

Louis Althusser

**LENIN AND PHILOSOPHY
AND OTHER ESSAYS**

[- Part 2 -]

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY BEN BREWSTER



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[- Part 2 -]

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Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)

ON THE REPRODUCTION OF THE CONDITIONS OF PRODUCTION^[1]

I must now expose more fully something which was briefly glimpsed in my analysis when I spoke of the necessity to renew the means of production if production is to be possible. That was a passing hint. Now I shall consider it for itself.

As Marx said, every child knows that a social formation which did not reproduce the conditions of production at the same time as it produced would not last a year.^[2] The ultimate condition of production is therefore the reproduction of the conditions of production. This may be 'simple' (reproducing exactly the previous conditions of production) or 'on an extended scale' (expanding them). Let us ignore this last distinction for the moment.

What, then, is *the reproduction of the conditions of production* ?

Here we are entering a domain which is both very fam-

1. This text is made up of two extracts from an ongoing study. The sub-title 'Notes towards an Investigation' is the author's own. The ideas expounded should not be regarded as more than the introduction to a discussion.

2. Marx to Kugelmann, 11 July 1868, Selected Correspondence, Moscow, 1955, p. 209.

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iliar (since *Capital* [Volume Two](#)) and uniquely ignored. The tenacious obviousnesses (ideological obviousnesses of an empiricist type) of the point of view of production alone, or even of that of mere productive practice (itself abstract in relation to the process of production) are so integrated

into our everyday 'consciousness' that it is extremely hard, not to say almost impossible, to raise oneself to the *point of view of reproduction*. Nevertheless, everything outside this point of view remains abstract (worse than one-sided: distorted) -- even at the level of production, and, *a fortiori*, at that of mere practice.

Let us try and examine the matter methodically.

To simplify my exposition, and assuming that every social formation arises from a dominant mode of production, I can say that the process of production sets to work the existing productive forces in and under definite relations of production.

It follows that, in order to exist, every social formation must reproduce the conditions of its production at the same time as it produces, and in order to be able to produce. It must therefore reproduce:

1. the productive forces,
2. the existing relations of production.

Reproduction of the Means of Production

Everyone (including the bourgeois economists whose work is national accounting, or the modern 'macro-economic' 'theoreticians') now recognizes, because Marx compellingly proved it in *Capital* Volume Two, that no production is possible which does not allow for the reproduction of the material conditions of production: the reproduction of the means of production.

The average economist, who is no different in this than

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the average capitalist, knows that each year it is essential to foresee what is needed to replace what has been used up or worn out in production: raw material, fixed installations (buildings), instruments of production (machines), etc. I say the average economist = the average capitalist, for they both express the point of view of the firm, regarding it as sufficient simply to give a commentary on the terms of the firm's financial accounting practice.

But thanks to the genius of Quesnay who first posed this 'glaring' problem, and to the genius of Marx who resolved it, we know that the reproduction of the material conditions of production cannot be thought at the level of the firm, because it does not exist at that level in its real conditions. What happens at the level of the firm is an effect, which only gives an idea of the necessity of reproduction, but absolutely fails to allow its conditions and mechanisms to be thought.

A moment's reflection is enough to be convinced of this: Mr X, a capitalist who produces woollen yarn in his spinning-mill, has to 'reproduce' his raw material, his machines, etc. But he does not produce them for his own production -- other capitalists do: an Australian sheep farmer, Mr Y, a heavy engineer producing machine-tools, Mr Z, etc., etc. And Mr Y and Mr Z, in order to produce those products which are the condition of the reproduction of Mr X's conditions of production, also have to reproduce the conditions of their own production, and so on to infinity -- the whole in proportions such that, on the national and even the world market, the demand for

means of production (for reproduction) can be satisfied by the supply.

In order to think this mechanism, which leads to a kind of 'endless chain', it is necessary to follow Marx's 'global' procedure, and to study in particular the relations of the circulation of capital between Department I (production of

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means of production) and Department II (production of means of consumption), and the realization of surplus value, in *Capital*, Volumes Two and Three.

We shall not go into the analysis of this question. It is enough to have mentioned the existence of the necessity of the reproduction of the material conditions of production.

Reproduction of Labour-Power

However, the reader will not have failed to note one thing. We have discussed the reproduction of the means of production -- but not the reproduction of the productive forces. We have therefore ignored the reproduction of what distinguishes the productive forces from the means of production, i.e. the reproduction of labour power.

From the observation of what takes place in the firm, in particular from the examination of the financial accounting practice which predicts amortization and investment, we have been able to obtain an approximate idea of the existence of the material process of reproduction, but we are now entering a domain in which the observation of what happens in the firm is, if not totally blind, at least almost entirely so, and for good reason: the reproduction of labour power takes place essentially outside the firm.

How is the reproduction of labour power ensured?

It is ensured by giving labour power the material means with which to reproduce itself: by wages. Wages feature in the accounting of each enterprise, but as 'wage capital',^[3] not at all as a condition of the material reproduction of labour power.

However, that is in fact how it 'works', since wages represents only that part of the value produced by the expendi-

3. Marx gave it its scientific concept: *variable capital*.

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ture of labour power which is indispensable for its reproduction: sc. indispensable to the reconstitution of the labour power of the wage-earner (the wherewithal to pay for housing, food and clothing, in short to enable the wage earner to present himself again at the factory gate the next day -- and every further day God grants him); and we should add: indispensable for raising and educating the children in whom the proletarian reproduces himself (in n models where $n = 0, 1, 2,$ etc. . . .) as labour power.

Remember that this quantity of value (wages) necessary for the reproduction of labour power is

determined not by the needs of a 'biological' Guaranteed Minimum Wage (*Salaire Minimum Interprofessionnel Garanti*) alone, but by the needs of a historical minimum (Marx noted that English workers need beer while French proletarians need wine) -- i.e. a historically variable minimum.

I should also like to point out that this minimum is doubly historical in that it is not defined by the historical needs of the working class 'recognized' by the capitalist class, but by the historical needs imposed by the proletarian class struggle (a double class struggle: against the lengthening of the working day and against the reduction of wages).

However, it is not enough to ensure for labour power the material conditions of its reproduction if it is to be reproduced as labour power. I have said that the available labour power must be 'competent', i.e. suitable to be set to work in the complex system of the process of production. The development of the productive forces and the type of unity historically constitutive of the productive forces at a given moment produce the result that the labour power has to be (diversely) skilled and therefore reproduced as such. Diversely: according to the requirements of the socio-technical division of labour, its different 'jobs' and 'posts'.

How is this reproduction of the (diversified) skills of

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labour power provided for in a capitalist regime? Here, unlike social formations characterized by slavery or serfdom this reproduction of the skills of labour power tends (this is a tendential law) decreasingly to be provided for 'on the spot' (apprenticeship within production itself), but is achieved more and more outside production: by the capitalist education system, and by other instances and institutions.

What do children learn at school? They go varying distances in their studies, but at any rate they learn to read, to write and to add -- i.e. a number of techniques, and a number of other things as well, including elements (which may be rudimentary or on the contrary thoroughgoing) of 'scientific' or 'literary culture', which are directly useful in the different jobs in production (one instruction for manual workers, another for technicians, a third for engineers, a final one for higher management, etc.). Thus they learn know-how.

But besides these techniques and knowledges, and in learning them, children at school also learn the 'rules' of good behaviour, i.e. the attitude that should be observed by every agent in the division of labour, according to the job he is 'destined' for: rules of morality, civic and professional conscience, which actually means rules of respect for the socio-technical division of labour and ultimately the rules of the order established by class domination. They also learn to 'speak proper French', to 'handle' the workers correctly, i.e. actually (for the future capitalists and their servants) to 'order them about' properly, i.e. (ideally) to 'speak to them' in the right way, etc.

To put this more scientifically, I shall say that 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'.

In other words, the school (but also other State institutions like the Church, or other apparatuses like the Army) teaches 'know-how', but in forms which ensure *subjection to the ruling ideology* or the mastery of its 'practice'. All the agents of production, exploitation and repression, not to speak of the 'professionals of ideology' (Marx), must in one way or another be 'steeped' in this ideology in order to perform their tasks 'conscientiously' -- the tasks of the exploited (the proletarians), of the exploiters (the capitalists), of the exploiters' auxiliaries (the managers), or of the high priests of the ruling ideology (its 'functionaries'), etc.

The reproduction of labour power thus reveals as its *sine qua non* not only the reproduction of its 'skills' but also the reproduction of its subjection to the ruling ideology or of the 'practice' of that ideology, with the proviso that it is not enough to say 'not only but also', for it is clear that *it is in the forms and under the forms of ideological subjection that provision is made for the reproduction of the skills of labour power*.

But this is to recognize the effective presence of a new reality: *ideology*.

Here I shall make two comments.

The first is to round off my analysis of reproduction.

I have just given a rapid survey of the forms of the reproduction of the productive forces, i.e. of the means of production on the one hand, and of labour power on the other.

But I have not yet approached the question of the *reproduction of the relations of production*. This is a *crucial question* for the Marxist theory of the mode of production.

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To let it pass would be a theoretical omission -- worse, a serious political error.

I shall therefore discuss it. But in order to obtain the means to discuss it, I shall have to make another long detour.

The second comment is that in order to make this detour, I am obliged to re-raise my old question: what is a society ?

INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUPERSTRUCTURE

On a number of occasions^[4] I have insisted on the revolutionary character of the Marxist conception of the 'social whole' insofar as it is distinct from the Hegelian 'totality'. I said (and this thesis only repeats famous propositions of historical materialism) that Marx conceived the structure of every society as constituted by 'levels' or 'instances' articulated by a specific determination: the *infrastructure*, or economic base (the 'unity' of the productive forces and the relations of production) and the *superstructure*, which itself contains two 'levels' or 'instances': the

politico-legal (law and the State) and ideology (the different ideologies, religious, ethical, legal, political, etc.).

Besides its theoretico-didactic interest (it reveals the difference between Marx and Hegel), this representation has the following crucial theoretical advantage: it makes it possible to inscribe in the theoretical apparatus of its essential concepts what I have called their *respective indices of effectivity*. What does this mean?

It is easy to see that this representation of the structure of every society as an edifice containing a base (infrastruc-

4. In *For Marx* and *Reading Capital*, 1965 (English editions 1969 and 1970 respectively).

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ture) on which are erected the two 'floors' of the superstructure, is a metaphor, to be quite precise, a spatial metaphor: the metaphor of a topography (*topique*).^[5] Like every metaphor, this metaphor suggests something, makes some thing visible. What? Precisely this: that the upper floors could not 'stay up' (in the air) alone, if they did not rest precisely on their base.

Thus the object of the metaphor of the edifice is to represent above all the 'determination in the last instance' by the economic base. The effect of this spatial metaphor is to endow the base with an index of effectivity known by the famous terms: the determination in the last instance of what happens in the upper 'floors' (of the superstructure) by what happens in the economic base.

Given this index of effectivity 'in the last instance', the 'floors' of the superstructure are clearly endowed with different indices of effectivity. What kind of indices ?

It is possible to say that the floors of the superstructure are not determinant in the last instance, but that they are determined by the effectivity of the base; that if they are determinant in their own (as yet undefined) ways, this is true only insofar as they are determined by the base.

Their index of effectivity (or determination), as determined by the determination in the last instance of the base, is thought by the Marxist tradition in two ways: (1) there is a 'relative autonomy' of the superstructure with respect to the base; (2) there is a 'reciprocal action' of the superstructure on the base.

We can therefore say that the great theoretical advantage of the Marxist topography, i.e. of the spatial metaphor of

5. *Topography* from the Greek *topos* : place. A topography represents in a definite space the respective *sites* occupied by several realities: thus the economic is *at the bottom* (the base), the superstructure *above it*.

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the edifice (base and superstructure) is simultaneously that it reveals that questions of determination (or of index of effectivity) are crucial; that it reveals that it is the base which in the last instance determines the whole edifice; and that, as a consequence, it obliges us to pose the theoretical problem of the types of 'derivatory' effectivity peculiar to the superstructure, i.e. it obliges us to think what the Marxist tradition calls conjointly the relative autonomy of the superstructure and the

reciprocal action of the superstructure on the base.

The greatest disadvantage of this representation of the structure of every society by the spatial metaphor of an edifice, is obviously the fact that it is metaphorical: i.e. it remains *descriptive*.

It now seems to me that it is possible and desirable to represent things differently. NB, I do not mean by this that I want to reject the classical metaphor, for that metaphor itself requires that we go beyond it. And I am not going beyond it in order to reject it as outworn. I simply want to attempt to think what it gives us in the form of a description.

I believe that it is possible and necessary to think what characterizes the essential of the existence and nature of the superstructure *on the basis of reproduction*. Once one takes the point of view of reproduction, many of the questions whose existence was indicated by the spatial metaphor of the edifice, but to which it could not give a conceptual answer, are immediately illuminated.

My basic thesis is that it is not possible to pose these questions (and therefore to answer them) *except from the point of view of reproduction*.

I shall give a short analysis of Law, the State and Ideology *from this point of view*. And I shall reveal what happens both from the point of view of practice and production on the one hand, and from that of reproduction on the other.

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THE STATE

The Marxist tradition is strict, here: in the [*Communist Manifesto*](#) and the [*Eighteenth Brumaire*](#) (and in all the later classical texts, above all in Marx's writings on the Paris Commune and Lenin's on [*State and Revolution*](#)), the State is explicitly conceived as a repressive apparatus. The State is a 'machine' of repression, which enables the ruling classes (in the nineteenth century the bourgeois class and the 'class' of big landowners) to ensure their domination over the working class, thus enabling the former to subject the latter to the process of surplus-value extortion (i.e. to capitalist exploitation).

The State is thus first of all what the Marxist classics have called *the State apparatus*. This term means: not only the specialized apparatus (in the narrow sense) whose existence and necessity I have recognized in relation to the requirements of legal practice, i.e. the police, the courts, the prisons; but also the army, which (the proletariat has paid for this experience with its blood) intervenes directly as a supplementary repressive force in the last instance, when the police and its specialized auxiliary corps are 'outrun by events'; and above this ensemble, the head of State, the government and the administration.

Presented in this form, the Marxist-Leninist 'theory' of the State has its finger on the essential point, and not for one moment can there be any question of rejecting the fact that this really is the essential point. The State apparatus, which defines the State as a force of repressive execution and intervention 'in the interests of the ruling classes' in the class struggle conducted by the bourgeoisie and its allies against the proletariat, is quite certainly the State, and quite certainly defines its basic 'function'.

From Descriptive Theory to Theory as such

Nevertheless, here too, as I pointed out with respect to the metaphor of the edifice (infrastructure and superstructure), this presentation of the nature of the State is still partly descriptive.

As I shall often have occasion to use this adjective (descriptive), a word of explanation is necessary in order to remove any ambiguity.

Whenever, in speaking of the metaphor of the edifice or of the Marxist 'theory' of the State, I have said that these are descriptive conceptions or representations of their objects, I had no ulterior critical motives. On the contrary, I have every grounds to think that great scientific discoveries cannot help but pass through the phase of what I shall call *descriptive 'theory'*. This is the first phase of every theory, at least in the domain which concerns us (that of the science of social formations). As such, one might and in my opinion one must -- envisage this phase as a transitional one, necessary to the development of the theory. That it is transitional is inscribed in my expression: 'descriptive theory', which reveals in its conjunction of terms the equivalent of a kind of 'contradiction'. In fact, the term theory 'clashes' to some extent with the adjective 'descriptive' which I have attached to it. This means quite precisely: (1) that the 'descriptive theory' really is, without a shadow of a doubt, the irreversible beginning of the theory; but (2) that the 'descriptive' form in which the theory is presented requires, precisely as an effect of this 'contradiction', a development of the theory which goes beyond the form of 'description'.

Let me make this idea clearer by returning to our present object: the State.

When I say that the Marxist 'theory' of the State available to us is still partly 'descriptive', that means first and fore-

most that this descriptive 'theory' is without the shadow of a doubt precisely the beginning of the Marxist theory of the State, and that this beginning gives us the essential point, i.e. the decisive principle of every later development of the theory.

Indeed, I shall call the descriptive theory of the State correct, since it is perfectly possible to make the vast majority of the facts in the domain with which it is concerned correspond to the definition it gives of its object. Thus, the definition of the State as a class State, existing in the repressive State apparatus, casts a brilliant light on all the facts observable in the various orders of repression whatever their domains: from the massacres of June 1848 and of the Paris Commune, of Bloody Sunday, May 1905 in Petrograd, of the Resistance, of Charonne, etc., to the mere (and relatively anodyne) interventions of a 'censorship' which has banned Diderot's *La Religieuse* or a play by Gatti on Franco; it casts light on all the direct or indirect forms of exploitation and extermination of the masses of the people (imperialist wars); it casts light on that subtle everyday domination beneath which can be glimpsed, in the forms of political democracy, for example, what Lenin, following Marx, called the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

And yet the descriptive theory of the State represents a phase in the constitution of the theory which itself demands the 'supersession' of this phase. For it is clear that if the definition in question

really does give us the means to identify and recognize the facts of oppression by relating them to the State, conceived as the repressive State apparatus, this 'interrelationship' gives rise to a very special kind of obviousness, about which I shall have something to say in a moment: 'Yes, that's how it is, that's really true!'^[6]

6. See p. 158 below, [On Ideology](#).

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And the accumulation of facts within the definition of the State may multiply examples, but it does not really advance the definition of the State, i.e. the scientific theory of the State. Every descriptive theory thus runs the risk of 'blocking' the development of the theory, and yet that development is essential.

That is why I think that, in order to develop this descriptive theory into theory as such, i.e. in order to understand further the mechanisms of the State in its functioning, I think that it is indispensable to add something to the classical definition of the State as a State apparatus.

The Essentials of the Marxist Theory of the State

Let me first clarify one important point: the State (and its existence in its apparatus) has no meaning except as a function of State power. The whole of the political class struggle revolves around the State. By which I mean around the possession, i.e. the seizure and conservation of State power by a certain class or by an alliance between classes or class fractions. This first clarification obliges me to distinguish between State power (conservation of State power or seizure of State power), the objective of the political class struggle on the one hand, and the State apparatus on the other.

We know that the State apparatus may survive, as is proved by bourgeois 'revolutions' in nineteenth-century France (1830, 1848), by *coups d'état* (2 December, May 1958), by collapses of the State (the fall of the Empire in 1870, of the Third Republic in 1940), or by the political rise of the petty bourgeoisie (1890-95 in France), etc., without the State apparatus being affected or modified: it may survive political events which affect the possession of State power.

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Even after a social revolution like that of 1917, a large part of the State apparatus survived after the seizure of State power by the alliance of the proletariat and the small peasantry: Lenin repeated the fact again and again.

It is possible to describe the distinction between State power and State apparatus as part of the 'Marxist theory' of the State, explicitly present since Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire* and *Class Struggles in France*.

To summarize the 'Marxist theory of the State' on this point, it can be said that the Marxist classics have always claimed that (1) the State is the repressive State apparatus, (2) State power and State apparatus must be distinguished, (3) the objective of the class struggle concerns State power, and in consequence the use of the State apparatus by the classes (or alliance of classes or of fractions of classes) holding State power as a function of their class objectives, and (4) the

proletariat must seize State power in order to destroy the existing bourgeois State apparatus and, in a first phase, replace it with a quite different, proletarian, State apparatus, then in later phases set in motion a radical process, that of the destruction of the State (the end of State power, the end of every State apparatus).

