, and generation) should be viewed as institutions and practices of civil society.

This does not mean that civil society is completely autonomous from production or the state. Production is connected to civil society through the circulation of capital and labor-power. The medium of this circulation is money. Likewise, the state is connected to civil society through the circulation of power and ideology. The medium of this circulation is the law (1982:115–116). The concept of the law operating as a medium between the state and civil society is an intriguing idea, but underdeveloped. Relations between the state and civil society outside of the law (such as illegal repression) have no place in Urry's conception. Nor does he explain the role of lawyers and judges (the organic intellectuals of legal discourse) in popular-democratic struggles, a role which Poulantzas (1980) considers substantial.

Ideological Struggle and the Unity of Ideology

Since civil society is separate from production, it may contain modes of subjection which do not necessarily reproduce production and may even be contrary to its reproduction, at least in the short run (1982:119–123). Reproduction is therefore not predetermined but instead a matter of struggle. Moreover, civil society contains various institutions—family, market, church, schools, etc. Thus struggles over reproduction cannot be reduced to class struggles.

Urry claims that Althusser's theory of ideology suffers from an inert functionalism since it implies that reproduction is "automatic" and "so structured that it is the most functionally appropriate for social relations of capitalist production" (1982:52). Like Therborn and Laclau, he notes that struggles over reproduction of labor-power (class-struggle) and struggle over reproduction of the power-bloc (popular-democratic struggle) is absent from Althusser's theory.¹⁴ According to Urry, the notion of the ideological instance does not include a well-defined arena for struggle over reproduction. The concept of civil society provides this arena.

Given ideology does not automatically reproduce capitalist relations but instead consists of disparate practices which may or may not reproduce production (or may simply be irrelevant to it), then there is also no basis for assuming a unified ideological instance. Urry contends that the material practices which interpellate subjects should be conceived as practices in civil society and nothing more. There is no dominant ideology since "class practices may or may not overlap with that of other classes. There may or may not be relations of domination between different class practices" (1982:47). Urry even goes on to argue that class practices (such as "interest, ritual, know-how, symbols and illusions, modes of thought, and views of life") have no inherent unity and

therefore should not be considered class ideologies at all (1982:47). As a result, he claims there is no ideological instance, only ideological effects. A social practice has an ideological effect only when there is "a concealment of causes, nature and consequences of that practice . . . and this concealment is in the interests of one or more of the dominant social forces" (1982:45). Urry has thus restricted the concept of ideology to a distinct and more orthodox meaning.

It is our position that his assertion that class practices "may or may not overlap" and "may or may not be relations of domination" does not invalidate the existence of a unified pattern of ideological hegemony. As Gramsci (1971:161) states, "the fact of hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised." Therefore, we would expect the dominant ideology to include overlapping practices and relations of compromise.

Urry's conception of civil society represents an advance over Althusser's ideological instance in that conflict and struggle are made more central, but Urry's theory is not without difficulties. His position regarding the separation of production from struggles over reproduction in civil society is a decisive step in avoiding reductionism (see Giddens, 1982 for a different argument with similar conclusions). However, struggle in production does not have a clear conceptual location in Urry's theory. Since class struggle in production is not examined, the determinant effects of production on circulation and reproduction are underspecified. Urry claims that ideology is everywhere (1982:31); we claim the same is true of struggle.

Discussion

Recent Marxist theories of ideology have moved in three major directions since the theoretical conjuncture opened up by Althusser. These three directions are (1) a movement away from functionalist theories of reproduction and towards an analysis of qualified actors, (2) a critique of class reductionism and emphasis on non-class struggles, and (3) a reconceptualization of the meaning of misrecognition and the importance of concealment in defining ideology and a move toward a more restrictive definition of ideology.

Functionalism

All of the recent theories incorporate Althusser's fundamental premise that the constitution of subjects always takes place within ideology and that there is no inherent essence to class subjects outside of, or prior to,

ideology. However, they all break to relative degrees within his position that ideology necessarily functions to reproduce the relations of production. The problems with this position are most evident in Althusser's concept of "subjection-guarantee." If ideology reproduces the relations of production through subjecting all subjects and guaranteeing to them that everything is as it seems, then there is no place for ideological struggle. To be sure, Althusser makes no such assertion, but he leaves no mechanism in his analysis for non-reproduction. Therborn's (1980) concept of subjection-qualification provides such a mechanism. It retains the premise of ideological subjection but indicates that subjection qualifies one to act and thus subjection and reproduction may not necessarily correspond.

