CULTURE, THE MEDIA AND MARXISM : DEBATES, PERSPECTIVES AND PROBLEMS

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
award of the Degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
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1983

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled CULTURE, THE MEDIA AND MARXISM : DEBATES, PERSPECTIVES AND PROBLEMS submitted by MANAS RAY is an original work and has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other University. We recommend that this dissertation be presented before the examiners for consideration of the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

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Chairperson

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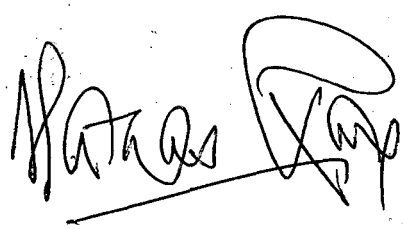
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am indebted to Prof. Ravindra Kumar Jain, my supervisor, who gave generously of his time and advice, and kept his cool with one who is, as a matter of temperament, discouraged at his labours.

Let me take this occasion to remember the continuing support, understanding and encouragement of my family, espically my mother, Smt. Jyotsna Roy.

I thank all my friends of JNU, SBBJ and Chitrabani, Calcutta for helping me in all possible forms. The list is long, too long than what the actual merit of the work could possibly bear. Lest it, unwittingly, goes against the genuine help and encouragement I got from these good souls, I avoid mentioning their names.



INTRODUCTION

We are faced with a paradox right at the onset. On one hand, the areas indicated by terms like 'culture','mass communications' and 'ideology' have for quite some time now been the subject of extensive and increasing analysis and debate. On the other, signs of the development of a systematic sociology of culture is emerging only recently - so much so that we are confronted by a field that is, even to date, largely unmapped. Consequently, we are doubtful about a strategy either of reflecting 'the state of the art' or of providing a showcase for the 'best works' done in the field. Rather, we restrict our aim to contributing to this on-going debate by attempting to locate problems and outline developments and by taking a position, wherever that is possible.

Coming to the defining term 'culture', it is important to note that it began as a noun of process- the culture(cultivation) of crops or(rearing and breeding) of animals, and by extension, the culture (active cultivation) of the human mind.[1] Traditionally, scholars have viewed culture as the informing spirit, determining society. If we call such approach idealist, there is also an opposed view which can be

termed materialist, which sees culture as a product of 'a whole social order' : "a specifiable culture, in styles of art and kinds of intellectual work, is seen as the direct or indirect product of an order primarily constituted by other social activities".[2]

In defining culture, we propose to take elements from both these traditions of thought: culture as a signifying system through which, along with other means, a social order is conveyed, reproduced, experienced and transformed. In this definition, culture necessarily is a process through history. Thus we emphasise on a whole social order and also view culture as constitutive, without reducing it to any one of these two aspects.

The notion of culture we advance hinges on the concept of production. We view cultural products and practices in terms of the relations between their material conditions of existence and their work as representations which produce meanings - culture as socially and historically situated process of production of meaning. In other words, our concern is both with modes of production and with modes of signification. Thus we pose a tentative challenge both to non-Marxist understandings of culture (and media), which miss broadly, as we have argued, the dialectical relations between culture and the social-historical forces - in the process, failing to see

culture itself as social - historical - and also, orthodox streaks within Marxist approaches. If works suffer from a kind of reductionism by privil cultural artefact itself, divorced from its co production and existence, and claiming that it provide the means of its analysis, certain Marx we have to admit, also are marked by a sense of r though of a different kind. This can be locat tendency neither to engage with the major issues formations, class structuration and ideological conf nor to take cognizance of the validity of critical constituted within the instance being investigated. led to analyse cultural products, ultimately but ine illustrations of consequences and effects of det located externally. It is reductionism in the sens specificity of cultural practices. Marxist works and the media are, however, yet to take up sq questions of modes of production and modes of signif cultural practices, and, more specifically and cru interlinkages between these two realms. This is pr a historically and socially aware semiology is yet t full form. We will have occasion to take up this some detail in our third chapter which, in a way, this question.

After a critical overview of the non-Marxist approaches to the media in the first chapter, we proceed to examining the key-issues of ideology, autonomy and hegemony in Marxist understandings of culture and, specifically, the media in our second chapter. In our third chapter, we review the debates in semiology and their relevance and potentials in analysing the media. We fold up the discussion by focussing on the crucial question of cultural imperialism in the fourth chapter.

NOTES

1. Williams, Raymond: Keywords (Fontana, 1981), pp.77-8.

2. Williams, Raymond: Marx: 100 years (ed): McLellan, David (Fontana, 1983), p.23

CHAPTER-I

NON-MARXIST APPROACHES TO THE MEDIA: A CRITICAL OVERVIEW

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"Practically all the sciences have sprung initially from philosophy. The introduction of laboratory methods enabled the natural sciences to make a rather complete seperation, and the medical sciences made the same later. The social sciences are still in the process of establishing their independence.....We have thus virtually to break an academic pattern. We have to establish a new academic mold."

(Edmund Day began his tenure as the Director of Social Sciences for the Rockefeller Foundation in 1929 with these words).