In this perspective, therefore, what I would propose to add to the 'Marxist theory' of the State is already there in so many words. But it seems to me that even with this supplement, this theory is still in part descriptive, although it does now contain complex and differential elements whose functioning and action cannot be understood without recourse to further supplementary theoretical development.

The State Ideological Apparatuses

Thus, what has to be added to the 'Marxist theory' of the State is something else.

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Here we must advance cautiously in a terrain which, in fact, the Marxist classics entered long before us, but without having systematized in theoretical form the decisive advances implied by their experiences and procedures. Their experiences and procedures were indeed restricted in the main to the terrain of political practice.

In fact, i.e. in their political practice, the Marxist classics treated the State as a more complex reality than the definition of it given in the 'Marxist theory of the State', even when it has been supplemented as I have just suggested. They recognized this complexity in their practice, but they did not express it in a corresponding theory.^[7]

I should like to attempt a very schematic outline of this corresponding theory. To that end, I propose the following thesis.

In order to advance the theory of the State it is indispensable to take into account not only the distinction between *State power* and *State apparatus*, but also another reality which is clearly on the side of the (repressive) State apparatus, but must not be confused with it. I shall call this reality by its concept: *the ideological State apparatuses*.

What are the ideological State apparatuses (ISAs)?

They must not be confused with the (repressive) State apparatus. Remember that in Marxist theory, the State Apparatus (SA) contains: the Government, the Admin-

7. To my knowledge, Gramsci is the only one who went any distance in the road I am taking. He had the 'remarkable' idea that the State could not be reduced to the (Repressive) State Apparatus, but included, as he put it, a certain number of institutions from '*civil society*': the Church, the Schools, the trade unions, etc. Unfortunately, Gramsci did not systematize his institutions, which remained in the state of acute but fragmentary notes (cf. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, International Publishers, 1971, pp. 12, 259, 260-3; see also the letter to Tatiana Schucht, 7 September 1931, in *Lettre del Carcere*, Einaudi, 1968, p. 479. English-language translation in preparation.

istration, the Army, the Police, the Courts, the Prisons, etc., which constitute what I shall in future call the Repressive State Apparatus. Repressive suggests that the State Apparatus in question 'functions by violence' -- at least ultimately (since repression, e.g. administrative repression, may take non-physical forms).

I shall call Ideological State Apparatuses a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions. I propose an empirical list of these which will obviously have to be examined in detail, tested, corrected and re-organized. With all the reservations implied by this requirement, we can for the moment regard the following institutions as Ideological State Apparatuses (the order in which I have listed them has no particular significance):

- the religious ISA (the system of the different Churches),
- the educational ISA (the system of the different public and private 'Schools'),
- the family ISA,^[8]
- the legal ISA,^[9]
- the political ISA (the political system, including the different Parties),
- the trade-union ISA,
- the communications ISA (press, radio and television, etc.),
- the cultural ISA (Literature, the Arts, sports, etc.).

I have said that the ISAs must not be confused with the (Repressive) State Apparatus. What constitutes the difference?

8. The family obviously has other 'functions' than that of an ISA. It intervenes in the reproduction of labour power. In different modes of production it is the unit of production and/or the unit of consumption.

9. The 'Law' belongs both to the (Repressive) State Apparatus and to the system of the ISAs.

As a first moment, it is clear that while there is one (Repressive) State Apparatus, there is a *plurality* of Ideological State Apparatuses. Even presupposing that it exists, the unity that constitutes this plurality of ISAs as a body is not immediately visible.

As a second moment, it is clear that whereas the unified -- (Repressive) State Apparatus belongs entirely to the *public* domain, much the larger part of the Ideological State Apparatuses (in their apparent dispersion) are part, on the contrary, of the *private* domain. Churches, Parties, Trade Unions, families, some schools, most newspapers, cultural ventures, etc., etc., are private.

We can ignore the first observation for the moment. But someone is bound to question the second, asking me by what right I regard as Ideological *State* Apparatuses, institutions which for the most part do not possess public status, but are quite simply *private* institutions. As a conscious

Marxist, Gramsci already forestalled this objection in one sentence. The distinction between the public and the private is a distinction internal to bourgeois law, and valid in the (subordinate) domains in which bourgeois law exercises its 'authority'. The domain of the State escapes it because the latter is 'above the law': the State, which is the State *of* the ruling class, is neither public nor private; on the contrary, it is the precondition for any distinction between public and private. The same thing can be said from the starting-point of our State Ideological Apparatuses. It is unimportant whether the institutions in which they are realized are 'public' or 'private'. What matters is how they function. Private institutions can perfectly well 'function' as Ideological State Apparatuses. A reasonably thorough analysis of any one of the ISAs proves it.

But now for what is essential. What distinguishes the ISAs from the (Repressive) State Apparatus is the following

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basic difference: the Repressive State Apparatus functions 'by violence', whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses' *function 'by ideology'*.

I can clarify matters by correcting this distinction. I shall say rather that every State Apparatus, whether Repressive or Ideological, 'functions' both by violence and by ideology, but with one very important distinction which makes it imperative not to confuse the Ideological State Apparatuses with the (Repressive) State Apparatus.

This is the fact that the (Repressive) State Apparatus functions massively and predominantly *by repression* (including physical repression), while functioning secondarily by ideology. (There is no such thing as a purely repressive apparatus.) For example, the Army and the Police also function by ideology both to ensure their own cohesion and reproduction, and in the 'values' they propound externally.

In the same way, but inversely, it is essential to say that for their part the Ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly *by ideology*, but they also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic. (There is no such thing as a purely ideological apparatus.) Thus Schools and Churches use suitable methods of punishment, expulsion, selection, etc., to 'discipline' not only their shepherds, but also their flocks. The same is true of the Family. . . . The same is true of the cultural IS Apparatus (censorship, among other things), etc.

Is it necessary to add that this determination of the double 'functioning' (predominantly, secondarily) by repression and by ideology, according to whether it is a matter of the (Repressive) State Apparatus or the Ideological State Apparatuses, makes it clear that very subtle explicit or tacit combinations may be woven from the interplay of the (Re-

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pressive) State Apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatuses? Everyday life provides us with innumerable examples of this, but they must be studied in detail if we are to go further than this mere observation.

Nevertheless, this remark leads us towards an understanding of what constitutes the unity of the

apparently disparate body of the ISAs. If the ISAs 'function' massively and predominantly by ideology, what unifies their diversity is precisely this functioning, insofar as the ideology by which they function is always in fact unified, despite its diversity and its contradictions, *beneath the ruling ideology*, which is the ideology of 'the ruling class'. Given the fact that the 'ruling class' in principle holds State power (openly or more often by means of alliances between classes or class fractions), and therefore has at its disposal the (Repressive) State Apparatus, we can accept the fact that this same ruling class is active in the Ideological State Apparatuses insofar as it is ultimately the ruling ideology which is realized in the Ideological State Apparatuses, precisely in its contradictions. Of course, it is a quite different thing to act by laws and decrees in the (Repressive) State Apparatus and to 'act' through the intermediary of the ruling ideology in the Ideological State Apparatuses. We must go into the details of this difference -- but it cannot mask the reality of a profound identity. To my knowledge, *no class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological Apparatuses*. I only need one example and proof of this: Lenin's anguished concern to revolutionize the educational Ideological State Apparatus (among others), simply to make it possible for the Soviet proletariat, who had seized State power, to secure the future of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the transition to socialism.^[10]

10. In a pathetic text written in 1937, Krupskaya relates the history of Lenin's desperate efforts and what she regards as his failure.

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This last comment puts us in a position to understand that the Ideological State Apparatuses may be not only the *stake*, but also the *site* of class struggle, and often of bitter forms of class struggle. The class (or class alliance) in power cannot lay down the law in the ISAs as easily as it can in the (repressive) State apparatus, not only because the former ruling classes are able to retain strong positions there for a long time, but also because the resistance of the exploited classes is able to find means and occasions to express itself there, either by the utilization of their contradictions, or by conquering combat positions in them in struggle.^[11]

Let me run through my comments.

If the thesis I have proposed is well-founded, it leads me back to the classical Marxist theory of the State, while making it more precise in one point. I argue that it is necessary to distinguish between State power (and its possession by . . .) on the one hand, and the State Apparatus on the other. But I add that the State Apparatus contains

11. What I have said in these few brief words about the class struggle in the ISAs is obviously far from exhausting the question of the class struggle.

To approach this question, two principles must be borne in mind:

The first principle was formulated by Marx in the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*: 'In considering such transformations [a social revolution] a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic -- in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.' The class struggle is thus expressed and exercised in ideological forms, thus also in the ideological forms of the ISAs. But the class struggle *extends far beyond* these forms, and it is because it extends beyond them that the struggle of the exploited classes may also be exercised in the forms of the ISAs, and thus turn the weapon of ideology against the classes in power.

This by virtue of the *second principle*: the class struggle extends beyond the ISAs because it is rooted elsewhere than in ideology, in the Infrastructure, in the relations of production, which are relations of

exploitation and constitute the base for class relations.

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two bodies: the body of institutions which represent the Repressive State Apparatus on the one hand, and the body of institutions which represent the body of Ideological State Apparatuses on the other.

But if this is the case, the following question is bound to be asked, even in the very summary state of my suggestions: what exactly is the extent of the role of the Ideological State Apparatuses? What is their importance based on? In other words: to what does the 'function' of these Ideological State Apparatuses, which do not function by repression but by ideology, correspond?

ON THE REPRODUCTION OF THE RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION

I can now answer the central question which I have left in suspense for many long pages: *how is the reproduction of the relations of production secured?*

In the topographical language (Infrastructure, Superstructure), I can say: for the most part,^[12] it is secured by the legal-political and ideological superstructure.

But as I have argued that it is essential to go beyond this still descriptive language, I shall say: for the most part, it is secured by the exercise of State power in the State Apparatuses, on the one hand the (Repressive) State Apparatus, on the other the Ideological State Apparatuses.

What I have just said must also be taken into account, and it can be assembled in the form of the following three features:

12. For the most part. For the relations of production are first reproduced by the materiality of the processes of production and circulation. But it should not be forgotten that ideological relations are immediately present in these same processes.

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1. All the State Apparatuses function both by repression and by ideology, with the difference that the (Repressive) State Apparatus functions massively and predominantly by repression, whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly by ideology.

2. Whereas the (Repressive) State Apparatus constitutes an organized whole whose different parts are centralized beneath a commanding unity, that of the politics of class struggle applied by the political representatives of the ruling classes in possession of State power, the Ideological State Apparatuses are multiple, distinct, 'relatively autonomous' and capable of providing an objective field to contradictions which express, in forms which may be limited or extreme, the effects of the clashes between the capitalist class struggle and the proletarian class struggle, as well as their subordinate forms.

3. Whereas the unity of the (Repressive) State Apparatus is secured by its unified and

centralized organization under the leadership of the representatives of the classes in power executing the politics of the class struggle of the classes in power, the unity of the different Ideological State Apparatuses is secured, usually in contradictory forms, by the ruling ideology, the ideology of the ruling class.

Taking these features into account, it is possible to represent the reproduction of the relations of production^[13] in the following way, according to a kind of 'division of labour'.

The role of the repressive State apparatus, insofar as it is a repressive apparatus, consists essentially in securing by force (physical or otherwise) the political conditions of the reproduction of relations of production which are in the

13. *For that part of reproduction to which the Repressive State Apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatus contribute.*

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last resort relations of exploitation. Not only does the State apparatus contribute generously to its own reproduction (the capitalist State contains political dynasties, military dynasties, etc.), but also and above all, the State apparatus secures by repression (from the most brutal physical force, via mere administrative commands and interdictions, to open and tacit censorship) the political conditions for the action of the Ideological State Apparatuses.

In fact, it is the latter which largely secure the reproduction specifically of the relations of production, behind a 'shield' provided by the repressive State apparatus. It is here that the role of the ruling ideology is heavily concentrated, the ideology of the ruling class, which holds State power. It is the intermediation of the ruling ideology that ensures a (sometimes teeth-gritting) 'harmony' between the repressive State apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatuses, and between the different State Ideological Apparatuses.

We are thus led to envisage the following hypothesis, as a function precisely of the diversity of ideological State Apparatuses in their single, because shared, role of the reproduction of the relations of production.

Indeed we have listed a relatively large number of ideological State apparatuses in contemporary capitalist social formations: the educational apparatus, the religious apparatus, the family apparatus, the political apparatus, the trade-union apparatus, the communications apparatus, the 'cultural' apparatus, etc.

But in the social formations of that mode of production characterized by 'serfdom' (usually called the feudal mode of production), we observe that although there is a single repressive State apparatus which, since the earliest known Ancient States, let alone the Absolute Monarchies, has been formally very similar to the one we know today, the number of Ideological State Apparatuses is smaller and their

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individual types are different. For example, we observe that during the Middle Ages, the Church (the religious ideological State apparatus) accumulated a number of functions which have today

devolved on to several distinct ideological State apparatuses, new ones in relation to the past I am invoking, in particular educational and cultural functions. Alongside the Church there was the family Ideological State Apparatus, which played a considerable part, incommensurable with its role in capitalist social formations. Despite appearances, the Church and the Family were not the only Ideological State Apparatuses. There was also a political Ideological State Apparatus (the Estates General, the *Parlement*, the different political factions and Leagues, the ancestors or the modern political parties, and the whole political system of the free Communes and then of the *Villes*). There was also a powerful 'proto-trade union' Ideological State Apparatus, if I may venture such an anachronistic term (the powerful merchants' and bankers' guilds and the journeymen's associations, etc.). Publishing and Communications, even, saw an indisputable development, as did the theatre; initially both were integral parts of the Church, then they became more and more independent of it.

In the pre-capitalist historical period which I have examined extremely broadly, it is absolutely clear that *there was one dominant Ideological State Apparatus, the Church*, which concentrated within it not only religious functions, but also educational ones, and a large proportion of the functions of communications and 'culture'. It is no accident that all ideological struggle, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, starting with the first shocks of the Reformation, was *concentrated* in an anti-clerical and anti-religious struggle; rather this is a function precisely of the dominant position of the religious ideological State apparatus.

The foremost objective and achievement of the French

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Revolution was not just to transfer State power from the feudal aristocracy to the merchant-capitalist bourgeoisie, to break part of the former repressive State apparatus and replace it with a new one (e.g., the national popular Army) but also to attack the number-one Ideological State Apparatus: the Church. Hence the civil constitution of the clergy, the confiscation of ecclesiastical wealth, and the creation of new ideological State apparatuses to replace the religious ideological State apparatus in its dominant role.

Naturally, these things did not happen automatically: witness the Concordat, the Restoration and the long class struggle between the landed aristocracy and the industrial bourgeoisie throughout the nineteenth century for the establishment of bourgeois hegemony over the functions formerly fulfilled by the Church: above all by the Schools. It can be said that the bourgeoisie relied on the new political, parliamentary-democratic, ideological State apparatus, installed in the earliest years of the Revolution, then restored after long and violent struggles, for a few months in 1848 and for decades after the fall of the Second Empire, in order to conduct its struggle against the Church and wrest its ideological functions away from it, in other words, to ensure not only its own political hegemony, but also the ideological hegemony indispensable to the reproduction of capitalist relations of production.

That is why I believe that I am justified in advancing the following Thesis, however precarious it is. I believe that the ideological State apparatus which has been installed in the *dominant* position in mature capitalist social formations as a result of a violent political and ideological class struggle against the old dominant ideological State apparatus, is the *educational ideological apparatus*.

This thesis may seem paradoxical, given that for everyone, i.e. in the ideological representation

has tried to give itself and the classes it exploits, it really seems that the dominant ideological State apparatus in capitalist social formations is not the Schools, but the political ideological State apparatus, i.e. the regime of parliamentary democracy combining universal suffrage and party struggle.

However, history, even recent history, shows that the bourgeoisie has been and still is able to accommodate itself to political ideological State apparatuses other than parliamentary democracy: the First and Second Empires, Constitutional Monarchy (Louis XVIII and Charles X), Parliamentary Monarchy (Louis-Philippe), Presidential Democracy (de Gaulle), to mention only France. In England this is even clearer. The Revolution was particularly 'successful' there from the bourgeois point of view, since unlike France, where the bourgeoisie, partly because of the stupidity of the petty aristocracy, had to agree to being carried to power by peasant and plebeian '*journées révolutionnaires*', something for which it had to pay a high price, the English bourgeoisie was able to 'compromise' with the aristocracy and 'share' State power and the use of the State apparatus with it for a long time (peace among all men of good will in the ruling classes!). In Germany it is even more striking, since it was behind a political ideological State apparatus in which the imperial Junkers (epitomized by Bismarck), their army and their police provided it with a shield and leading personnel, that the imperialist bourgeoisie made its shattering entry into history, before 'traversing' the Weimar Republic and entrusting itself to Nazism.

Hence I believe I have good reasons for thinking that behind the scenes of its political Ideological State Apparatus, which occupies the front of the stage, what the bourgeoisie has installed as its number-one, i.e. as its dominant ideological State apparatus, is the educational apparatus, which

has in fact replaced in its functions the previously dominant ideological State apparatus, the Church. One might even add: the School-Family couple has replaced the Church-Family couple.

Why is the educational apparatus in fact the dominant ideological State apparatus in capitalist social formations, and how does it function?

For the moment it must suffice to say:

1. All ideological State apparatuses, whatever they are, contribute to the same result: the reproduction of the relations of production, i.e. of capitalist relations of exploitation.

2. Each of them contributes towards this single result in the way proper to it. The political apparatus by subjecting individuals to the political State ideology, the 'indirect' (parliamentary) or 'direct' (plebiscitary or fascist) 'democratic' ideology. The communications apparatus by cramming every 'citizen' with daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism, etc, by means of the press, the radio and television. The same goes for the cultural apparatus (the role of sport in chauvinism is of the first importance), etc. The religious apparatus by recalling in sermons and the other great ceremonies of Birth, Marriage and Death, that man is only ashes, unless he loves his

neighbour to the extent of turning the other cheek to whoever strikes first. The family apparatus . . . but there is no need to go on.

3. This concert is dominated by a single score, occasionally disturbed by contradictions (those of the remnants of former ruling classes, those of the proletarians and their organizations): the score of the Ideology of the current ruling class which integrates into its music the great themes of the Humanism of the Great Forefathers, who produced the Greek Miracle even before Christianity, and afterwards

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the Glory of Rome, the Eternal City, and the themes of Interest, particular and general, etc. nationalism, moralism and economism.

4. Nevertheless, in this concert, one ideological State apparatus certainly has the dominant role, although hardly anyone lends an ear to its music: it is so silent! This is the School.