To a larger extent, the functionalist tendencies in Althusser are the result of the limits imposed by his object of study. By choosing "ideology in general" as his object of study, Althusser was not able to address conflicts between particular ideologies. In examining particular ideologies, each of the subsequent authors found it necessary to move in the direction of including class struggle and historical contingency in their analysis. Poulantzas (1973) argues that the dominant ideology is a result of ideological class struggle, and Laclau (1977a) emphasizes the importance of subjection to counter-hegemonic ideologies. Urry (1982) speaks to the notion of the unity of ideology. Since Althusser's (1971) assertion of unity is based on the function of ideology as reproduction, to acknowledge that ideology contains nonreproductive practices then destroys the basis of that unity. Instead, unity must come from other sources, such as the nation-state, as Poulantzas (1973) suggests.

Each of these theorists argue that ideological subjection results from ideological struggle and does not automatically reproduce existing social relations. Ideological dominance is contingent on successful elaboration and organization of the dominant ideology as well as cooptation or containment of opposing ideologies. This makes the role of intellectuals central to understanding ideology and ideological conflict. A significant lacuna in all of the theories (with the partial exception of Poulantzas, 1973 and 1980) is an adequate analysis of the specific role of intellectuals. One can find the beginnings of a theory of intellectuals in Gramsci's (1971:5-23) brilliant discussion of the role of traditional and organic intellectuals. He realized that intellectuals have a significant and relatively autonomous position in the social structure and that their relation to class forces is a significant determinant of the outcome of ideological conflict. The theory of ideology needs to more fully address the role of intellectuals in the production of ideology and the processes by which it becomes transformed.

Reductionism

The second direction taken by recent Marxist theories is the progressive abandonment of both economic reductionism and class reductionism. Stalinist Marxism is reductionist in both senses, viewing the superstructure as a reflection of the economic base and ideologies as reflections of the economic interests of particular social classes. Althusser (1971) and Poulantzas (1973) break with economic reductionism by positing the relative autonomy of the ideological and political levels of social formations. Yet both retain class reductionist definitions of ideology. For Althusser ideology reproduces class domination while for Poulantzas all ideological elements have a specific class character (1974).¹⁵ Therborn (1980) and Laclau (1977a) deny that all ideologies can be reduced to class interests but argue that all ideologies are overdetermined by class ideologies. This is only a partial break with class reductionism.

Urry (1982) and Laclau, in a later discussion (1982), deny the necessary primacy of class ideologies over nonclass ideologies in conflicts over hegemony. According to Urry (1982), there are many different ideological struggles within civil society, and it is a contingent question as to whether class or nonclass ideological conflicts will be more important in any particular social formation. Laclau (1982:100) argues along similar lines that either class or non-class articulating principles may form the basis of hegemony.

In part, these positions are missing one another. The differences between these theorists partially reflect differences in their units of analysis. Althusser (1971) is exclusively concerned with the reproduction of the relations of production, whereas Laclau (1982) and Urry (1982) are concerned with the reproduction of the social formation. Political hegemony cannot be reduced to class hegemony. Attempts to do so obscure the specific nature of race, sex, national, religious, and other nonclass struggles. This does not mean that the mode of production does not structure social relations in a social formation but only that not all social relations can be reduced to relations of production.

Misrecognition and Concealment in Ideology

While the above discussions indicate a progressive abandonment of functionalist tendencies and class reductionism, the discussion of misrecognition and concealment defines ideology in ways that bring it closer to pre-Althusserian positions.

The importance of concealment in ideology becomes increasingly salient once reproduction is no longer considered to function automatically.

According to Althusser, misrecognition of real relations is guaranteed not because the dominant class conceals them but because real relations cannot be recognized within ideology. Ideology adequately represents lived experience and adequately inserts subjects into their practical activities. It is false not in its portrayal of surface appearances but in that it only portrays surface appearances and not the underlying structural relations which inform them. In other words, ideology is false in that it is not science. This is Althusser's theoretical development of Lenin's famous diction "that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness;" socialist consciousness "would have to be brought to them from without" (Lenin, 1970:143).

If one allows that ideological subjection qualifies a subject to creatively act and produce counter-hegemonic ideologies, then not all ideological subjection "conceals" in the sense of causing misrecognition of relations of domination/subjugation. The question becomes whether ideological subjection-qualification which does not reproduce the existing relations of domination (or is simply irrelevant to it) should be considered ideology at all. Urry (1982) defines ideology by its effects of concealment and labels other signifying practices that do not have these effects as merely practices in civil society. Laclau (1982:98) refers to practices which do not entail misrecognition as discursive practices. It is not clear what meaning he gives to misrecognition, but it appears to imply a more restricted definition of ideology.