It takes children from every class at infant-school age, and then for years, the years in which the child is most 'vulnerable', squeezed between the family State apparatus and the educational State apparatus, it drums into them, whether it uses new or old methods, a certain amount of 'know-how' wrapped in the ruling ideology (French, arithmetic, natural history, the sciences, literature) or simply the ruling ideology in its pure state (ethics, civic instruction, philosophy). Somewhere around the age of sixteen, a huge mass of children are ejected 'into production': these are the workers or small peasants. Another portion of scholastically adapted youth carries on: and, for better or worse, it goes somewhat further, until it falls by the wayside and fills the posts of small and middle technicians, white-collar workers, small and middle executives, petty bourgeois of all kinds. A last portion reaches the summit, either to fall into intellectual semi-employment, or to provide, as well as the 'intellectuals of the collective labourer', the agents of exploitation (capitalists, managers), the agents of repression (soldiers, policemen, politicians, administrators, etc.) and the professional ideologists (priests of all sorts, most of whom are convinced 'laymen').

Each mass ejected *en route* is practically provided with the ideology which suits the role it has to fulfil in class society: the role of the exploited (with a 'highly-developed' 'professional', 'ethical', 'civic', 'national' and a-political consciousness); the role of the agent of exploitation (ability to

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give the workers orders and speak to them: 'human relations'), of the agent of repression (ability to give orders and enforce obedience 'without discussion', or ability to manipulate the demagogy of a political leader's rhetoric), or of the professional ideologist (ability to treat consciousnesses with the respect, i.e. with the contempt, blackmail, and demagogy they deserve, adapted to the accents of Morality, of Virtue, of 'Transcendence', of the Nation, of France's World Role, etc.).

Of course, many of these contrasting Virtues (modesty, resignation, submissiveness on the one hand, cynicism, contempt, arrogance, confidence, self-importance, even smooth talk and cunning on the other) are also taught in the Family, in the Church, in the Army, in Good Books, in films and even in the football stadium. But no other ideological State apparatus has the obligatory (and not least, free) audience of the totality of the children in the capitalist social formation, eight hours a day for five or six days out of seven.

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. The mechanisms which produce this vital result for the capitalist regime are naturally covered up and concealed by a universally reigning ideology of the School, universally reigning because it is one of the essential forms of the ruling bourgeois ideology: an ideology which represents the School as a neutral environment purged of ideology (because it is . . . lay), where teachers respectful of the 'conscience' and 'freedom' of the children who are entrusted to them (in complete confidence) by their 'parents' (who are free, too,

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i.e. the owners of their children) open up for them the path to the freedom, morality and responsibility of adults by their own example, by knowledge, literature and their 'liberating' virtues.

I ask the pardon of those teachers who, in dreadful conditions, attempt to turn the few weapons they can find in the history and learning they 'teach' against the ideology, the system and the practices in which they are trapped. They are a kind of hero. But they are rare and how many (the majority) do not even begin to suspect the 'work' the system (which is bigger than they are and crushes them) forces them to do, or worse, put all their heart and ingenuity into performing it with the most advanced awareness (the famous new methods!). So little do they suspect it that their own devotion contributes to the maintenance and nourishment of this ideological representation of the School, which makes the School today as 'natural', indispensable-useful and even beneficial for our contemporaries as the Church was 'natural', indispensable and generous for our ancestors a few centuries ago.

In fact, the Church has been replaced today *in its role as the dominant Ideological State Apparatus* by the School. It is coupled with the Family just as the Church was once coupled with the Family. We can now claim that the unprecedentedly deep crisis which is now shaking the education system of so many States across the globe, often in conjunction with a crisis (already proclaimed in the *Communist Manifesto*) shaking the family system, takes on a political meaning, given that the School (and the School Family couple) constitutes the dominant Ideological State Apparatus, the Apparatus playing a determinant part in the reproduction of the relations of production of a mode of production threatened in its existence by the world class struggle.

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ON IDEOLOGY

When I put forward the concept of an Ideological State Apparatus, when I said that the ISAs 'function by ideology', I invoked a reality which needs a little discussion: ideology.

It is well known that the expression 'ideology' was invented by Cabanis, Destutt de Tracy and their friends, who assigned to it as an object the (genetic) theory of ideas. When Marx took up the term fifty years later, he gave it a quite different meaning, even in his Early Works. Here, ideology is the system of the ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group. The ideologico-political struggle conducted by Marx as early as his articles in the *Rheinische Zeitung* inevitably and quickly brought him face to face with this reality and forced him to take his earliest intuitions further.

However, here we come upon a rather astonishing paradox. Everything seems to lead Marx to formulate a theory of ideology. In fact, *The German Ideology* does offer us, after the 1844 *Manuscripts*, an explicit theory of ideology, but . . . it is not Marxist (we shall see why in a moment). As for *Capital*, although it does contain many hints towards a theory of ideologies (most visibly, the ideology of the vulgar economists), it does not contain that theory itself, which depends for the most part on a theory of ideology in general.

I should like to venture a first and very schematic outline of such a theory. The theses I am about to put forward are certainly not off the cuff, but they cannot be sustained and tested, i.e. confirmed or rejected, except by much thorough study and analysis.

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Ideology has no History

One word first of all to expound the reason in principle which seems to me to found, or at least to justify, the project of a theory of ideology *in general*, and not a theory of particular ideologies, which, whatever their form (religious, ethical, legal, political), always express *class positions*.

It is quite obvious that it is necessary to proceed towards a theory of ideologies in the two respects I have just suggested. It will then be clear that a theory of ideologies depends in the last resort on the history of social formations, and thus of the modes of production combined in social formations, and of the class struggles which develop in them. In this sense it is clear that there can be no question of a theory of ideologies in general, since ideologies (defined in the double respect suggested above: regional and class) have a history, whose determination in the last instance is clearly situated outside ideologies alone, although it involves them.

On the contrary, if I am able to put forward the project of a theory of ideology *in general*, and if this theory really is one of the elements on which theories of ideologies depend, that entails an apparently paradoxical proposition which I shall express in the following terms: *ideology has no history*.

As we know, this formulation appears in so many words in a passage from *The German Ideology*. Marx utters it with respect to metaphysics, which, he says, has no more history than ethics (meaning also the other forms of ideology).

In *The German Ideology*, this formulation appears in a plainly positivist context. Ideology is conceived as a pure illusion, a pure dream, i.e. as nothingness. All its reality is external to it. Ideology is thus thought as an imaginary construction whose status is exactly like the theoretical status of the dream among writers before Freud. For these writers, the dream was the purely imaginary, i.e. null,

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result of 'day's residues', presented in an arbitrary arrangement and order, sometimes even 'inverted', in other words, in 'disorder'. For them, the dream was the imaginary, it was empty, null and arbitrarily 'stuck together' (*bricolé*), once the eyes had closed, from the residues of the only full and positive reality, the reality of the day. This is exactly the status of philosophy and ideology (since in this book philosophy is ideology *par excellence*) in *The German Ideology*.

Ideology, then, is for Marx an imaginary assemblage (*bricolage*), a pure dream, empty and vain, constituted by the 'day's residues' from the only full and positive reality, that of the concrete history of concrete material individuals materially producing their existence. It is on this basis that ideology has no history in *The German Ideology*, since its history is outside it, where the only existing history is, the history of concrete individuals, etc. In *The German Ideology*, the thesis that ideology has no history is therefore a purely negative thesis, since it means both:

1. ideology is nothing insofar as it is a pure dream (manufactured by who knows what power: if not by the alienation of the division of labour, but that, too, is a *negative* determination);

2. ideology has no history, which emphatically does not mean that there is no history in it (on the contrary, for it is merely the pale, empty and inverted reflection of real history) but that it has no history of its *own*.

Now, while the thesis I wish to defend formally speaking adopts the terms of *The German Ideology* ('ideology has no history'), it is radically different from the positivist and historicist thesis of *The German Ideology*.

For on the one hand, I think it is possible to hold that ideologies *have a history of their own* (although it is determined in the last instance by the class struggle); and on the other, I think it is possible to hold that ideology *in general*

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has no history, not in a negative sense (its history is external to it), but in an absolutely positive sense.

This sense is a positive one if it is true that the peculiarity of ideology is that it is endowed with a structure and a functioning such as to make it a non-historical reality, i.e. an *omni-historical* reality, in the sense in which that structure and functioning are immutable, present in the same form throughout what we can call history, in the sense in which the *Communist Manifesto* defines history as the history of class struggles, i.e. the history of class societies.

To give a theoretical reference-point here, I might say that, to return to our example of the dream, in its Freudian conception this time, our proposition: ideology has no history, can and must (and in a way which has absolutely nothing arbitrary about it, but, quite the reverse, is theoretically necessary, for there is an organic link between the two propositions) be related directly to Freud's proposition that the *unconscious is eternal*, i.e. that it has no history.

If eternal means, not transcendent to all (temporal) history, but omnipresent, trans-historical and therefore immutable in form throughout the extent of history, I shall adopt Freud's expression word for word, and write *ideology is eternal*, exactly like the unconscious. And I add that I find this comparison theoretically justified by the fact that the eternity of the unconscious is not unrelated to the eternity of ideology in general.

That is why I believe I am justified, hypothetically at least, in proposing a theory of ideology *in general*, in the sense that Freud presented a theory of the unconscious *in general*.

To simplify the phrase, it is convenient, taking into account what has been said about ideologies, to use the plain term ideology to designate ideology in general, which I have just said has no

history, or, what comes to the same thing, is eternal, i.e. omnipresent in its immutable form

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throughout history (= the history of social formations containing social classes). For the moment I shall restrict myself to 'class societies' and their history.

Ideology is a 'Representation' of the Imaginary Relationship of Individuals to their Real Conditions of Existence

In order to approach my central thesis on the structure and functioning of ideology, I shall first present two theses, one negative, the other positive. The first concerns the object which is 'represented' in the imaginary form of ideology, the second concerns the materiality of ideology.

THE S I S I. Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.

We commonly call religious ideology, ethical ideology, legal ideology, political ideology, etc., so many 'world outlooks'. Of course, assuming that we do not live one of these ideologies as the truth (e.g. 'believe' in God, Duty, Justice, etc. . . .), we admit that the ideology we are discussing from a critical point of view, examining it as the ethnologist examines the myths of a 'primitive society', that these 'world outlooks' are largely imaginary, i.e. do not 'correspond to reality'.

However, while admitting that they do not correspond to reality, i.e. that they constitute an illusion, we admit that they do make allusion to reality, and that they need only be 'interpreted' to discover the reality of the world behind their imaginary representation of that world (ideology = *illusion/allusion*).

There are different types of interpretation, the most famous of which are the *mechanistic* type, current in the eighteenth century (God is the imaginary representation of the real King), and the *hermeneutic* 'interpretation, inaugurated by the earliest Church Fathers, and revived by

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Feuerbach and the theologico-philosophical school which descends from him, e.g. the theologian Barth (to Feuerbach, for example, God is the essence of real Man). The essential point is that on condition that we interpret the imaginary transposition (and inversion) of ideology we arrive at the conclusion that in ideology 'men represent their real conditions of existence to themselves in an imaginary form'.

Unfortunately, this interpretation leaves one small problem unsettled: why do men 'need' this imaginary transposition of their real conditions of existence in order to 'represent to themselves' their real conditions of existence?

The first answer (that of the eighteenth century) proposes a simple solution: Priests or Despots are responsible. They 'forged' the Beautiful Lies so that, in the belief that they were obeying God, men would in fact obey the Priests and Despots, who are usually in alliance in their imposture, the Priests acting in the interests of the Despots or *vice versa*, according to the political positions of the 'theoreticians' concerned. There is therefore a cause for the imaginary transposition of the real

conditions of existence: that cause is the existence of a small number of cynical men who base their domination and exploitation of the 'people' on a falsified representation of the world which they have imagined in order to enslave other minds by dominating their imaginations.

The second answer (that of Feuerbach, taken over word for word by Marx in his Early Works) is more 'profound', i.e. just as false. It, too, seeks and finds a cause for the imaginary transposition and distortion of men's real conditions of existence, in short, for the alienation in the imaginary of the representation of men's conditions of existence. This cause is no longer Priests or Despots, nor their active imagination and the passive imagination of their victims. This cause is the material alienation which reigns

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in the conditions of existence of men themselves. This is how, in *The Jewish Question* and elsewhere, Marx defends the Feuerbachian idea that men make themselves an alienated (= imaginary) representation of their conditions of existence because these conditions of existence are themselves alienating (in the *1844 Manuscripts* : because these conditions are dominated by the essence of alienated society -- '*alienated labour* ').

All these interpretations thus take literally the thesis which they presuppose, and on which they depend, i.e. that what is reflected in the imaginary representation of the world found in an ideology is the conditions of existence of men, i.e. their real world.

Now I can return to a thesis which I have already advanced: it is not their real conditions of existence, their real world, that 'men' 'represent to themselves' in ideology, but above all it is their relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them there. It is this relation which is at the centre of every ideological, i.e. imaginary, representation of the real world. It is this relation that contains the 'cause' which has to explain the imaginary distortion of the ideological representation of the real world. Or rather, to leave aside the language of causality it is necessary to advance the thesis that it is the *imaginary nature of this relation* which underlies all the imaginary distortion that we can observe (if we do not live in its truth) in all ideology.

To speak in a Marxist language, if it is true that the representation of the real conditions of existence of the individuals occupying the posts of agents of production, exploitation, repression, ideologization and scientific practice, does in the last analysis arise from the relations of production, and from relations deriving from the relations of production, we can say the following: all ideology rep-

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resents in its necessarily imaginary distortion not the existing relations of production (and the other relations that derive from them), but above all the (imaginary) relationship of individuals to the relations of production and the relations that derive from them. What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live.

If this is the case, the question of the 'cause' of the imaginary distortion of the real relations in ideology disappears and must be replaced by a different question: why is the representation given to individuals of their (individual) relation to the social relations which govern their conditions of

existence and their collective and individual life necessarily an imaginary relation? And what is the nature of this imaginarieness? Posed in this way, the question explodes the solution by a 'clique'^[14], by a group of individuals (Priests or Despots) who are the authors of the great ideological mystification, just as it explodes the solution by the alienated character of the real world. We shall see why later in my exposition. For the moment I shall go no further.

THE S I S II: Ideology has a material existence.

I have already touched on this thesis by saying that the 'ideas' or 'representations', etc., which seem to make up ideology do not have an ideal (idéale or idéelle) or spiritual existence, but a material existence. I even suggested that the ideal (idéale, idéelle) and spiritual existence of 'ideas' arises exclusively in an ideology of the 'idea' and of ideology, and let me add, in an ideology of what seems to have 'founded' this conception since the emergence of the sciences, i.e. what

14. I use this very modern term deliberately. For even in Communist circles, unfortunately, it is a commonplace to 'explain' some political deviation (left or right opportunism) by the action of a 'clique'.

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the practitioners of the sciences represent to themselves in their spontaneous ideology as 'ideas', true or false. Of course, presented in affirmative form, this thesis is unproven. I simply ask that the reader be favourably disposed towards it, say, in the name of materialism. A long series of arguments would be necessary to prove it.

This hypothetical thesis of the not spiritual but material existence of 'ideas' or other 'representations' is indeed necessary if we are to advance in our analysis of the nature of ideology. Or rather, it is merely useful to us in order the better to reveal what every at all serious analysis of any ideology will immediately and empirically show to every observer, however critical.

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, ethical, legal, political, aesthetic, etc. -- being assured by their subjection to the ruling ideology). I now return to this thesis: an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. This existence is material.

Of course, the material existence of the ideology in an apparatus and its practices does not have the same modality as the material existence of a paving-stone or a rifle. But, at the risk of being taken for a Neo-Aristotelian (NB Marx had a very high regard for Aristotle), I shall say that 'matter is discussed in many senses', or rather that it exists in different modalities, all rooted in the last instance in 'physical' matter.

Having said this, let me move straight on and see what happens to the 'individuals' who live in ideology, i.e. in a determinate (religious, ethical, etc.) representation of the world whose imaginary distortion depends on their imaginary relation to their conditions of existence, in other words, in the last instance, to the relations of production

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and to class relations (ideology = an imaginary relation to real relations). I shall say that this

imaginary relation is itself endowed with a material existence.

Now I observe the following.

An individual believes in God, or Duty, or Justice, etc. This belief derives (for everyone, i.e. for all those who live in an ideological representation of ideology, which reduces ideology to ideas endowed by definition with a spiritual existence) from the ideas of the individual concerned, i.e. from him as a subject with a consciousness which contains the ideas of his belief. In this way, i.e. by means of the absolutely ideological 'conceptual' device (*dispositif*) thus set up (a subject endowed with a consciousness in which he freely forms or freely recognizes ideas in which he believes), the (material) attitude of the subject concerned naturally follows.

The individual in question behaves in such and such a way, adopts such and such a practical attitude, and, what is more, participates in certain regular practices which are those of the ideological apparatus on which 'depend' the ideas which he has in all consciousness freely chosen as a subject. If he believes in God, he goes to Church to attend Mass, kneels, prays, confesses, does penance (once it was material in the ordinary sense of the term) and naturally repents and so on. If he believes in Duty, he will have the corresponding attitudes, inscribed in ritual practices 'according to the correct principles'. If he believes in Justice, he will submit unconditionally to the rules of the Law, and may even protest when they are violated, sign petitions, take part in a demonstration, etc.

Throughout this schema we observe that the ideological representation of ideology is itself forced to recognize that every 'subject' endowed with a 'consciousness' and believing in the 'ideas' that his 'consciousness' inspires in him

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and freely accepts, must 'act according to his ideas', must therefore inscribe his own ideas as a free subject in the actions of his material practice. If he does not do so, 'that is wicked'.

Indeed, if he does not do what he ought to do as a function of what he believes, it is because he does something else, which, still as a function of the same idealist scheme, implies that he has other ideas in his head as well as those he proclaims, and that he acts according to these other ideas, as a man who is either 'inconsistent' ('no one is willingly evil') or cynical, or perverse.

In every case, the ideology of ideology thus recognizes, despite its imaginary distortion, that the 'ideas' of a human subject exist in his actions, or ought to exist in his actions, and if that is not the case, it lends him other ideas corresponding to the actions (however perverse) that he does perform. This ideology talks of actions: I shall talk of actions inserted into *practices*. And I shall point out that these practices are governed by the *rituals* in which these practices are inscribed, within the *material existence of an ideological apparatus*, be it only a small part of that apparatus: a small mass in a small church, a funeral, a minor match at a sports' club, a school day, a political party meeting, etc.

Besides, we are indebted to Pascal's defensive 'dialectic' for the wonderful formula which will enable us to invert the order of the notional schema of ideology. Pascal says more or less: 'Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe.' He thus scandalously inverts the order of things, bringing, like Christ, not peace but strife, and in addition something hardly Christian (for woe to him who brings scandal into the world!) -- scandal itself. A fortunate scandal which makes

him stick with Jansenist defiance to a language that directly names the reality.

I will be allowed to leave Pascal to the arguments of his

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ideological struggle with the religious ideological State apparatus of his day. And I shall be expected to use a more directly Marxist vocabulary, if that is possible, for we are advancing in still poorly explored domains.

I shall therefore say that, where only a single subject (such and such an individual) is concerned, the existence of the ideas of his belief is material in that *his ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject*. Naturally, the four inscriptions of the adjective 'material' in my proposition must be affected by different modalities: the materialities of a displacement for going to mass, of kneeling down, of the gesture of the sign of the cross, or of the *mea culpa*, of a sentence, of a prayer, of an act of contrition, of a penitence, of a gaze, of a hand-shake, of an external verbal discourse or an 'internal' verbal discourse (consciousness), are not one and the same materiality. I shall leave on one side the problem of a theory of the differences between the modalities of materiality.

It remains that in this inverted presentation of things, we are not dealing with an 'inversion' at all, since it is clear that certain notions have purely and simply disappeared from our presentation, whereas others on the contrary survive, and new terms appear.

Disappeared: the term *ideas*.

Survive: the terms *subject, consciousness, belief, actions*.

Appear: the terms *practices, rituals, ideological apparatus*.

It is therefore not an inversion or overturning (except in the sense in which one might say a government or a glass is overturned), but a reshuffle (of a non-ministerial type), a rather strange reshuffle, since we obtain the following result.

Ideas have disappeared as such (insofar as they are endowed with an ideal or spiritual existence), to the precise

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extent that it has emerged that their existence is inscribed in the actions of practices governed by rituals defined in the last instance by an ideological apparatus. It therefore appears that the subject acts insofar as he is acted by the following system (set out in the order of its real determination): ideology existing in a material ideological apparatus, prescribing material practices governed by a material ritual, which practices exist in the material actions of a subject acting in all consciousness according to his belief.

But this very presentation reveals that we have retained the following notions: subject, consciousness, belief, actions. From this series I shall immediately extract the decisive central term on which everything else depends: the notion of the *subject*.

And I shall immediately set down two conjoint theses:

1. there is no practice except by and in an ideology;
2. there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects.

I can now come to my central thesis.

Ideology Interpellates Individuals as Subjects

This thesis is simply a matter of making my last proposition explicit: there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects. Meaning, there is no ideology except for concrete subjects, and this destination for ideology is only made possible by the subject: meaning, *by the category of the subject* and its functioning.

By this I mean that, even if it only appears under this name (the subject) with the rise of bourgeois ideology, above all with the rise of legal ideology,^[15] the category of the

15. Which borrowed the legal category of 'subject in law' to make an ideological notion: man is by nature a subject.

subject (which may function under other names: e.g., as the soul in Plato, as God, etc.) is the constitutive category of all ideology, whatever its determination (regional or class) and whatever its historical date -- since ideology has no history.

I say: the category of the subject is constitutive of all ideology, but at the same time and immediately I add that *the category of the subject is only constitutive of all ideology insofar as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects*. In the interaction of this double constitution exists the functioning of all ideology, ideology being nothing but its functioning in the material forms of existence of that functioning.

In order to grasp what follows, it is essential to realize that both he who is writing these lines and the reader who reads them are themselves subjects, and therefore ideological subjects (a tautological proposition), i.e. that the author and the reader of these lines both live 'spontaneously' or 'naturally' in ideology in the sense in which I have said that 'man is an ideological animal by nature'.

That the author, insofar as he writes the lines of a discourse which claims to be scientific, is completely absent as a 'subject' from 'his' scientific discourse (for all scientific discourse is by definition a subject-less discourse, there is no 'Subject of science' except in an ideology of science) is a different question which I shall leave on one side for the moment.

As St Paul admirably put it, it is in the 'Logos', meaning in ideology, that we 'live, move and have our being'. It follows that, for you and for me, the category of the subject is a primary 'obviousness' (obviousnesses are always primary): it is clear that you and I are subjects (free, ethical, etc. . . .). Like all obviousnesses, including those that make a word 'name a thing' or 'have a meaning' (therefore including

the obviousness of the 'transparency' of language), the 'obviousness' that you and I are subjects -- and that that does not cause any problems -- is an ideological effect, the elementary ideological effect.^[16] It is indeed a peculiarity of ideology that it imposes (without appearing to do so, since these are 'obviousnesses') obviousnesses as obviousnesses, which we cannot *fail to recognize* and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out (aloud or in the 'still, small voice of conscience'): 'That's obvious! That's right! That's true!'

At work in this reaction is the ideological *recognition* function which is one of the two functions of ideology as such (its inverse being the function of *misrecognition* -- *méconnaissance*).

To take a highly 'concrete' example, we all have friends who, when they knock on our door and we ask, through the door, the question 'Who's there?', answer (since 'it's obvious') 'It's me'. And we recognize that 'it is him', or 'her'. We open the door, and 'it's true, it really was she who was there'. To take another example, when we recognize somebody of our (previous) acquaintance ((*re*)-*connaissance*) in the street, we show him that we have recognized him (and have recognized that he has recognized us) by saying to him 'Hello, my friend', and shaking his hand (a material ritual practice of ideological recognition in everyday life -- in France, at least; elsewhere, there are other rituals).

In this preliminary remark and these concrete illustrations, I only wish to point out that you and I are *always already* subjects, and as such constantly practice the rituals of ideological recognition, which guarantee for us that we

16. Linguists and those who appeal to linguistics for various purposes often run up against difficulties which arise because they ignore the action of the ideological effects in all discourses -- including even scientific discourses.

are indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects. The writing I am currently executing and the reading you are currently^[17] performing are also in this respect rituals of ideological recognition, including the 'obviousness' with which the 'truth' or 'error' of my reflections may impose itself on you.

But to recognize that we are subjects and that we function in the practical rituals of the most elementary everyday life (the hand-shake, the fact of calling you by your name, the fact of knowing, even if I do not know what it is, that you 'have' a name of your own, which means that you are recognized as a unique subject, etc.) -- this recognition only gives us the 'consciousness' of our incessant (eternal) practice of ideological recognition -- its consciousness, i.e. its *recognition* -- but in no sense does it give us the (scientific) *knowledge* of the mechanism of this recognition. Now it is this knowledge that we have to reach, if you will, while speaking in ideology, and from within ideology we have to outline a discourse which tries to break with ideology, in order to dare to be the beginning of a scientific (i.e. subject-less) discourse on ideology.

Thus in order to represent why the category of the 'subject' is constitutive of ideology, which only exists by constituting concrete subjects as subjects, I shall employ a special mode of exposition: 'concrete' enough to be recognized, but abstract enough to be thinkable and thought,

giving rise to a knowledge.

As a first formulation I shall say: *all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects*, by the functioning of the category of the subject.

17. NB: this double 'currently' is one more proof of the fact that ideology is 'eternal', since these two 'currentlys' are separated by an indefinite interval; I am writing these lines on 6 April 1969, you may read them at any subsequent time.

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This is a proposition which entails that we distinguish for the moment between concrete individuals on the one hand and concrete subjects on the other, although at this level concrete subjects only exist insofar as they are supported by a concrete individual.

I shall then suggest that ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!'^[18]

Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was 'really' addressed to him, and that 'it was *really him* who was hailed' (and not someone else). Experience shows that the practical telecommunication of hailings is such that they hardly ever miss their man: verbal call or whistle, the one hailed always recognizes that it is really him who is being hailed. And yet it is a strange phenomenon, and one which cannot be explained solely by 'guilt feelings', despite the large numbers who 'have something on their consciences'.

Naturally for the convenience and clarity of my little theoretical theatre I have had to present things in the form of a sequence, with a before and an after, and thus in the form of a temporal succession. There are individuals walking along. Somewhere (usually behind them) the hail rings out: 'Hey, you there!' One individual (nine times out

18. Hailing as an everyday practice subject to a precise ritual takes a quite 'special' form in the policeman's practice of 'hailing' which concerns the hailing of 'suspects'.

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of ten it is the right one) turns round, believing/suspecting/knowing that it is for him, i.e. recognizing that 'it really is he' who is meant by the hailing. But in reality these things happen without any succession. The existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing.

I might add: what thus seems to take place outside ideology (to be precise, in the street), in reality takes place in ideology. What really takes place in ideology seems therefore to take place outside it. That is why those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology: one of the effects of ideology is the practical *denegation* of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says, 'I am ideological'. It is necessary to be outside ideology, i.e. in

scientific knowledge, to be able to say: I am in ideology (a quite exceptional case) or (the general case): I was in ideology. As is well known, the accusation of being in ideology only applies to others, never to oneself (unless one is really a Spinozist or a Marxist, which, in this matter, is to be exactly the same thing). Which amounts to saying that ideology *has no outside* (for itself), but at the same time *that it is nothing but outside* (for science and reality).

Spinoza explained this completely two centuries before Marx, who practised it but without explaining it in detail. But let us leave this point, although it is heavy with consequences, consequences which are not just theoretical, but also directly political, since, for example, the whole theory of criticism and self-criticism, the golden rule of the Marxist-Leninist practice of the class struggle, depends on it.

Thus ideology hails or interpellates individuals as subjects. As ideology is eternal, I must now suppress the temporal form in which I have presented the functioning of ideology, and say: ideology has always-already interpellated individuals as subjects, which amounts to making it clear

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that individuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects, which necessarily leads us to one last proposition: *individuals are always-already subjects*. Hence individuals are 'abstract' with respect to the subjects which they always already are. This proposition might seem paradoxical.

That an individual is always-already a subject, even before he is born, is nevertheless the plain reality, accessible to everyone and not a paradox at all. Freud shows that individuals are always 'abstract' with respect to the subjects they always-already are, simply by noting the ideological ritual that surrounds the expectation of a 'birth', that 'happy event'. Everyone knows how much and in what way an unborn child is expected. Which amounts to saying, very prosaically, if we agree to drop the 'sentiments', i.e. the forms of family ideology (paternal/maternal conjugal/fraternal) in which the unborn child is expected: it is certain in advance that it will bear its Father's Name, and will therefore have an identity and be irreplaceable. Before its birth, the child is therefore always-already a subject, appointed as a subject in and by the specific familial ideological configuration in which it is 'expected' once it has been conceived. I hardly need add that this familial ideological configuration is, in its uniqueness, highly structured, and that it is in this implacable and more or less 'pathological' (presupposing that any meaning can be assigned to that term) structure that the former subject-to-be will have to 'find' 'its' place, i.e. 'become' the sexual subject (boy or girl) which it already is in advance. It is clear that this ideological constraint and pre-appointment, and all the rituals of rearing and then education in the family, have some relationship with what Freud studied in the forms of the pre-genital and genital 'stages' of sexuality, i.e. in the 'grip' of what Freud registered by its effects as being the unconscious. But let us leave this point, too, on one side.

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Let me go one step further. What I shall now turn my attention to is the way the 'actors' in this *mise en scène* of interpellation, and their respective roles, are reflected in the very structure of all ideology.

An Example: The Christian Religious Ideology

As the formal structure of all ideology is always the same, I shall restrict my analysis to a single example, one accessible to everyone, that of religious ideology, with the proviso that the same demonstration can be produced for ethical, legal, political, aesthetic ideology, etc.

Let us therefore consider the Christian religious ideology. I shall use a rhetorical figure and 'make it speak', i.e. collect into a fictional discourse what it 'says' not only in its two Testaments, its Theologians, Sermons, but also in its practices, its rituals, its ceremonies and its sacraments. The Christian religious ideology says something like this:

It says: I address myself to you, a human individual called Peter (every individual is called by his name, in the passive sense, it is never he who provides his own name), in order to tell you that God exists and that you are answer able to Him. It adds: God addresses himself to you through my voice (Scripture having collected the Word of God, Tradition having transmitted it, Papal Infallibility fixing it for ever on 'nice' points). It says: this is who you are: you are Peter! This is your origin, you were created by God for all eternity, although you were born in the 1920th year of Our Lord! This is your place in the world! This is what you must do! By these means, if you observe the 'law of love' you will be saved, you, Peter, and will become part of the Glorious Body of Christ! Etc. . . .

Now this is quite a familiar and banal discourse, but at the same time quite a surprising one.

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Surprising because if we consider that religious ideology is indeed addressed to individuals,^[19] in order to 'transform them into subjects', by interpellating the individual, Peter, in order to make him a subject, free to obey or disobey the appeal, i.e. God's commandments; if it calls these individuals by their names, thus recognizing that they are always-already interpellated as subjects with a personal identity (to the extent that Pascal's Christ says: 'It is for you that I have shed this drop of my blood!'); if it interpellates them in such a way that the subject responds: '*Yes. it really is me!*' if it obtains from them the *recognition* that they really do occupy the place it designates for them as theirs in the world, a fixed residence: 'It really is me, I am here, a worker, a boss or a soldier!' in this vale of tears; if it obtains from them the recognition of a destination (eternal life or damnation) according to the respect or contempt they show to 'God's Commandments', Law become Love; -- if everything does happen in this way (in the practices of the well-known rituals of baptism, confirmation, communion, confession and extreme unction, etc. . . .), we should note that all this 'procedure' to set up Christian religious subjects is dominated by a strange phenomenon: the fact that there can only be such a multitude of possible religious subjects on the absolute condition that there is a Unique, Absolute, *Other Subject*, i.e. God.

It is convenient to designate this new and remarkable Subject by writing Subject with a capital S to distinguish it from ordinary subjects, with a small s.

It then emerges that the interpellation of individuals as subjects presupposes the 'existence' of a Unique and central Other Subject, in whose Name the religious ideology

19. Although we know that the individual is always already a subject, we go on using this term, convenient because of the contrasting effect it produces.

interpellates all individuals as subjects. All this is clearly^[20] written in what is rightly called the Scriptures. 'And it came to pass at that time that God the Lord (Yahweh) spoke to Moses in the cloud. And the Lord cried to Moses, "Moses!" And Moses replied "It is (really) I! I am Moses thy servant, speak and I shall listen!" And the Lord spoke to Moses and said to him, "*I am that I am*".'

God thus defines himself as the Subject *par excellence*, he who is through himself and for himself ('I am that I am'), and he who interpellates his subject, the individual subjected to him by his very interpellation, i.e. the individual named Moses. And Moses, interpellated-called by his Name, having recognized that it 'really' was he who was called by God, recognizes that he is a subject, a subject of God, a subject subjected to God, *a subject through the Subject and subjected to the Subject*. The proof: he obeys him, and makes his people obey God's Commandments.

God is thus the Subject, and Moses and the innumerable subjects of God's people, the Subject's interlocutors-interpellates: his *mirrors*, his *reflections*. Were not men made *in the image* of God? As all theological reflection proves, whereas He 'could' perfectly well have done without men, God needs them, the Subject needs the subjects, just as men need God, the subjects need the Subject. Better: God needs men, the great Subject needs subjects, even in the terrible inversion of his image in them (when the subjects wallow in debauchery, i.e. sin).

Better: God duplicates himself and sends his Son to the Earth, as a mere subject 'forsaken' by him (the long complaint of the Garden of Olives which ends in the Crucifixion), subject but Subject, man but God, to do what prepares the way for the final Redemption, the Resurrection

20. I am quoting in a combined way, not to the letter but 'in spirit and truth'.

of Christ. God thus needs to 'make himself' a man, the Subject needs to become a subject, as if to show empirically, visibly to the eye, tangibly to the hands (see St. Thomas) of the subjects, that, if they are subjects, subjected to the Subject, that is solely in order that finally, on Judgement Day, they will re-enter the Lord's Bosom, like Christ, i.e. re-enter the Subject.^[21]

Let us decipher into theoretical language this wonderful necessity for the duplication of the *Subject into subjects* and of *the Subject itself into a subject-Subject*.

We observe that the structure of all ideology, interpellating individuals as subjects in the name of a Unique and Absolute Subject is *speculary*, i.e. a mirror-structure, and *doubly* specular: this mirror duplication is constitutive of ideology and ensures its functioning. Which means that all ideology is *centred*, that the Absolute Subject occupies the unique place of the Centre, and interpellates around it the infinity of individuals into subjects in a double mirror-connexion such that it *subjects* the subjects to the Subject, while giving them in the Subject in which each subject can contemplate its own image (present and future) the *guarantee* that this really concerns them and Him, and that since everything takes place in the Family (the Holy Family: the Family is in essence Holy), 'God will *recognize* his own in it', i.e. those who have recognized God, and have recognized themselves in Him, will be saved.

Let me summarize what we have discovered about ideology in general.

The duplicate mirror-structure of ideology ensures simultaneously:

21. The dogma of the Trinity is precisely the theory of the duplication of the Subject (the Father) into a subject (the Son) and of their mirror-connexion (the Holy Spirit).

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1. the interpellation of 'individuals' as subjects;
2. their subjection to the Subject;
3. the mutual recognition of subjects and Subject, the subjects' recognition of each other, and finally the subject's recognition of himself;^[22]
4. the absolute guarantee that everything really is so, and that on condition that the subjects recognize what they are and behave accordingly, everything will be all right: Amen -- '*So be it*'.

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. They 'recognize' the existing state of affairs (*das Bestehende*), that 'it really is true that it is so and not otherwise', and that they must be obedient to God, to their conscience, to the priest, to de Gaulle, to the boss, to the engineer, that thou shalt 'love thy neighbour as thyself', etc. Their concrete, material behaviour is simply the inscription in life of the admirable words of the prayer: '*Amen -- So be it*'.

Yes, the subjects 'work by themselves'. The whole

22. Hegel is (unknowingly) an admirable 'theoretician' of ideology insofar as he is a 'theoretician' of Universal Recognition who unfortunately ends up in the ideology of Absolute Knowledge. Feuerbach is an astonishing 'theoretician' of the mirror connexion, who unfortunately ends up in the ideology of the Human Essence. To find the material with which to construct a theory of the guarantee, we must turn to Spinoza.

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mystery of this effect lies in the first two moments of the quadruple system I have just discussed, or, if you prefer, in the ambiguity of the term *subject*. In the ordinary use of the term, subject in fact means: (1) a free subjectivity, a centre of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions; (2) a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission. This last note gives us the meaning of this ambiguity, which is merely a reflection of the effect which produces it: the individual *is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection, i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection 'all by himself'. There are no subjects except by and for their subjection.* That is why they 'work all by themselves'.

'So be it! . . . ' This phrase which registers the effect to be obtained proves that it is not 'naturally' so ('naturally': outside the prayer, i.e. outside the ideological intervention). This phrase proves that it *has* to be so if things are to be what they must be, and let us let the words slip: if the reproduction of the relations of production is to be assured, even in the processes of production and circulation, every day, in the 'consciousness', i.e. in the attitudes of the individual-subjects occupying the posts which the socio-technical division of labour assigns to them in production, exploitation, repression, ideologization, scientific practice, etc. Indeed, what is really in question in this mechanism of the mirror recognition of the Subject and of the individuals interpellated as subjects, and of the guarantee given by the Subject to the subjects if they freely accept their subjection to the Subject's 'commandments'? The reality in question in this mechanism, the reality which is necessarily *ignored* (*méconnue*) in the very forms of recognition

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(ideology = misrecognition/ignorance) is indeed, in the last resort, the reproduction of the relations of production and of the relations deriving from them.

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P.S. If these few schematic theses allow me to illuminate certain aspects of the functioning of the Superstructure and its mode of intervention in the Infrastructure, they are obviously *abstract* and necessarily leave several important problems unanswered, which should be mentioned:

1. The problem of the *total process* of the realization of the reproduction of the relations of production.

As an element of this process, the ISAs *contribute* to this reproduction. But the point of view of their contribution alone is still an abstract one.

It is only within the processes of production and circulation that this reproduction is *realized*. It is realized by the mechanisms of those processes, in which the training of the workers is 'completed', their posts assigned them, etc. It is in the internal mechanisms of these processes that the effect of the different ideologies is felt (above all the effect of legal-ethical ideology).