Poulantzas' (1973) distinction between ideology in general and specific class ideologies may help disentangle the notions of concealment and misrecognition. He considers ideology in general to be equivalent to culture (minus the term's humanistic or functionalist connotations). Ideology as a general concept necessarily contains both real and false knowledge as a consequence of its limited horizon. In accord with Althusser, this limitation necessarily involves simultaneous recognition/misrecognition, and, thus, ideology is inherently "false" in contrast to science. Concealment in the traditional sense of obscuring relations of domination/subjugation (as emphasized by Urry, 1982) consists of the exorbitant effects of bourgeois ideology on the dominant ideology. As a result, subordinate class members are unable to clearly perceive their situation from their own vantage point and, thus, are unable to formulate their own class-specific ideology. Therborn also points out that the dominant class has a greater ability to organize experience and to structure the material matrix of affirmations and sanctions which help maintain biases within the dominant ideology. An adequate conceptualization of ideol-

ogy must allow the possibility of counter-hegemonic ideologies which perform the function of unmasking relations of domination/subjugation. This is not to claim that counter-hegemonic ideologies necessarily provide scientific knowledge of the underlying structures which support these relations. However, counter-hegemonic ideologies which are informed by scientific knowledge should achieve a greater long-term measure of success.

The debate regarding misrecognition and concealment has important implications for the definition of ideology. Althusser and Poulantzas define ideology as (1) lived experience and (2) necessarily involving misrecognition. Their definition avoids the usage of ideology as only relatively coherent systems of meaning and, instead, includes all social practices and beliefs as ideological elements. It includes both the practices referred to by Laclau as "discursive," as well as the practices Urry claims belong in civil society.

Ideology is too broadly defined by Althusser and Poulantzas and too narrowly defined by Urry. The former theorists see ideology as ubiquitous reproduction practices, which do not necessarily involve concealment, while the latter restricts ideology to practices which conceal the interests of particular social groups. The extent to which ideology conceals or reveals underlying relations of domination-subordination is a question for historical investigation and not part of the definition of ideology. We accept Laclau's concept of the nonrandom articulation of beliefs and practices as the proper domain of ideology. This view leaves open the extent to which various ideologies actually conceal real social relations and also allows for the incorporation of Therborn's concept of the material matrix of affirmations and sanctions that shapes (and is shaped by) ideological conflict in civil society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our discussion of the new direction in Marxist theories of ideology suggests several amendments to the elaborated Althusserian theory we outlined earlier. We find that analysis of ideology would benefit from incorporation of at least six key concepts. We will briefly define each of these and provide an example of what issues we feel they illustrate. The concepts are:

1. *The Subjection-Qualification Dialectic* (Therborn, 1980). Ideology subjects agents to the relations of exploitation, but in the process it qualifies people for creative action within their positions in society (including agents of social change and revolution). For example, while trade unions

subject workers to the limits of an economic perspective, in the process unions also qualify workers to act as a class.

2. *Organic and Traditional Subjection-Qualification of Intellectuals* (Gramsci, 1971). The role of intellectuals in struggles over hegemony is to elaborate on the horizon of knowledge and organize the corresponding affirmations and sanctions. There are two distinguishable types of intellectuals, organic and traditional; however, this distinction does not necessarily correspond to their position in ideological struggle. A current example of both organic and traditional intellectuals attempting to sustain a counter-hegemonic ideology is Lech Walensa and the KOR group in Poland. Many issues need to be addressed, e.g., what qualitative factors differentiate the constitution of organic and traditional intellectuals, and what distinguishes their relation to ideological struggle?

3. *The Modes of Ideological Interpellation* (Therborn, 1980). Ideologies have successive levels of interpellation which basically conform to the three views of what exists, what is good, and what is possible (and their negation—what does not exist, what is evil, what is impossible). For example, bourgeois concepts of human nature posit that only selfish people exist, that the pursuit of self-interest is good, and that a communal system is not possible.

4. *The Dual Character of Ideology* (Therborn, 1980). Each ideological expression has its supporting inverse. Thus an ideology contains simultaneously ego and alter representations. Racism for example contains both an ego ideology of “white supremacy” and an alter ideology of black inferiority.

5. *The People and Popular-Democratic Struggles* (Laclau, 1977a). The expression of the interests of the power-bloc in the state organizes the interests of those outside the power-bloc into a nonclass configuration of “the people.” “The people” struggle against the power-bloc for representation of their interests in the state. Therefore these struggles are “popular” (of the people) and “democratic” (extend representation to the masses). Since “the people” includes all groups outside the power-bloc, “popular-democratic” struggles may include ideological expressions which are anti-working class. For example, fascism can be a “popular-democratic” ideology of the petty-bourgeoisie outside of an alliance with the power-bloc.

6. *Civil Society* (Urry, 1982). Civil society is the space in which agents are constituted as subjects and subjects function to reproduce the material conditions of their lives. Capitalist production specifies that surplus value is realized and labor-power is reproduced in spheres outside of production. This does not function automatically; surplus value distrib-

ution and the reproduction of labor-power are issues of struggle. For example, the primary unit of reproduction is the family whose structure is neither a function of capitalist production nor the state. A central conflict within the family is over the distribution of labor in production of the use-values necessary for reproduction.