But this point of view is still an abstract one. For in a class society the relations of production are relations of exploitation, and therefore relations between antagonistic classes. The reproduction of the relations of production, the ultimate aim of the ruling class, cannot therefore be a merely technical operation training and distributing individuals for the different posts in the 'technical division' of labour. In fact there is no 'technical division' of labour except in the ideology of the ruling class: every 'technical' division, every 'technical' organization of labour is the form and mask of a *social* (= class) division and organization of

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labour. The reproduction of the relations of production can therefore only be a class undertaking. It is realized through a class struggle which counterposes the ruling class and the exploited class.

The *total process* of the realization of the reproduction of the relations of production is therefore

still abstract, insofar as it has not adopted the point of view of this class struggle. To adopt the point of view of reproduction is therefore in the last instance, to adopt the point of view of the class struggle.

2. The problem of the class nature of the ideologies existing in a social formation.

The 'mechanism' of ideology *in general* is one thing. We have seen that it can be reduced to a few principles expressed in a few words (as 'poor' as those which, according to Marx, define production *in general*, or in Freud, define *the unconscious in general*). If there is any truth in it, this mechanism must be *abstract* with respect to every real ideological formation.

I have suggested that the ideologies were *realized* in institutions, in their rituals and their practices, in the ISAs. We have seen that on this basis they contribute to that form of class struggle, vital for the ruling class, the reproduction of the relations of production. But the point of view itself however real, is still an abstract one.

In fact, the State and its Apparatuses only have meaning from the point of view of the class struggle, as an apparatus of class struggle ensuring class oppression 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.

That is why the ISAs are not the realization of ideology *in general*, nor even the conflict-free realization of the

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ideology of the ruling class. The ideology of the ruling class does not become the ruling ideology by the grace of God, nor even by virtue of the seizure of State power alone. It is by the installation of the ISAs in which this ideology is realized and realizes itself that it becomes the ruling ideology. But this installation is not achieved all by itself; on the contrary, it is the stake in a very bitter and continuous class struggle: first against the former ruling classes and their positions in the old and new ISAs, then against the exploited class.

But this point of view of the class struggle in the ISAs is still an abstract one. In fact, the class struggle in the ISAs is indeed an aspect of the class struggle, sometimes an important and symptomatic one: e.g. the anti-religious struggle in the eighteenth century, or the 'crisis' of the educational ISA in every capitalist country today. But the class struggles in the ISAs is only one aspect of a class struggle which goes beyond the ISAs. The ideology that a class in power makes the ruling ideology in its ISAs is indeed 'realized' in those ISAs, but it goes beyond them, for it comes from elsewhere. Similarly, the ideology that a ruled class manages to defend in and against such ISAs goes beyond them, for it comes from elsewhere.

It is only from the point of view of the classes, i.e. of the class struggle, that it is possible to explain the ideologies existing in a social formation. Not only is it from this starting-point that it is possible to explain the realization of the ruling ideology in the ISAs and of the forms of class struggle for which the ISAs are the seat and the stake. But it is also and above all from this starting-point that it is possible to understand the provenance of the ideologies which are realized in the ISAs and confront one another there. For if it is true that the ISAs represent the *form* in which the ideology of the ruling class must *necessarily* be

realized, and the form in which the ideology of the ruled class must *necessarily* be measured and confronted, 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 experience of the struggle, etc.

April 1970

Appendix

PUBLISHER'S NOTE TO 'FREUD AND LACAN'

Louis Althusser agreed to let New Left Review reproduce the following article, which was written in 1964 and published in the French Communist Party journal, La Nouvelle Critique.

In a letter to the translator (21 February 1969), Louis Althusser wrote: 'There is a danger that this text will be misunderstood, unless it is taken for what it then objectively was: a philosophical intervention urging members of the PCF to recognize the scientificity of psycho-analysis, of Freud's work, and the importance of Lacan's interpretation of it. Hence it was polemical, for psycho-analysis had been officially condemned in the fifties as "a reactionary ideology", and, despite some modification, this condemnation still dominated the situation when I wrote this article. This exceptional situation must be taken into account when the meaning of my interpretation is assessed today.'

Louis Althusser also warned English readers that his article contained theses that must 'either be corrected, or expanded'.

'In particular, in the article Lacan's theory is presented in terms which, despite all precautions, have "culturalist" overtones (whereas Lacan's theory is profoundly anti-culturalist).

'On the other hand, the suggestions at the end of the article are correct and deserve a much extended treatment, that is, the

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discussion of the forms of familial ideology, and of the crucial role they play in initiating the functioning of the instance that Freud called "the unconscious", but which should be re-christened as soon as a better term is found.

'This mention of the forms of familial ideology (the ideology of paternity-maternity-conjugality-infancy and their interactions) is crucial, for it implies the following conclusion -- that Lacan could not express, given his theoretical formation -- that is, that no theory of psycho-analysis can be produced without basing it on historical materialism (on which the theory of the formations of familial ideology depends, in the last instance).'

AUTHOR'S PREFATORY NOTE

Let us admit, without prevarication: anyone today who merely wants to understand Freud's revolutionary discovery, who wants to know what it means as well as just recognizing its existence, has to make a great theoretical and critical effort in order to cross the vast space of ideological prejudice that divides us from Freud. For not only has Freud's discovery been reduced, as we shall see, to disciplines which are essentially foreign to it (biology, psychology, sociology, philosophy); not only have many psycho-analysts (notably in the American school) become accomplices to this revisionism; but, more important, this revisionism has itself objectively assisted the fantastic ideological exploitation whose object and victim psycho-analysis has been. Not without good reason did French Marxists once (in 1948) denounce this exploitation as a 'reactionary ideology' which furnished arguments for the ideological struggle against Marxism, and a practical instrument for the intimidation and mystification of consciousnesses.

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But today it must also be said that, in their own way, these same Marxists were directly or indirectly the first victims of the ideology they denounced; for they confused this ideology and Freud's revolutionary discovery, thereby adopting in practice the enemy's position, accepting his conditions and recognizing the image he had imposed on them as the supposed reality of psycho-analysis. The whole history of the relations between Marxism and psycho-analysis depends essentially on this confusion, this imposture.

That this was particularly difficult to avoid we can understand from the function of this ideology: the 'dominant' ideas, in this case, were playing their 'dominating' role to perfection, ruling unrecognized over the very minds that were trying to fight them. But it is explained by the existence of the psycho-analytic revisionism that made this exploitation possible: the fall into ideology began in fact with the fall of psycho-analysis into biologism, psychologism and sociologism.

We can also see that this revisionism could derive its authority from the ambiguity of some of Freud's concepts, for, like all inventors, Freud was forced to think his discovery in existing theoretical concepts, i.e. concepts designed for other purposes (was not Marx, too, forced to think his discovery in certain Hegelian concepts?). This will come as no surprise to anyone at all familiar with the history of new sciences -- and at all careful to discern the irreducible element of a discovery and of its objects in the concepts in which it was expressed at its birth, but which, out-dated by the advance of knowledge, may later mask it.

So a return to Freud today demands:

1. Not only that we reject the ideological layers of the reactionary exploitation of Freud as a crude mystification;

2. but also that we avoid the more subtle ambiguities of

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psycho-analytic revisionism, sustained as they are by the prestige of certain more or less scientific disciplines;

3. and finally that we commit ourselves to a serious effort of historico-theoretical criticism in order to identify and define, in the concepts Freud had to use, the true *epistemological relation*

between these concepts and their thought content.

Without this triple labour of ideological criticism (1, 2) and epistemological elucidation (3), which, in France, has been initiated in practice by Lacan, Freud's discovery in its specificity will remain beyond our reach. And, more serious, we will take as Freud precisely what has been put within our reach, precisely what we aimed to reject (the reactionary ideological exploitation of Freud), or subscribed to more or less thoughtlessly (the different forms of bio-psycho-sociological revisionism). In either case, we would remain prisoners, at different levels, of the explicit or implicit categories of ideological exploitation and theoretical revisionism. Marxists, who know from their own experience the deformations Marx's enemies have imposed on his thought, can see why Freud could suffer the same fate, in his own way, and why an authentic 'return to Freud' is of such theoretical importance.

They will concede that if such a short article proposes to introduce a problem of this importance without betraying it, it must confine itself to the essential, it must situate the *object* of psycho-analysis so as to give a first definition of it, in concepts that allow its *location*, the indispensable pre-condition for its elucidation. They will concede therefore that, as far as possible, these concepts should be introduced in a rigorous form, as in any scientific discipline; to vulgarize them in an over-approximate commentary would banalize them, while an analysis that really drew them out would require much more space.

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An accurate assessment of these concepts can only come from the serious study of Freud and Lacan which each one of us can undertake; the same is true for the definition of the still unsolved problems of this theoretical discipline already rich in results and promises.

Freud and Lacan

Friends have correctly criticized me for discussing Lacan in three lines.^[1] This was too much for what I was saying about him, and too little for the conclusions that I drew from him. They have asked me for a few words to justify both the allusion and its object. Here they are -- a few words, where a book is needed.

In the history of Western Reason, every care, foresight, precaution and warning has been devoted to births. Pre-natal therapy is institutional. When a young science is born, the family circle is always ready for astonishment, jubilation and baptism. For a long time, every child, even the foundling, has been reputed the son of a father, and when it is a prodigy, the fathers would fight at the gate if it were not for the mother and the respect due to her. In our crowded world, a place is allocated for birth, a place is even allocated for the prediction of a birth: 'prospective'!

1. *Revue de l'Enseignement philosophique*, June-July 1963, 'Philosophie et sciences humaines', p. 7 and p. 11, n. 14: 'Marx based his theory on the rejection of the myth of the "*homo oeconomicus*", Freud based his theory on the rejection of the myth of the "*homo psychologicus*". Lacan has seen and understood Freud's liberating rupture. He has understood it in the fullest sense of the term, taking it rigorously at its word and forcing it to produce its own consequences, without concessions or quarter. It may be that, like everyone else, he errs in the detail or even the choice of his philosophical bearings; but we owe him the *essential*.'

To my knowledge, the nineteenth century saw the birth of two or three children that were not expected: Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. 'Natural' children, in the sense that nature offends customs, principles, morality and good breeding: nature is the rule violated, the unmarried mother, hence the absence of a legal father. Western Reason makes a fatherless child pay heavily. Marx, Nietzsche and Freud had to foot the often terrible bill of survival: a price compounded of exclusion, condemnation, insult, poverty, hunger and death, or madness. I speak only of them (other unfortunates might be mentioned who lived their death sentences in colour, sound and poetry). I speak only of them because they were the births of sciences or of criticism.

That Freud knew poverty, calumny and persecution, that his spirit was well enough anchored to withstand, and interpret, all the insults of the age -- these things may have something to do with certain of the limits and dead-ends of his genius. An examination of this point is probably premature. Let us instead consider Freud's solitude in his own times. I do not mean human solitude

(he had teachers and friends, though he went hungry), I mean *theoretical* solitude. For when he wanted to think i.e. to express in the form of a rigorous system of abstract concepts the extraordinary discovery that met him every day in his *practice*, search as he might for theoretical precedents, fathers in theory, he could find none. He had to cope with the following situation: to be himself his own father, to construct with his own craftsman's hands the theoretical space in which to situate his discovery, to weave with thread borrowed intuitively left and right the great net with which to catch in the depths of blind experience the teeming fish of the unconscious, which men call dumb because it speaks even while they sleep.

To express this in Kantian terms: Freud had to think his

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discovery and his practice in *imported* concepts, concepts borrowed from the thermodynamic physics then dominant, from the political economy and biology of his time. With no legal inheritance behind him -- except for a parcel of philosophical concepts (consciousness, preconsciousness, unconsciousness, etc.) which were probably more of a hindrance than a help as they were marked by a problematic of consciousness present even in its reservations -- without any ancestral endowment whatever, his only forerunners writers -- Sophocles, Shakespeare, Molière, Goethe -- or proverbs, etc. Theoretically, Freud set up in business alone: producing his own 'home-made' concepts under the protection of imported concepts borrowed from the sciences as they existed, and, it should be said, from within the horizons of the ideological world in which these concepts swam.

That is how Freud comes to us. A long series of profound texts, sometimes clear, sometimes obscure, often enigmatic and contradictory, problematic, and armed with concepts many of which seem to us at first sight to be out of date, inadequate for their content, or surpassed. For today we cannot doubt the existence of this content: analytic practice itself, its effect.

So let us summarize the object Freud is for us:

1. A practice (the analytic cure). 2. A technique (the method of the cure) that gives rise to an abstract exposition with the appearance of a theory. 3. A theory which has a relation with the practice and the technique. This organic practical (1), technical (2) and theoretical (3) whole recalls the structure of every scientific discipline. *Formally*, what Freud gives us does have the structure of a science. Formally; for the difficulties of Freud's conceptual terminology, the sometimes material disproportion between his concepts and their content, suggest the question: in this organic

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practico-technico-theoretical whole do we have a whole that is truly stabilized and founded at the scientific level? In other words, is the theory really theory in the scientific sense? Or is it not, on the contrary, a simple transposition into theory of the methodology of the practice (the cure)? Hence the very common modern view that beneath its theoretical exterior (which we owe to worthy but vain pretensions of Freud himself), psycho-analysis remains a mere practice that does sometimes give results, but not always; a mere practice extended into a technique (rules of analytic method), but *without a theory*, at least without a true theory: what it calls theory being merely the blind technical concepts in which it reflects the rules of its practice; a mere practice without theory . . . perhaps then, even simply a kind of magic? that succeeds, like all magic, because of its prestige --

and its prestige, applied to the fulfilment of a social need or demand, therefore its only justification, its real justification. Levi-Strauss would then have theorized this *magic*, this *social* practice, psycho-analysis, by pointing out the *shaman* as the ancestor of Freud.

A practice pregnant with a half-silent theory? A practice proud or ashamed to be merely the social magic of modern times? What then is psychoanalysis?

1

Lacan's first word is to say: in principle, Freud founded a *science*. A new science which was the science of a new object: the unconscious.

A rigorous statement. If psycho-analysis is a science because it is the science of a distinct object, it is also a science with the structure of all sciences: it has a *theory* and a *technique* (method) that make possible the knowledge and transformation of its object in a specific *practice*. As in every

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authentically constituted science, the practice is not the absolute of the science but a theoretically subordinate moment; the moment in which the theory, having become method (technique), comes into theoretical contact (knowledge) or practical contact (cure) with its specific object (the unconscious).

If this thesis is correct, analytical practice (the cure), which absorbs all the attention of those interpreters and philosophers eager for the intimacy of the confidential couple in which avowed sickness and professional medical secrecy exchange the sacred promises of intersubjectivity, does not contain the secrets of psycho-analysis; it only contains one part of the reality of psycho-analysis, the part which exists in the practice. It does not contain its theoretical secrets. If this thesis is correct, neither do the technique and method contain the secrets of psycho-analysis, except as every method does, by delegation, not from the practice but from the theory. Only the theory contains them, as in every scientific discipline.

In a hundred places in his work, Freud calls himself a theoretician; he compares psycho-analysis, as far as its scientificity is concerned, with the physical sciences that stem from Galileo, he repeats that the practice (cure) and analytical technique (analytical method) are only authentic because they are based on a scientific *theory*. Freud says time and again that a practice and a technique, even if they give results, do not deserve the name of science unless a theory gives them the right to it, not by mere declaration, but by rigorous proof.

Lacan's first word is to take these words literally. And to draw the conclusion: a return to Freud to seek out, distinguish and pin-point in him the theory from which all the rest, both practical and technical, stems by right.

A return to Freud. Why this new return to the source?

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Lacan does not return to Freud as Husserl does to Galileo or Thales, to capture a birth at its birth

-- i.e. to achieve that religious philosophical preconception, purity, which like all water bubbling up out of the ground, is only pure at the very instant, the pure instant of its birth, in the pure passage from non-science to science. For Lacan, this passage is not pure, it is still impure: purity comes after the still 'muddy' passage (the invisible mud of its past suspended in the new born water which pretends transparency, i.e. innocence). A return to Freud means: a return to the theory established, fixed and founded firmly in Freud himself, to the mature, reflected, supported and verified theory, to the advanced theory that has settled down in life (including practical life) to build its home, produce its method and give birth to its practice. The return to Freud is not a return to Freud's birth: but a return to his *maturity*. Freud's youth, the moving passage from not-yet-science to science (the period of the relations with Charcot, Bernheim, Breuer, up to the *Studies in Hysteria* -- 1895) may indeed be of interest to us, but on a quite different level: as an example of the archaeology of a science -- or as a negative index of immaturity, thereby precisely dating maturity and its arrival. The youth of a science is its prime of life; before this age it is old, its age the age of the preconceptions by which it lives, as a child does the preconceptions and hence the age of its parents.

That a young, and hence mature theory can relapse into childhood, i.e. into the preconceptions of its elders and their descendants, is proved by the whole history of psycho-analysis. This is the deeper meaning of the return to Freud proclaimed by Lacan. We must return to Freud to return to the maturity of Freudian theory, not to its childhood, but to its prime, which is its true youth -- we must return to Freud beyond the theoretical childishness, the relapse into

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childhood in which all or a part of contemporary psycho-analysis, particularly in America, savours the advantages of surrender.

This relapse into childhood has a name that phenomenologists will understand straight away: psychologism or another that Marxists will understand straight away: pragmatism. The modern history of psycho-analysis illustrates Lacan's judgement. Western Reason (legal, religious, moral and political *as well as* scientific) will only agree to conclude a pact of peaceful coexistence with psycho-analysis after years of non-recognition, contempt and insults -- means that are still available anyway if all else fails -- on condition of annexing it to its own sciences or myths: to psychology, whether behaviourist (Dalbiez), phenomenological (Merleau-Ponty) or existentialist (Sartre); to a more or less Jacksonian bio-neurology (Ey); to 'sociology' of the 'culturalist' or 'anthropological' type (dominant in the USA: Kardiner, Margaret Mead, etc); and to philosophy (cf. Sartre's 'existentialist psychoanalysis', Binswanger's '*Daseinanalyse*', etc.). To these confusions, to this mythologization of psycho-analysis, a discipline officially recognized at the price of compromise alliances sealed with *imaginary* ties of adoption but very real powers, some psycho-analysts have subscribed, only too happy to emerge at last from their theoretical ghetto, to be 'recognized' as full members of the great family of psychology, neurology, psychiatry, medicine, sociology, anthropology, philosophy -- only too happy to certify their practical success with this 'theoretical' recognition which at last, after decades of insults and exile, confers on them citizen's rights in the world: the world of science, medicine and philosophy. They were not alerted to the suspicious side of this agreement, believing that the world was coming round to their positions -- when they were themselves, with these honours, coming round to

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the world's positions -- preferring its honours to its insults.

They thereby forgot that a science is only a science if it can claim a right to an object *of its own* -- an object that is its own and its own *only* -- not a mere foothold in an object loaned, conceded or abandoned by another science, one of the latter's 'aspects', the *leavings* that can be rehashed in the kitchen once the master of the house has eaten his fill. Concretely, if the whole of psycho-analysis is reduced to behaviourist or Pavlovian 'conditioning' in early childhood; if it is reduced to a dialectic of the *stages* which Freud's terminology designates as oral, anal and genital, latency and puberty; if, finally, it is reduced to the primitive experience of the Hegelian struggle, of the phenomenological for others, or of the Heideggerian 'gulf' of being; if all psycho-analysis is merely this art of assimilating the leavings of neurology, biology, psychology, anthropology and philosophy, what can it claim as its specific object, what really distinguishes it from these disciplines and makes it in the full sense a science?^[2]

2. The most dangerous of these temptations are those of *philosophy* (which gladly reduces the whole of the psycho-analysis to the dual experience of the cure and thereby 'verifies' the themes of phenomenological intersubjectivity, of the existence-project, or more generally of personalism); of *psychology* which appropriates most of the categories of psycho-analysis as so many attributes of a 'subject' in which, manifestly, it sees no problem; finally, of sociology which comes to the aid of psychology by providing it with an objective content for the 'reality principle' (social and familial imperatives) which the 'subject' need only 'internalize' to be armed with a 'super-ego' and the corresponding categories. Thus subordinated to psychology or sociology psycho-analysis is usually reduced to a technique of 'emotional' or 'affective' re-adaptation, or to a re-education of the 'relational function', neither of which have anything to do with its real object -- but which unfortunately respond to a major demand, and what is more, to a demand that is highly tendentious in the contemporary world. Through this bias, psycho-analysis has become an article of mass consumption in modern culture, i.e. in modern ideology.

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It is here that Lacan intervenes: he defends the irreducibility of analysis against these 'reductions' and deviations, which dominate most contemporary theoretical interpretations; he defends its irreducibility, which means *the irreducibility of its object*. That this defence requires an uncommon lucidity and firmness, sufficient to repulse all the voraciously hospitable assaults of the disciplines I have listed, cannot be doubted by anyone who has ever in his life measured the need for security (theoretical, moral, social and economic), i.e. the uneasiness, of corporations (whose status is indissolubly scientific-professional-legal-economic) whose balance and comfort is threatened by the appearance of a unique discipline that forces them all to re-investigate not only their own disciplines but the reasons why they believe in them, i.e. to doubt them, by the appearance of a science which, however little it is believed, threatens to violate the existing frontiers and hence to alter the *status quo* of several disciplines. Hence the contained passion and passionate contention of Lacan's language, unable to live or survive except in a state of alert and accusation: the language of a man of the besieged vanguard, condemned by the crushing strength of the threatened structures and corporations to forestall their blows, or at least to feint a response to them before they are delivered, thus discouraging the opponents from crushing him beneath their assault. Hence also the often paradoxical resort to the security provided by philosophies completely foreign to his scientific undertaking (Hegel, Heidegger), as so many intimidating witnesses thrown in the faces of part of his audience to retain their respect; and as so many witnesses to a possible objectivity, the natural ally of his thought, to reassure or educate the rest. As this resort was almost indispensable to sustain a discourse addressed *from within* to the medical profession alone, one would have to ignore

both the conceptual weakness of medical studies in general and the profound need for theory felt by the best medical men, to condemn it out of hand. And since I am dealing with his language, the language which is the sum total of his prestige for some of the audience ('the Góngora of psycho-analysis', 'the Grand Dragon', the great officiant of an esoteric cult in which gesture, hushedness and solemnity can constitute the ritual of a real communication -- or of a quite 'Parisian' fascination) -- and for the rest (above all scientists or philosophers) his 'artifice', his strangeness and his 'hermeticism', it is clear that it bears some relation to the conditions of his practice as a teacher: since he has to teach the theory of the unconscious to doctors, analysts or analysands, in the rhetoric of his speech Lacan provides them with a dumbshow equivalent of the language of the unconscious (which, as is well known, is in its ultimate essence '*Witz*', successful or unsuccessful pun and metaphor): the equivalent of the lived experience of their practice, whether as analyst or as analysand.

An understanding of this language's ideological and educational preconditions -- i.e. the ability to maintain the distance of historical and theoretical 'exteriority' from its pedagogic 'interiority' -- is enough to let us discern its objective meaning and scope -- and recognize its basic proposal: to give Freud's discovery its measure in theoretical concepts by defining as rigorously as is possible today the unconscious and its 'laws', its whole object.

2

What is the *object* of psycho-analysis? It is *what* analytical technique deals with in the analytical practice of the cure, i.e. not the cure itself, not that supposedly dual system which is tailor-made for any phenomenology or morality

but the '*effects*', prolonged into the surviving adult, of the extraordinary adventure which from birth to the liquidation of the Oedipal phase transforms a small animal conceived by a man and a woman into a small human child.

One of the '*effects*' of the humanization of the small biological creature that results from human parturition: there in its place is the object of psycho-analysis, an object which has a simple name: '*the unconscious*'.

That this small biological being survives, and not as a 'wolf-child', that has become a little wolf or bear (as displayed in the princely courts of the eighteenth century), but as a *human child* (having escaped all childhood deaths, many of which are human deaths, deaths punishing the failure of humanization), that is the test all adult men have passed: they are the *never forgetful* witnesses, and very often the victims, of this victory, bearing in their most hidden, i.e. in their most clamorous parts, the wounds, weaknesses and stiffnesses that result from this struggle for human life or death. Some, the majority, have emerged more or less unscathed -- or at least, give this out to be the case; many of these veterans bear the marks throughout their lives; some will die from their fight, though at some remove, the old wounds suddenly opening again in psychotic explosion, in madness, the ultimate compulsion of a 'negative therapeutic reaction'; others, more numerous, as 'normally' as you like, in the guise of an 'organic' decay. Humanity only inscribes its official deaths

on its war memorials: those who were able to die on time, i.e. late, as men, in human wars in which only *human* wolves and gods tear and sacrifice one another. In its sole survivors, psycho-analysis is concerned with another struggle, with the only war without memoirs or memorials, the war humanity pretends it has never declared, the war it always thinks it has won in advance, simply because humanity is nothing but surviving this war, living and

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bearing children as culture in human culture: a war which is continually declared in each of its sons, who, projected, deformed and rejected, are required, each by himself in solitude and against death, to take the long forced march which makes mammiferous larvae into human children, *masculine* or *feminine subjects*.

This object is no business of the biologist's: this story is certainly not biological! -- since from the beginning it is completely dominated by the constraint of the sexed human order that each mother engraves on the small human animal in maternal 'love' or hatred, starting from its alimentary rhythm and training. History, 'sociology' or anthropology have no business here, and this is no surprise for they deal with society and therefore with culture, i.e. with what is no longer this small animal -- which only becomes human-sexual by crossing the infinite divide that separates life from humanity, the biological from the historical, 'nature' from 'culture'. Psychology is lost here, and this is hardly strange for it thinks that in its 'object' it is dealing with some human 'nature' or 'non-nature', with the genesis of this existent, identified and certified by culture itself (by the human) -- when the object of psycho-analysis is the question with absolute priority, whether to be born or not to be (*naître ou n'être pas*), the aleatory abyss of the human-sexual itself in every human scion. Here 'philosophy' loses its bearings and its cover ('*repères*' and '*repaires*'), naturally! -- for these unique origins rob it of the only origins it renders homage to for its existence: God, reason, consciousness, history and culture. It is clear that the object of psycho-analysis may be specific and that the modality of its material as well as the specificity of its 'mechanisms' (to use one of Freud's terms) are of quite another kind than the material and 'mechanisms' which are known to the biologist, the neurologist, the anthropologist, the sociologist, the

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psychologist and the philosopher. We need only recognize this specificity and hence the distinctness of the object that it derives from, in order to recognize the radical right of psycho-analysis to a specificity of its concepts in line with the specificity of its object: the unconscious and its effects.

3

Lacan would be the first to admit that his attempted theorization would have been impossible were it not for the emergence of a new science: *linguistics*. It is in the nature of the history of the sciences that one science may often not become a science except by recourse to a detour through other sciences, not only sciences that existed at its baptism but also some new late-comer among sciences that needed time before it could be born. The temporary opacity of the shadow cast on Freudian theory by the model of Helmholtz and Maxwell's thermodynamic physics has been dispersed today by the light that structural linguistics throws on its object, making possible an intelligible approach to that object. Freud himself said that everything depended on language.

Lacan makes this more precise: 'the discourse of the unconscious is structured like a language'. In his first great work *The Interpretation of Dreams* (which is not anecdotal and superficial as is frequently suggested, but fundamental), Freud studied the 'mechanisms' and 'laws' of dreams, reducing their variants to two: *displacement* and *condensation*. Lacan recognized these as two essential figures of speech, called in linguistics metonymy and metaphor. Hence slips, failures, jokes and symptoms, like the elements of dreams themselves, became *signifiers*, inscribed in the chain of an unconscious discourse, doubling silently, i.e. deafeningly, in the misrecognition of 'repression', the chain

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of the human subject's verbal discourse. Hence we were introduced to the paradox, formally familiar to linguistics, of a double yet single discourse, unconscious yet verbal, having for its double field only a single field, with no beyond except in itself: the field of the 'Signifying Chain'. Hence the most important acquisitions of de Saussure and of the linguistics that descends from him began to play a justified part in the understanding of the process of the unconscious as well as that of the verbal discourse of the subject and of their inter-relationship, i.e. of their identical relation and non-relation in other words, of their reduplication and dislocation (*décalage*). Thereby philosophico-idealist interpretations of the unconscious as a second consciousness, of the unconscious as bad faith (Sartre), of the unconscious as the cankerous survival of a non-current structure or non-sense (Merleau-Ponty), all the interpretations of the unconscious as a biogenico-archetypical 'id' (Jung) became what they were: not the beginnings of a theory but null 'theories', ideological misunderstandings.

It remained to define (I am forced into the crudest schematism, but how could I avoid it in such a short article?) the meaning of this *primacy* of the formal structure of language and its 'mechanisms' as they are encountered in the practice of analytical interpretation, as a function of the very foundations of this practice: its object, i.e. the 'effects' still present in the survivors of the forced 'humanization' of the small human animal into a *man* or a *woman*. This question cannot be answered merely by invoking the factual primacy of language as the sole object and means of analytical practice. Everything that happens in the cure does take place in and through language (including silence, its rhythms and scansion). But it is necessary to show *why* and *how* in principle the factual role of language in the cure as both raw material of analytic practice and means of pro-

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duction of its effects (the passage, as Lacan puts it, from an 'empty speech' to a 'full speech'), is only founded in fact in analytical practice because it is founded in *principle* in its object, the object that, in the last analysis, founds this practice and its technique: hence, since it is a science, in the *theory* of its object.

Herein no doubt lies the most original aspect of Lacan's work, his discovery. Lacan has shown that this transition from (ultimately purely) biological existence to human existence (the human child) is achieved within the Law of Order, the law I shall call the Law of Culture, and that this Law of Order is confounded in its *formal* essence with the order of language. What are we to understand by this formula, at first sight so enigmatic? Firstly, that the *whole of this transition* can only be grasped in terms of a recurrent language, as designated by the language of the adult or child in a *cure situation*, designated, assigned and localized within the law of language in which is

established and presented all human order, i.e. every human role. Secondly, that in this assignment by the language of the cure appears the current, constant presence of the absolute effectiveness of order in the transition itself, of the Law of Culture in humanization.

To give some idea of this in a very few words, I shall indicate the two great moments of this *transition*. 1. The moment of the dual pre-Oedipal intercourse, in which the child, concerned with nothing but one alter-ego, the mother, who punctuates its life by her presence (*da!*) and absence (*fort!*),^[3] lives this dual intercourse in the mode of the imaginary fascination of the ego, being itself *that other, any*

3. These are the two German expressions made famous by Freud, with which a small child under his observation sanctioned the appearance and disappearance of its mother by the manipulation of an arbitrary object that 'represented' her: a cotton-reel.

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other, *every other*, all *the others* of primary narcissistic identification, never able to take up the objectifying distance of the third *vis-à-vis* either the other or itself; 2. the Oedipal moment, in which a ternary structure emerges against the background of the dual structure, when the third (the father) intrudes on the imaginary satisfaction of dual fascination, overthrows its economy, destroys its fascinations, and introduces the child to what Lacan calls the Symbolic Order, the order of objectifying language that will finally allow him to say: I, you, he, she or it, that will therefore allow the small child to situate itself as a *human child* in a world of adult thirds.

Hence two great moments: 1. that of the imaginary (pre-Oedipal); 2. that of the symbolic (Oedipal resolution), or, to use a different language, that of objectivity recognized in its (symbolic) use, but not yet known (the knowledge of objectivity arising at a quite different 'age' and also from a quite different practice).

And the crucial point that Lacan has illuminated is this: these two moments are dominated, governed and marked by a single Law, the *Law of the Symbolic*. Even the moment of the imaginary, which, for clarity's sake, I have just presented as *preceding* the symbolic, as distinct from it -- hence as the first moment in which the child *lives* its immediate intercourse with a human being (its mother) without recognizing it practically as the symbolic intercourse it is (i.e. as the intercourse of a small human child with a human mother) -- *is marked and structured in its dialectic by the dialectic of the Symbolic Order itself*, i.e. by the dialectic of human Order, of the human norm (the norms of the temporal rhythms of feeding, hygiene, behaviour, of the concrete attitudes of recognition -- the child's acceptance, rejection, yes and no being merely the small change, the *empirical* modalities of this constitutive Order,

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the Order of Law and of the Right of attributory or exclusory assignment), in the form of the Order of the signifier itself, i.e., in the form of an Order *formally* identical with the order of language.^[4]

Where a superficial or prejudiced reading of Freud has only seen happy, lawless childhood, the paradise of 'polymorphous perversity', a kind of state of nature only punctuated by stages of a biological type linked with the functional primacy of some part of the human body, the site of a 'vital' need (oral, anal, genital),^[5] Lacan demonstrates the effectiveness of the Order, the Law, that

has been lying in wait for each infant born since before his birth, and seizes him before his first cry, assigning to him his place and role, and hence his fixed destination. Each stage traversed by the sexed infant is traversed in the realm of Law, of the codes of human assignment, communication and non-communication; his 'satisfactions' bear the indelible and constitutive mark of the Law, of the claims of human Law, that, like all

4. *Formally* : for the Law of Culture, which is first introduced as language and whose first form is language, is not exhausted by language; its content is the real kinship structures and the determinate ideological formations in which the persons inscribed in these structures live their functions. It is not enough to know that the Western family is patriarchal and exogamic (kinship structures) -- we must also work out the ideological formations that govern paternity, maternity, conjugality and childhood: what are 'husband-and-wife-being', 'father-being', 'mother-being' and 'child-being' in the modern world? A mass of research remains to be done on these ideological formations. This is a task for *historical materialism*.

5. A branch of neuro-biology and one of psychology have been only too pleased to discover in Freud a theory of 'stages', and they have not hesitated to translate it directly and exhaustively into a theory of 'stadial growth', either neuro-biological or bio-neuro-psychological -- mechanically assigning to neuro-biological growth the role of an 'essence' for which the Freudian 'stages' are merely the 'phenomena' pure and simple. This perspective is nothing but a re-edition of the old theory of mechanical parallelism. This is directed particularly towards the disciples of Wallon, for Wallon himself did not take any notice of Freud.

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law, cannot be 'ignored' by anyone, least of all by those ignorant of it, but may be evaded or violated by everyone, above all by its most faithful adherents. That is why any reduction of childhood traumas to a balance of 'biological frustrations' alone, is in principle erroneous, since the Law that covers them, as a Law, abstracts from all contents, exists and acts as a Law only in and by this abstraction, and the infant submits to this rule and receives it from his first breath.^[6] This is the beginning, and has always been the beginning, even where there is no living father, of the official presence of the Father (who is Law), hence of the Order of the human signifier, i.e. of the Law of Culture: this discourse, the absolute precondition of any discourse, this discourse present at the top, i.e. absent in the depths, in all verbal discourse, the discourse of this Order, this discourse of the Other, of the great Third, which is this Order itself: *the discourse of the unconscious*. This gives us a hold, a *conceptual* hold on the unconscious, which is in each human being the absolute place where his particular discourse seeks its own place, seeks, misses, and in missing, finds its own

6. There is a risk that the theoretical scope of this formal condition may be misconstrued, if this is countered by citing the apparently biological concepts (libido, affects, instincts, desire) in which Freud thinks the 'content' of the unconscious. For example, when he says that the dream is a '*wish-fulfilment*' (*Wunscherfüllung*). The sense here is the same as the sense in which Lacan opposes man's 'empty speech' to his 'full speech', as to the language of unconscious 'desire'. But only on the basis of this formal condition do these (apparently biological) concepts obtain their authentic meaning, or can this meaning be assigned and thought and a curative technique defined and applied. Desire, the basic category of the unconscious, is only intelligible in its specificity as the sole meaning of the discourse of the human subject's unconscious: the meaning that emerges in and through the 'play' of the signifying chain which makes up the discourse of the unconscious. As such, 'desire' is marked by the structure that commands human development. As such, desire is radically distinct from organic and essentially biological 'need'. There is no essential continuity between organic need and unconscious [*cont. onto p.* 213. -- *DJR*] desire, any more than there is between man's biological existence and his historical existence. Desire is determined in its ambiguous being (its 'failure-in-being' -- *manque à être* -- says Lacan) by the structure of the Order that imposes its mark on it and destines it for a placeless existence, the existence of repression, for its resources as well as for its disappointments. The specific reality of desire cannot be reached by way of organic need any more than the specific reality of historical existence can be reached by way of the biological existence of 'man'. On the contrary: just as it is the categories of history that allow us to define the specificity of man's historical existence, including some apparently purely biological determinations such as his 'needs' or

demographic phenomena, by distinguishing his historical existence from a purely biological existence -- similarly, it is the essential categories of the unconscious that allow us to grasp and define the very meaning of desire by distinguishing it from the biological realities that support it (exactly as biological existence supports historical existence) but neither *constitute*, nor *determine* it.

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place, its own anchor to its place, in the imposition, imposture, complicity and denegation of its own imaginary fascinations.

That in the Oedipal phase the sexed child becomes a sexual human child (man or woman) by testing its imaginary fantasies against the Symbolic, and if all 'goes well' finally becomes and accepts itself as what it is: a little boy or little girl among adults, with the rights of a child in this adult world, and, like all children, with the full *right* to become one day 'like daddy', i.e. a masculine human being with a wife (and no longer only a mother), or 'like mummy', i.e. a feminine human being with a husband (and not just a father) -- these things are only the destination of the long forced march towards human childhood.

That all the material of this ultimate drama is provided by a previously formed language, which, in the Oedipal phase, is centred and arranged wholly around the signifier *phallus* : the emblem of the Father, the emblem of right, of the Law, the fantasy image of all Right -- this may seem astonishing or arbitrary, but all psycho-analysts attest to it as a fact of experience.