The foregoing list of useful concepts represents the beginning of the development of Marxist theories of ideology. Although a great deal of progress has been made since the orthodox relegation of ideology to the epiphenomenal superstructure and Althusser's early functionalism, there are still many important issues unresolved and many important questions yet to be addressed. We hope that in summarizing and constructively criticizing recent Marxist theoretical work on ideology, we have helped to lay the foundation for the future theoretical elaboration and historical application of these important concepts.

Notes

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1. Althusser's reference to the ideological, economic, and political instances in his method for recognizing Marxism as a unique synthesis of German philosophy, English economics, and French politics. This synthesis was constructed by Marx as the continuation and simultaneous surpassing of the previous world views. It is a unique synthesis such that regardless of which instance one is examining at the time, all three are present in a formative or preparatory sense (see Gramsci, 1971:399-401; Lenin, 1943:3-9).

2. A full consideration of the issues raised by Althusser's notion of Ideological State Apparatuses would involve an examination of the interface between the ideological instance and the state, which is beyond the scope of this paper. Furthermore, Therborn (1980), Urry (1982), and even Althusser himself (1976) have pointed to the limitations and distortions in this concept. For these reasons we will not provide any extensive discussion of Ideological State Apparatuses in this essay.

3. The reference to the unconscious is more than just an analogy. As Althusser points out (1969) "ideology has very little to do with 'consciousness'. . . It is profoundly unconscious." One of Althusser's important contributions has been to integrate psychoanalysis into a Marxist problematic. It is important to realize that for Althusser a complete Marxist theory of ideology requires this structuralist social psychology.

4. As Burawoy (1979) has shown, the function of reproduction also takes place within the economic base, but this is not Althusser's concern.

5. Althusser does not provide examples of the Subject-subject relation in these other regions even though he argues that the education-family couplet has replaced the religion-family couplet as the dominant ISAs in capitalist societies. It is unclear to us exactly how subjection operates in these regions as there are two possible interpretations. For example, in the region of education the student exists in a relation of dominance-subjection with the teacher, Teacher-student, but also each student is subjected to the concept of student, Student-student.

6. See also Anderson's (1977) discussion of the influence of one of Gramsci's conceptions of the exercise of hegemony by the state apparatus on Althusser's concept of Ideological State Apparatuses.

7. Poulantzas states that only the two major classes of a given social formation have

relatively coherent ideologies. Secondary classes are characterised by ideological sub-ensembles which eclectically spin together ideological elements from the major class ideologies.

8. Scientific discourse does allow for contradictions which exist in social relations. It is in this sense that ideology is false, not in the sense of false consciousness.

9. Poulantzas (1973:211) claims that "technocratism" has become the articulating region under monopoly capitalism. However, he does not develop this point. It is interesting to note that Bahro (1978) claims that in "actually existing socialist countries" the political bureaucracy is the dominant instance of the mode of production and technocracy is the articulating region of the dominant ideology. Technocracy is so employed as to justify and legitimate the bureaucratic hierarchy.

10. This calls into question the notion that the working class must be the "vanguard" in any transition to socialism.

11. See Poulantzas (1973) on the concept of the "power bloc."

12. Basically, a reductionist theory does not allow for the relative autonomy of the political and the ideological from the economic level. Each political or ideological practice of significance is conceived of as having a direct economic cause or reflecting the economic interests of a class. Instrumentalism in political theory and economism in general tend to be reductionist theories (see Gramsci, 1971:158-168 for a discussion of economism). An autonomous theory is conceptually the opposite of a reductionist theory. Politics and ideologies are affected by the economy (and vice versa), but there is no determination in the last instance of the economic. Autonomous theories generally stem from Weberian influences. Since civil society is tied to the advent of capitalism, it is a historically specific concept. Althusser's theory of mode of production having three instances is an abstract conception without a "history."

13. According to Therborn (1980:85, 133, note 36) in a personal communication, Althusser stated he is no longer defending ISAs as such, only the intrinsic link between ideological apparatuses and the state. This latter conception seems consistent with Urry's theory of the role of the law, although he rejects the centrality Althusser (1971) and Poulantzas (1973) give to the juridico-political ideology.

14. The absence of an analysis of how class struggle affects the ideological constitution of subjects and thus the reproduction of society is a striking deficiency in Althusser's work noted by Hirst (1976) and even Althusser himself (1976).

15. We should note that Poulantzas' (1973:210-216) discussion of the various regions within the ideological instance is not class reductionist. He argues that the various regions are structured by class domination but cannot be reduced to class interests. However, this one example does not refute the argument that many components of his theory suffer from class reductionism.

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