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The last Oedipal stage, 'castration', shows us why. When the small boy lives and resolves the tragic and beneficial situation of castration, he accepts the fact that he *has not* the same Right (phallus) as his father, in particular, that he has not the same Right as his father over his mother, who is thereby revealed as endowed with the intolerable status of double use, mother for the small boy, wife for the father; but by accepting that he has not the same right as his father, he gains the assurance that one day, *later on*, when he grows up, he will get the right which is now refused him through his lack of 'means'. He has only a little right, which will grow big if he will grow big himself by taking care to 'mind his p's and q's' (*manger sa soupe*). For her part, when the little girl lives and assumes the tragic and beneficial situation of castration, she accepts that she has not the same right as her mother, and hence she doubly accepts that she has not the same right (phallus) as her father, since her mother has not this right (no phallus), although she is a woman, because she is a woman, and she simultaneously accepts that she has not the same right as her mother, i.e. that she is not yet a woman as her mother is. But she thereby gains in return her own small right: the right of a little girl, and the promise of a large right, the full right of a woman when she grows up, if she will grow up accepting the Law of Human Order, i.e. submitting to it if need be to deflect it -- by not minding her p's and q's 'properly'.

In either case, whether it be the moment of dual fascination of the Imaginary (1) or the (Oedipal) moment of the lived recognition of the insertion into the Symbolic Order (2), the whole dialectic of the transition in all its essential details is stamped by the seal of Human Order, of the Symbolic, for which linguistics provides us with the *formal* laws, i.e. the *formal* concept.

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Psycho-analytic theory can thus give us what makes each science no pure speculation but a science: the definition of the *formal* essence of its object, the precondition for any practical, technical application of it to its *concrete* objects. Thereby psycho-analytic theory escapes the classical idealist antinomies formulated by Politzer for example, when, while demanding of psycho-analysis (whose revolutionary theoretical scope he was the first in France to realize) that it be a science of the true 'concrete', a 'concrete psychology', he attacked it for its *abstractions* : the unconscious, the Oedipus complex, the castration complex, etc. How, said Politzer, can psycho-analysis claim to be the science of the *concrete* it aims to be and could be, if it persists in *abstractions* which are merely the 'concrete' alienated in an abstract and metaphysical psychology? How can one reach the 'concrete' from such abstractions, from the abstract? In fact, no science can do without abstraction, even when, in its 'practice' (which is not, NB, the theoretical practice of that science but the practice of its concrete *application*), it deals only with those peculiar and unique variants that constitute each individual 'drama'. As Lacan thinks them in Freud -- and Lacan thinks nothing but Freud's concepts, giving them the form of our scientificity, the only scientificity there can be -- the 'abstractions' of psycho-analysis are really the authentic scientific concepts of their object, insofar as, as concepts of their object, they contain within them the index, measure and basis for the necessity of their abstraction, i.e., the measure of their relation to the 'concrete', and hence of their specific relation to the concrete of their application, commonly called analytic practice (the cure).

So the Oedipal phase is not a hidden '*meaning*' which merely lacks consciousness or speech -- it is not a structure buried in the past that can always be restructured or surpassed by 'reactivating its meaning'; the Oedipus complex

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is the dramatic structure, the 'theatrical machine'^[7] imposed by the Law of Culture on every involuntary, conscripted candidate to humanity, a structure containing in itself not only the possibility of, but the necessity for the concrete variants in which it *exists*, for every individual who reaches its threshold, lives through it and survives it. In its application, in what is called its practice (the cure), psycho-analysis works on the concrete 'effects'^[8] of these variants, i.e. on the modality of the specific and absolutely unique nexus in which the Oedipal transition was and is begun, completed, missed or eluded by some particular individual. These *variants* can be thought and known in their essence itself on the basis of the structure of the Oedipal *invariant*, precisely because this whole transition is marked from its beginnings in fascination, in its most 'aberrant' as well as in its most 'normal' forms, by the Law of this structure, the ultimate form of access to the Symbolic within the Law of the Symbolic itself.

I know that these brief suggestions will not only appear to be, but are, summary and schematic; that a number of notions put forward here require extended development if they are to be justified and established. Even if their well-foundedness and the relations they bear to the set of notions that underly them were clarified, even if they were compared with the letter of Freud's analyses, they would pose their own problems in their turn: not only problems of

7. An expression of Lacan's ('*machine*'), referring to Freud ('*ein anderes Schauspiel*' ... '*Schauplatz*'). From Politzer, who talks of 'drama' to Freud and Lacan who speak of theatre, stage, *mise en scène*, machinery, theatrical genre, *metteur en scène*, etc., there is all the distance between the spectator who takes himself for the theatre -- and the theatre itself.

8. If this term 'effect' is examined in the context of a classical theory of causality, it reveals a conception of the continuing presence of the cause in its effects (cf. Spinoza).

conceptual formation, definition and clarification, but real, new problems, necessarily produced by the development of the work of theorization we have just discussed. For example, how can we rigorously formulate the relation between the *formal* structure of language, the absolute precondition for the existence and intelligibility of the unconscious, on the one hand, the concrete kinship structures on the other, and finally the concrete ideological formations in which the specific functions implied by the kinship structures (paternity, maternity, childhood) are lived? Is it conceivable that the historical variation of these latter structures (kinship, ideology) might materially affect some or other aspect of the instances isolated by Freud? Or again, to what extent may the simple definition of the object and location of Freud's discovery, rationally conceived, react on the disciplines from which it distinguished itself (such as psychology, social psychology, sociology), and raise for them questions as to the (often problematic) status of their objects? And selecting one more from among so many possible questions: what relations are there between analytic theory and 1. the historical preconditions of its appearance, and 2. the social preconditions of its application?

1. *Who, then, was Freud, simultaneously* the founder of analytic theory and the inaugurator, as Analyst number one, *self-analysed*, original Father, of the long line of practitioners who claim descent from him?

2. *Who, then, are the psycho-analysts, who simultaneously* (and as naturally as if it went without saying) accept Freudian theory, the didactic tradition that descends from Freud, and the social and economic conditions (the social status of their 'associations' which cling tightly to the status of *medical* corporations) under which they practice? To what extent do the historical origins and socio-economic con-

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ditions of the practice of psycho-analysis react an analytical theory and technique? Most important of all, to what extent do the theoretical *silence* of psychoanalysts about these questions (for this is certainly the state of affairs) and the theoretical *repression* these problems meet with in the world of analysis, affect both analytic theory and analytical technique in their content itself? Cannot the eternal question of the 'end of analysis', among others, be related to this repression, i.e. to the *non-thoughtness of these problems* which derive from an epistemological history of psycho-analysis and a social (and ideological) history of the world of analysis?

Here are a number of real questions, really posed, and they constitute immediately an equal number of fields of research. It may be that in the near future certain notions will emerge transformed from this test.

And this test is rooted in the test Freud, in his own field, applied to a particular legal, ethical and philosophical, i.e. definitively ideological, image of 'man', of the human 'subject'. Not in vain did Freud sometimes compare the critical reception of his discovery with the upheavals of the Copernican Revolution. Since Copernicus, we have known that the earth is not the 'centre' of the universe. Since Marx, we have known that the human subject, the economic, political or philosophical ego is not the 'centre' of history and even, in opposition to the Philosophers of the Enlightenment and to Hegel, that history has no 'centre' but possesses a structure which has no necessary 'centre' except in ideological misrecognition. In turn, Freud has discovered for us that the real subject, the individual in his unique essence, has not the form of an ego, centred on the 'ego',

on 'consciousness' or on 'existence' -- whether this is the existence of the for-itself, of the body-proper or of 'behaviour' -- that the human subject is de-centred, con-

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stituted by a structure which has no 'centre' either, except in the imaginary misrecognition of the 'ego', i.e. in the ideological formations in which it 'recognizes' itself.

It must be clear that this has opened up one of the ways which may perhaps lead us some day to a better understanding of this structure of misrecognition, which is of particular concern for all investigations into ideology.

January 1964 (corrected February 1969)

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Access to Lacan's work will be facilitated if it is approached in the following order:

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A Letter on Art in Reply to André Daspre

La Nouvelle Critique has sent me your letter.^[1] I hope you will permit me, if not to reply to all the questions it poses, at least to add a few comments to yours in the line of your own reflections.

First of all, you should know that I am perfectly conscious of the *very schematic* character of my article on Humanism.^[2] As you have noticed, it has the disadvantage that it gives a 'broad' idea of ideology without going into the analysis of details. As it does not mention art, I realize that it is possible to wonder whether art should or should not be ranked as such among ideologies, to be precise, whether art and ideology are one and the same thing. That, I feel, is how you have been tempted to *interpret* my silence.

The problem of the relations between art and ideology is a very complicated and difficult one. However, I can tell you in what directions our investigations tend. *I do not rank real art among the ideologies*, although art does have a quite particular and specific relationship with ideology. If you would like some idea of the initial elements of this thesis and the very complicated developments it promises,

1. See *La Nouvelle Critique*, no. 175, April 1966, pp. 136-41.

2. *La Nouvelle Critique*, no. 164, March 1965; *For Marx*, pp. 242-7.

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I advise you to read carefully the article Pierre Macherey has written on 'Lenin as a critic of Tolstoy' in *La Pensée*, No. 121, 1965.^[3] Of course, that article is only a beginning, but it does pose the problem of the relations between art and ideology and of the specificity of art. This is the direction in which we are working, and we hope to publish important studies on this subject in a few months time.

The article will also give you a first idea of the relationship between art and knowledge. Art (I mean authentic art, not works of an average or mediocre level) does not give us a *knowledge* in the *strict sense*, it therefore does not replace knowledge (in the modern sense: scientific knowledge), but what it gives us does nevertheless maintain a certain *specific relationship* with knowledge. This relationship is not one of identity but one of difference. Let me explain. I believe that the peculiarity of art is to 'make us see' (*nous donner à voir*), 'make us perceive', 'make us feel' something which *alludes* to reality. If we take the case of the novel, Balzac or Solzhenitsyn, as you refer to them, they make us *see, perceive* (but not *know*) something which *alludes* to reality.

It is essential to take the words which make up this first provisional definition literally if we are to avoid lapsing into an identification of what art gives us and what science gives us. What art makes us *see*, and therefore gives to us in the form of '*seeing*', '*perceiving*' and '*feeling*' (which is not the form of *knowing*), is the *ideology* from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it *alludes*. Macherey has shown this very clearly in the case of Tolstoy, by extending Lenin's analyses. Balzac and Solzhenitsyn give us a 'view' of the ideology to which their work alludes and with which it is constantly fed, a view which presupposes a *retreat, an internal distancing*

3. Now in Pierre Macherey, *Pour une théorie de la production littéraire*, Paris, 1966, pp. 125-57.

from the very ideology from which their novels emerged. They make us 'perceive' (but not know) in some sense *from the inside*, by an *internal distance*, the very ideology in which they are held.

These distinctions, which are not just shades of meaning but specific differences, should *in principle* enable us to resolve a number of problems.

First the problem of the 'relations' between art and science. Neither Balzac nor Solzhenitsyn gives us any *knowledge* of the world they describe, they only make us 'see', 'perceive' or 'feel' the reality of the ideology of that world. When we speak of ideology we should know that ideology slides into all human activity, that it is identical with the 'lived' experience of human existence itself: that is why the form in which we are 'made to see' ideology in great novels has as its content the 'lived' experience of individuals. This 'lived' experience is not a *given*, given by a pure 'reality', but the spontaneous 'lived experience' of ideology in its peculiar relationship to the real. This is an important comment, for it enables us to understand that art does not deal with a reality *peculiar to itself*, with a *peculiar domain* of reality in which it has a monopoly (as you tend to imply when you write that 'with art, knowledge becomes human', that the object of art is 'the individual'), whereas science deals with a *different domain* of reality (say, in opposition to 'lived experience' and the 'individual', the abstraction of structures). Ideology is also an object of science, the 'lived experience' is also an object of science, the 'individual' is also an object of science. The real difference between art and science lies in the *specific form* in which they give us the same object in quite different ways: art in the form of 'seeing' and 'perceiving' or 'feeling', science in the form of *knowledge* (in the strict sense, by concepts).

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The same thing can be said in other terms. If Solzhenitsyn does 'make us see' the 'lived experience' (in the sense defined earlier) of the 'cult of personality' and its effects, in no way does he give us a knowledge of them: this knowledge is the conceptual *knowledge* of the complex mechanisms which eventually produce the 'lived experience' that Solzhenitsyn's novel discusses. If I wanted to use Spinoza's language again here, I could say that art makes us 'see' 'conclusions without premisses', whereas knowledge makes us penetrate into the mechanism which produces the 'conclusions' out of the 'premisses'. This is an important distinction, for it enables us to understand that a novel on the 'cult', however profound, may draw attention to its 'lived' effects, but *cannot give an understanding of it*; it may put the question of the 'cult' on the agenda, but it cannot *define the means* which will make it possible to remedy these effects.

In the same way, these few elementary principles perhaps enable us to point the direction from which we can hope for an answer to another question you pose: how is it that Balzac, despite his personal political options, 'makes us see' the 'lived experience' of capitalist society in a critical form? I do not believe one can say, as you do, that he '*was forced by the logic of his art to abandon certain of his political conceptions in his work as a novelist*'. On the contrary, we know that Balzac *never abandoned* his political positions. We know even more: his peculiar, reactionary political positions played a decisive part in the production of the content of his work. This is certainly a paradox, but it is the case, and history provides us with a number of examples to which Marx drew our attention (on Balzac, I refer you to the article by R. Fayolle in the special 1965 number of *Europe*). These are examples of a deformation of sense very commonly found in

the dialectic of ideologies. See what Lenin says about Tolstoy (cf. Macherey's article): Tolstoy's personal ideological position is one component of the deep-

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lying causes of the *content* of his work. The fact that the content of the work of Balzac and Tolstoy is 'detached' from their political ideology and in some way makes us 'see' it from the *outside*, makes us 'perceive' it by a distantiating inside that ideology, *presupposes that ideology itself*. It is certainly possible to say that it is an 'effect' of *their art* as novelists that it produces this distance inside their ideology, which makes us 'perceive' it, but it is not possible to say, as you do, that art '*has its own logic*' which '*made Balzac abandon his political conceptions*'. On the contrary, *only because he retained them could he produce his work*, only because he stuck to his political ideology could he produce in it this internal 'distance' which gives us a critical 'view' of it.

As you see, in order to answer most of the questions posed for us by the existence and specific nature of art, we are forced to produce an adequate (scientific) *knowledge* of the processes which produce the 'aesthetic effect' of a work of art. In other words, in order to answer the question of the relationship between art and knowledge we must produce a *knowledge of art*.

You are conscious of this necessity. But you ought also to know that in this issue we still have a long way to go. The recognition (even the political recognition) of the existence and importance of art does not constitute a knowledge of art. I do not even think that it is possible to take as the beginnings of knowledge the texts you refer to,⁴ or even Joliot Curie, quoted by Marcenac.⁵ To say a few words about the sentence attributed to Joliot-Curie, it contains a terminology

4. [Jean Marcenac, Elsa Triolet, Lukács, among others.

5. [Jean Marcenac, *Les Lettres Françaises*, 1966. 'I have always regretted the fact that F. Joliot-Curie never pursued the project he suggested to me at the time of Eluard's death, the project of a comparative study of poetic creation and scientific creation, which he thought might eventually prove an identity in their procedures.']

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-- '*aesthetic creation, scientific creation*' -- a terminology which is certainly quite common, but one which in my opinion must be *abandoned* and replaced by another, in order to be able to pose the problem of the knowledge of art in the proper way. I know that the artist, and the art lover, *spontaneously* express themselves in terms of 'creation', etc. It is a 'spontaneous' language, but we know from Marx and Lenin that every 'spontaneous' language is an *ideological* language, the vehicle of an ideology, here the ideology of art and of the activity productive of aesthetic effects. Like all knowledge, the knowledge of art presupposes a preliminary *rupture* with the language of *ideological spontaneity* and the constitution of a body of scientific concepts to replace it. It is essential to be conscious of the necessity for this rupture with ideology to be able to undertake the constitution of the edifice of a knowledge of art.

Here perhaps, is where I must express a sharp reservation about what you say. I am not perhaps speaking about exactly what you *want* or *would like* to say, but about what you *actually* do say. When you counterpose '*rigorous reflection on the concepts of Marxism*' to '*something else*', in particular to what art gives us, I believe you are establishing a comparison which is either

incomplete or illegitimate. Since art in fact provides us with *something else* other than science, there is not an opposition between them, but a difference. On the contrary, if it is a matter of *knowing* art, it is absolutely essential to begin with '*rigorous reflection on the basic concepts of Marxism*': there is no other way. And when I say, '*it is essential to begin . . .*', it is not enough to *say* it, it is essential to *do* it. If not, it is easy to extricate oneself with a passing acknowledgement, like '*Althusser proposes to return to a rigorous study of Marxist theory. I agree that this is indispensable. But I do not believe that it is enough.*' My response to this is the only real criticism: there is a way of

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declaring an exigency 'indispensable' which consists precisely of *dispensing with it*, dispensing with a careful consideration of all its implications and consequences -- by the acknowledgement accorded it in order to move quickly on to 'something else'. Now I believe that the only way we can hope to reach a real knowledge of art, to go deeper into the specificity of the work of art, to know the mechanisms which produce the 'aesthetic effect', is precisely to spend a long time and pay the greatest attention to the '*basic principles of Marxism*' and not to be in a hurry to 'move on to something else', for if we move on too quickly to 'something else' we shall arrive not at a *knowledge* of art, but at an *ideology* of art: e.g., at the latent humanist ideology which may be induced by what you say about the relations between art and the 'human', and about artistic 'creation', etc.

If we must turn (and this demands slow and arduous work) to the 'basic principles of Marxism' in order to be able to pose correctly, in concepts which are not the *ideological* concepts of aesthetic spontaneity, but *scientific* concepts adequate to their object, and thus necessarily *new* concepts, it is not in order to pass art silently by or to sacrifice it to science: it is quite simply in order to *know* it, and to give it its due.

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Cremonini, Painter of the Abstract

As I was standing in the hall at the Venice Biennale in which Cremonini^[1] had exhibited some fine canvases, two Frenchmen came in, glanced quickly round and left, one saying to the other, 'Uninteresting: expressionism!' Since then, I have had occasion to read the same words from the pen of art criticism. Applied to Cremonini, the term 'expressionism' is a striking indication of a misunderstanding. All in all, it is the misunderstanding of all critical (and therefore of all aesthetic) judgement, which is no more than a commentary, at best a theoretical commentary, on aesthetic *consumption* : the ruling misunderstanding in contemporary art criticism, which, when it does not dress up its 'judgements' in the esotericism of a vocabulary communicating no more than the complicity of accomplices in ignorance, but consents to speak a plain language, reveals to one and all that it is no more than a branch of taste, i.e. of gastronomy.

1. Leonardo Cremonini was born at Bologna in 1925. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna and at the Brera Academy in Milan. Since 1951, the date of his first one-man exhibition at the Centre d'Art Italien, he has divided his time between Paris and long stays at Forio d'Ischia, Douarnenez, Panarea, Palermo, Forli, or in Spain. He has participated in exhibitions at the Tate Gallery, at the Biennales of San Marino and Venice, at the Rome Quadriennale, at the Paris Musée d'Art Moderne, as well as in Pittsburgh, New York, Beverly Hills and the Galerie du Dragon, Paris.

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In order to 'see' Cremonini, and above all to talk about what he makes visible, we have to abandon the categories of the aesthetics of consumption: the gaze we need is different from that of desire for or disgust with 'objects'. Indeed, his whole strength as a figurative painter lies in the fact that he does not 'paint' 'objects' (those dismembered sheep; those tortured carcasses; that stone; those plants; that 1900 armchair), nor 'places' (the sea, seen from the heavy articulated skeleton of an island; seen from a window open to the air; that balcony hanging in the sky; those rooms with polished wardrobes and beds; that dubious washroom; that compartment on a night train), nor 'times' or 'moments' (the morning at dawn; the night, high noon in a courtyard drenched in sunshine where little girls play hop-scotch). Cremonini 'paints' the *relations* which bind the objects, places and times. Cremonini is a *painter of abstraction*. Not an abstract painter, 'painting' an absent, pure possibility in a new form and matter, but a painter of the real *abstract*, 'painting' in a sense we have to define, real relations (as relations they are necessarily *abstract*) between 'men' and their 'things', or rather, to give the term its stronger sense, between 'things' and *their* 'men'.

To 'see' these relations in Cremonini's canvases is simultaneously to enter into other relations: those that obtain between the 'artist' and his 'work', or rather between the work and *its* artist. Here too, modern art criticism too often thinks these relations in the mysteries of the subjectivity of the painter, who inscribes his 'creative project' in the ideal materiality of his 'creation'. The aesthetics of consumption and the aesthetics of creation are merely one and the same: they both depend on the same basic ideological categories: (1) the category of the *subject*, whether creator or consumer (producer of a 'work', producer of an aesthetic judgement), endowed with the attributes of sub-

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jectivity (freedom, project, act of creation and judgement; aesthetic need, etc.); (2) the category of the *object* (the 'objects' represented, depicted in the work, the work as a produced or consumed

object). Thus the subjectivity of creation is no more than the mirror reflection (and this reflection is aesthetic *ideology* itself) of the subjectivity of consumption: the 'work' is no more than the phenomenon of the artist's subjectivity, whether this subjectivity is psychological or transcendental-aesthetic. Cremonini leads us to the idea that the 'mystery' of the 'inwardness' of a painter, of his 'creative project', is no more than his work itself, that the relations between a painter and his 'work' are nothing but the 'relations' he 'paints'. Cremonini makes us see the relations between things and their men. At the same time, he makes us see, not the relations between the painter and his work, which have no *aesthetic* existence, but the relations between a 'work' and *its* painter, which are at the same time the relations between that work *and us*.

The individual *history* of Cremonini's painting is simply a commentary on this necessity: a refutation of the pure subjectivity of production, the mirror-reflection of the subjectivity of consumption.

This history is interesting not because it *began with* one 'object' and went on to another, but because of the *problems* confronted, which this history progressively and tenaciously poses, transforms and resolves.

In fact, Cremonini 'began' (one must 'begin' somewhere) with the *geological* : the armatures and articulations, consolidated by weight and history, of the passive body of an island, dormant in the heavy oblivion of the rocks, at the edge of an empty sea, a matter-less horizon. But he is already quite the opposite of a painter of 'objects', a landscape painter. All that he 'paints' about the rocks is what they ignore: their weight and memory (oblivion), i.e. their

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difference from something other than themselves, from what makes them the *ground* for men.

Cremonini went on to the *vegetable* : the sharp growth of a bulb, the long shriek of the dumb stems, the strident outpouring of a flower displayed in the air like a bird of silence. He never 'painted' anything but the absences in these presences: the rhythm, the spurt, the snap of *time* 'depicted' by instantaneous, i.e. eternal, plants -- and the cry of a voice, 'depicted' by something quite different, by gestures, trajectories and suspensions. Cremonini's next step was to *animals* : motionless sheep whose bones pierce their skin and snap in the paralysis of movement; flocks resembling the rock piles on which they graze; dogs frozen in a bronze rut; dismembered animals scattered among men collecting bony carcasses, men like the carcasses they bear on their emaciated shoulders. All that he 'painted' about the animals were the articulated bones, tailored in the very material of the rocks: articulations of the very livingness of life, but frozen in death -- and the few men he stiffened into the same material. The animals and their men, equally living corpses, circumscribed by the stone that they are, and by the air in which they think themselves free. What did Cremonini 'paint'? Similarities (rocks, bones, animals, men) where there are *differences* -- and by 'painting' these similarities, he 'painted' differences: his animals and men are *distanced* from the nature fixed for them by our 'idea', i.e. by the ruling ideology, of man.

In conclusion, Cremonini came to the 'men' who had already prowled among the animals.

In his *individual* history as a painter, he had traversed and reproduced the whole cycle of a History (rocks, plants, animals, men), but in doing so he had showed that every god, even a painter-god, was absent, banished from it. He had reproduced this History in its material -- or

we say 'materialist'? -- order: the earth, plants, creatures, finally man. It is obvious that a certain ideology of the immediate relationship between man and nature provided the inspiration for Cremonini's work from the outset: what still fascinates him individually in the arm of a chair or in a tool is the fact that they extend the joints of the bony limbs of men and animals, and that these joints are no more than further patterns of nature related to the original patterns which made up the relationships of equilibrium and disequilibrium of the weight levers in his rocks. Hence the meaning that he could find in the *order* in which he had reproduced this History while living *his own* history: it could be the order of a *Genesis* (even a materialist one), i.e. of a *descent* from an origin containing the *true* meaning of things, the true relationship between man and nature, and his 'objects', above all the exemplary relationship between the craftsman and his material, his tools and his product.

It is highly probable that this ideological 'project' is what inspired, i.e. haunted Cremonini, and that the illusion it contained was part of the disposition of the means which ultimately produced his canvases and their peculiar history: the *result* (that is all that exists for us: the canvases that we are discussing) is precisely something *quite different* from this 'ideological' project. And the comparisons (the similarities) between the *forms* of the four orders (geological, vegetable, animal, human) are not *in fact* the canvases' *dominant* organizational principle: these comparisons are themselves subject to another organizational principle: that of the *differences*. At a certain moment, Cremonini might have *thought* he was painting only 'similarities', i.e. the 'isomorphisms' required to elaborate his ideological 'project' of the descent of forms (rocks, plants, articulated skeletons, tools, gestures . . .): *in fact*, these similarities were very soon subjected to a quite different logic: the logic of

the *differences* which Cremonini has constantly 'painted', and foremost among them, the *difference from this ideological project of the descent of forms*. All this can be clearly 'seen' in the last stage of Cremonini's painting: the 'men'.

The men: they originally had, and still have, the *form* of their 'things', of 'things'. Bodies and faces of stone, revealing in their objects and gestures their primordial 'origins': precisely those bones transposed into tools, those thin elbows articulated into the arms of chairs, those women erect like the iron balustrades of their balconies, and their diminutive children. The men: beings congealed in their essence, in their past, in their origin, i.e. in their absence, which makes them what they are, never having asked to live, or why they should. The 'things': those tools, those utensils, walls, partitions separating the inside from the outside, the shade from the air, the sombre sheen of worn varnish from the harsh limpidity of the sky. The 'men': fashioned from the material of their objects, circumscribed by it, caught and defined once and for all: faces corroded by the air, gnawed and seemingly amputated (almost *too much* faces), gestures and cries congealed into immutable weight, a parody of human time reduced to eternity, the eternity of matter.

Then, only a few years ago, what spoke, silently, in this History began to appear: the *relations* between the men. It is not accidental that for Cremonini this object took the form of an exploration of *mirrors*, above all of the old mirrors of ordinary homes, the mirrors of shabby 1900 wardrobes:

men at grips with their only wealth, the wretched past in which they *look at themselves*. They look at themselves: no, they *are* looked at. It is their mirrors, their wretchedness which fastens them, restoring to them despite themselves, whatever they do, their only inalienable possession: their own image.

Those women at the dressing-table do not see *themselves*

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though they look at themselves in the mirror, even that young woman does not see *herself*, though *we* see her naked desire *on the back* of the looking-glass she holds in her hand: it is their mirrors that see them, and see the circle of their sight, though their mirrors are blind. The mirrors see the men, even in sleep and love: the implacable reflection, indifferent to its model, sees for us those beings of flesh, sleep, desire and waking, even in the hanging sky of their vertigo. However, in all these canvases, there are *tall vertical lines* : doors, windows, partitions, walls, in which is 'painted' the pitiless law which governs the men, even in their exhausted flesh: the *weight* of matter, i.e. of their lives.

No one could argue that it is by chance that the great *verticals* of the partitions and walls emerged in Cremonini's work at the same time as he came to paint in their mirrors the inexorable *circle* which dominates the connexions between men, through the connexions between objects and their men. The circles of the mirrors 'depict' a quite different *reference* than that of the similarity of forms in an ideology of *descent*. The circles of the mirrors 'depict' the fact that the objects and their forms, though related among themselves, are only so related because they turn in the same circle, because they are subject to the same law, which now 'visibly' dominates the relations between the objects and their men.

Furthermore, this *circle* really is a circle: it is 'cyclical', it has lost any origin; but along with the origin, it also seems to have lost any 'determination in the last instance'. The men and their objects refer us to the objects and their men, and *vice versa*, endlessly. And yet, the meaning of this circle is fixed, *behind the scenes*, by its *difference* : this difference is nothing but the presence, *alongside* the circle, of the great *verticals* of weight, which 'depict' *something other than*

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the perpetual reference of human-individuals to object individuals and *vice versa* to infinity, *something other than* this circle of *ideological* existence: the determination of this circle by its *difference*, by a different, *non-circular* structure, by a law of quite a different nature, a weight which is irreducible to any Genesis, and haunts all Cremonini's later canvases in its *determinate absence*.

In the latest works, the *physical* presence of the mirrors is no longer required in order to 'paint' the circle. It becomes directly the circle of the inside and the outside, the circle of the gazes and gestures caught in the circle of things: thus the interior of the neighbouring flat seen through a window, while the neighbours look at that other interior from where they are seen; thus the holy butchers confused with the gigantic open carcasses of beef which they are ransacking (circle of man and animal), turning towards the window (circle of the inside and the outside) where prohibition has drawn a little girl who runs away even before she has looked at them (circle of wish and prohibition); thus the game 'without rules' of the children running around the furniture -- without

rules, because its rule is merely the law of closure of a closed space, the only body of their 'freedom'. In their 'finite' world which dominates them, Cremonini thus 'paints' (i.e. 'depicts' by the play of the similarities inscribed in the differences) the history of men as a history *marked*, as early as the first childhood games, and even in the anonymity of faces (of children, women and men), by the *abstraction* of their sites, spaces, objects, i.e. 'in the last instance' by the *real abstraction* which determines and sums up these first abstractions: the relations which constitute their *living conditions*.

I do not mean -- it would be *meaningless* -- that it is possible to 'paint' 'living conditions', to paint social relations, to paint the relations of production or the forms of the class

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struggle in a given society.^[2] But it is possible, through their objects, to 'paint' visible connexions that depict by their disposition, the *determinate absence* which governs them. The structure which controls the *concrete* existence of men, i.e. which *informs the lived ideology* of the relations between men and objects and between objects and men, this structure, *as a structure*, can never be depicted by its presence, in person, positively, in relief, but only by traces and effects, negatively, by indices of absence, *in intaglio (en creux)*. This intaglio (*creux*), which 'depicts' a *determinate* absence, is very precisely inscribed in the pertinent *differences* which we have been discussing: in the fact that a painted object does not conform to its essence, is compared with an object other than itself; in the fact that the normal connexions (e.g., the connexions between men and objects) are inverted and dislocated (*décalées*); lastly, in the fact, summing up all the others, that Cremonini can never paint a *circle* without simultaneously painting *behind the scenes*, i.e. alongside and away from the circle, but at the same time as it, and near it, something which rejects its law and 'depicts' the effectivity of a *different* law, absent in person: the great *verticals*.

Lastly, the final effect of this necessity, of the effectivity of the *abstract relations* which are the absent object of Cremonini's painting: what happens to human *faces*. It is these distorted and sometimes apparently monstrous, if not deformed faces, that have evoked the cry of expressionism. Those who have raised this cry still hold to a humanist religious ideology of the function of the human face in art, and at the same time to an idealist ideology of *ugliness* (the

2. In my opinion, this is Planchon's error in his staging of Molière's *George Dandin*, at least as I saw it at Avignon in July 1966: it is not possible to stage social classes *in person* in a text which only deals with certain of their 'structural effects'.

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aesthetic of ugliness is the ideology of expressionism), which confuses *deformation* with *deformity*. The humanist religious ideological function of the human face is to be the seat of the 'soul', of subjectivity, and therefore the visible proof of the existence of the human *subject* with all the ideological force of the concept of the *subject* (the centre from which the 'world' is organized, because the human subject is the centre of its world, as a perceiving subject, as an active 'creative' subject, as a free subject and hence as responsible for its objects and their meaning).

Given these ideological premisses, it is obvious that the human face can only be painted as an identifiable and therefore recognizable individuality (certain individualizing *features*), recognizable even in the variations of its *uniqueness* (certain feelings which 'express' the religious quality and

function of this subject, the *centre* and source of its 'world'). The aesthetic of *deformity* (of ugliness) is not in principle a critique and cancellation of these humanist ideological categories, but merely a variant of them. That is why Cremonini's human faces are not expressionist, for they are characterized not by deformity but by *deformation* : their deformation is merely a determinate absence of form, a 'depiction' of their anonymity, and it is this anonymity that constitutes the actual cancellation of the categories of the humanist ideology. Strictly speaking, the deformation to which Cremonini subjects his faces is a *determinate* deformation, in that it does not replace one identity with another on the same face, does not give the faces one *particular* 'expression' (of the soul, the subject) instead of *another* : it takes *all expression* away from them, and with it, the ideological function which that expression ensures in the complicities of the humanist ideology of art. If Cremonini's faces are *deformed*, it is because they do not have the *form* of *individuality*, i.e. of *subjectivity*, in which

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'men' immediately recognize that man is the *subject*, the centre, the author, the 'creator' of his objects and his world. Cremonini's human faces are such that they cannot be *seen*, i.e. identified as bearers of the ideological function of the expression of *subjects*. That is why they are so 'badly' represented, hardly outlined, as if instead of being the authors of their gestures, they were merely their *trace*. They are haunted by an absence: a purely negative absence, that of the humanist function which is refused them, and which they refuse; and a positive, determinate absence, that of the *structure* of the world which determines them, which makes them the anonymous beings they are, the structural effects of the real relations which govern them. If these faces are 'inexpressive', since they have not been individualized in the ideological form of identifiable subjects, it is because they are not the expression of their 'souls', but the expression, if you like (but this term is inadequate, it would be better to say the *structural effect*) of an absence, visible in them, the absence of the structural relations which govern their world, their gestures and even their experience of freedom.

All of 'man' is certainly present in Cremonini's work, but precisely because *it is not there*, because its double (negative positive) absence is its very existence. That is why his painting is profoundly anti-humanist, and materialist. That is why his painting denies the spectator the complicities of communion in the complacent breaking of the humanist bread, the complicity which confirms the spectator in his spontaneous ideology by depicting it in 'paint'. Lastly, that is why his painting itself prevents him from recognizing himself as a 'creator' and *rejoicing* in the pictures he paints: for these pictures are the refutation *in actu* of the ideology of creation, even in aesthetics. This dislocation prevents Cremonini from *repeating* himself, i.e. from rejoicing in this

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recognition, and he cannot repeat himself because his painting denies him this recognition. If he constantly *discovers* and therefore changes, it is not, as with others, for reasons of taste or to test his skill, but because of the very logic of what he has been doing *from the outset*, despite his starting point, and the 'ideological project' with which he began. That an individual can abstract himself from his painting to this extent, i.e. can reject in it all the advantages of the complacency of self-recognition, that painting can to this extent abstract from its *painter* (i.e. refuse to be his own ideological mirror, the reflection of an ideology of 'aesthetic creation') are facts profoundly linked to the *significance* of this painting. If Cremonini does 'paint' 'abstract' relations, if he is the painter of

abstraction I have tried to define, he can only 'paint' this abstraction on condition that he is present in his painting in the form determined by the relations he paints: in the form of their *absence*, i.e. in particular, in the form of *his own absence*.

It is precisely this radical anti-humanism of Cremonini's work which gives him such a power over the 'men' that we are. We cannot 'recognize' ourselves (ideologically) in his pictures. And it is because we cannot 'recognize' ourselves in them that we can *know* ourselves in them, in the specific form provided by art, here, by painting. If all that Cremonini 'paints' about 'man' is his reality: the 'abstract' relations which constitute him in his being, which make even his individuality and freedom -- it is because he also knows that every painted work is only painted to be seen, and to be seen by living 'concrete' men, capable of determining themselves practically, within objective limits, determined, in their freedom, by the very 'sight' of what they are. Cremonini thus follows the path which was opened up to men by the great revolutionary thinkers, theoreticians and politicians, the great materialist thinkers

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who understood that the freedom of men is not achieved by the complacency of its ideological *recognition*, but by *knowledge* of the laws of their slavery, and that the 'realization' of their concrete individuality is achieved by the analysis and mastery of the abstract relations which govern them. In his own way, at his own level, with his own means, and in the element, not of philosophy or science, but of painting, Cremonini has taken the same road. This painter of the abstract, like the great revolutionary philosophers and scientists, would not paint, and would not paint the 'abstraction' of their world, if he did not paint for *concrete* men, for the only existing men, for us.

Every work of art is born of a project both aesthetic and ideological. When it exists as a work of art it produces *as a work of art* (by the type of critique and knowledge it inaugurates with respect to the ideology it makes us see) an *ideological* effect. If, as Establet has correctly, but too briefly, noted in a recent article,^[3] 'culture' is the ordinary name for the Marxist concept of the *ideological*, then the work of art, as an *aesthetic object*, is no more part of 'culture' than instruments of production (a locomotive) or scientific knowledges are part of 'culture'. But like every other object, including instruments of production and knowledges, or even the corpus of the sciences, a work of art can become an *element* of the *ideological*, i.e. it can be inserted into the system of relations which constitute the ideological, which reflects in an imaginary relationship the relations that 'men' (i.e. the members of social classes, in our class societies) maintain with the structural relations which constitute their 'conditions of existence'. Perhaps one might even suggest the following proposition, that as the specific function of the work of art is to make *visible* (*donner à voir*), by establishing

3. See Roger Establet, "Culture" et idéologie', *Démocratie Nouvelle*, no. 6, 1966.

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a distance from it, the reality of the existing ideology (of any one of its forms), the work of art *cannot fail to exercise* a directly ideological effect, that it therefore maintains far closer relations with ideology than any other *object*, and that it is impossible to think the work of art, in its specifically aesthetic existence, without taking into account the privileged relation between it and ideology, i.e. *its direct and inevitable ideological effect*. Just as a great revolutionary

philosopher, like a great revolutionary politician, takes into account in his own thought the historical *effects* of his adoption of a position, even within the rigorous and objective system of his own thought -- so a great artist cannot fail to take into account in his work itself, in its disposition and internal economy, the ideological *effects* necessarily produced by its existence. Whether this assumption of responsibility is completely lucid or not is a *different* question. At any rate, we know that 'consciousness' is secondary, even when it *thinks*, in the principle of materialism, its derivatory and conditioned position.

August 1966

From Marx to Mao	Other Documents	Reading Guide
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