* * * *

"One of my favourite fantasies is a dialogue between Mills and Lazarsfeld in which the former reads to the latter the first sentence of The Sociological Imagination: "Now a days men often feel that their private lives are a series of traps". Lazarsfeld immediately replies: "How many men, which men, how long have they felt this way, which aspects of their private lives bother them, when do they feel free rather than trapped, what kinds of traps do they experience, etc. etc. etc." If Mills succumbed, the two of them would have to apply to the National Institute of Mental Health for a million-dollor grant to check out and elaborate that first sentence. They would need a staff of hundreds, and when finished they would have written Americans View Their Mental Health rather than The Sociological Imagination, provided that they finished at all, and provided that either of them cared enough at the end to bother writing anything".

Maurice Stien (a former graduate student of Columbia University): REFLECTIONS ON COMMUNITY POWER(New York, 1964),pp215-16

Media sociology is a distinctly post-World War I phenomenon and until the 40s, it was nurtured primarily in its homeland, i.e. America. From there when it reached Europe, the dominant assumptions of the field were gradually but surely challenged by traditions of thought like Marxism, structuralism and phenomenology. In the third world it was taken up seriously even later - from mid-50s onwards, when with the achievement of political freedom these countries started looking for suitable development policy and corresponding media strategy. Even then, almost all the non-marxist media models of today have their origins and subsequent theoretical development in the U.S., where they enjoy a near-complete monopoly over this brand of social science. Hence, in this chapter we restrict ourselves to the dominant media sociology of America. We would try to point out, while giving a synoptic account of the arguments, the intellectual inheritance, latest assumptions and, of course, limitations of each of these models.

It is, however, important to keep in mind that though media sociology is primarily an American product the initial concerns expressed (specifically in the 'hypodermic' model) closely parallel the arguments centring culture in Europe during the turn of the century and even later. Nietzsche, for example, sees the threat to 'high' culture (philosophy, art, literature and science) stemming directly from the insatiable demands and ideology of 'strong and soundly consolidated

mediocrity' for whom 'happiness is merely mastery of one thing, specilization - a natural instinct'. This view anticipates the hierarchical and organic concept of culture as propounded by T.S. Eliot and F.R. Leavis. For these conservative literary critics, the threat to modern culture comes from below, the 'mass man' who must be taught and inspired to accept his 'natural' place in society, failing which traditional culture is sure to be submerged in 'barbarism'.

But if Nietzsche has identified 'socialism' as the root of all evil, for T.S. Eliot it is the advent of the machine. Eliot defines modern capitalism in terms of 'unregulated industrialism' which progressively weakens all moral bonds of a traditional common culture: "The working class has lost its traditional culture and with it its class vitality: the cinema especially has made the working class listless while the mass production of gramophones and cars has simply reduced its interest in life".[1] For him, "families are the most important channel of transmission of culture", due to rapid industrialization, this remains no more the prerogative of families but of the State via mass media, which is surely going to bring about the collapse of organic and authentic culture.

For Leavis, the present phase of history is 'abnormal' because there is no longer a 'genuine common culture' with its moral assumptions shared by all sections. His sharp attacks on contemporary capitalism are based on his nostalgia for an idyllic

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past. He identified culture with a passive acceptance of an unchanging social order and, implicitly, the hierarchies of power. From this point of view, his complete rejection of technological and scientific basis of culture seem only natural.

All these critics of modern culture misunderstood the contradictory elements of capitalist culture and the potentials of liberation embedded in the mechanical reproduction of art. By viewing culture as a process that should flow downwards from the citadel of the 'wise' and 'learned', they only exposed their elitist bias. Also, in their attack of technology, industry and concurrent changes in social order, they were viewing the telescope from the wrong end. But what is striking is that these critics have a remarkable similarity in the causes of their pessimism and targets of attack with a particular variety of Marxist culture critics - like certain member of the Frankfurt Institute, particularly T.W. Adorno, J. Habermas and Max Horkheimer. We will discuss this point in detail in our second chapter. Let us point out here that the initial media sociologists - the 'hypodermic' theorists -- share their understandings of culture and the all-important role of the mass media, though not necessarily from a pessimistic point of view, with these conservative literary critics. But before we actually come to the 'hypodermic' theory, let us profile the American, vis-a-vis European, media research scene as it exists today.

II.

MEDIA RESEARCH IN AMERICA: Patterns, Priorities And Biases

The years following the World War II saw a head-on incursion of American Social Science into Europe. This one-way Atlantic crossing was not, to be sure, due to any necessary superiority of American Social Science, rather, it was a reflection of the international economic order that was gradually shaping up, effecting Europe adversely on its wake. Also, it was a comment on the cultural situation of the war-torn continent. Traditions, universities and scholarships were in utter disarray, a situation which American communications-scholar, James W. Carey, rightly calls ' a modern Diaspora' that made researchers to work in 'unfamiliar and often unreceptive settings'[2]. By the phrase 'American Social Science' one, of course, indicates the dominant trend of an otherwise vast area, a trend that can be labelled as behaviourist, positivist, empiricist and, at times, pragmatist: behaviouralpsychology and functional sociology, that is.

In more recent years, however, European scholarship has reasserted itself through the resurgence of traditions like Marxism and phenomenology, along with new methods of understanding reality such as structuralism, reflecting a distinctively European mind. The dominant traditions of American Social Science have remained blissfully somnolent of this European resurgence - thanks to nature and demands of the various funding agencies and the general intellectual milieu.

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This general pattern in the social sciences is ruthlessly true for the situation in communications research. American communications research had its heydays in the 50s, and when communications science picked up in Europe, it had the American intellectual import as its main inspiration. However, for a little more than a decade, European communications research ('cultural science/studies', as it is called) has made an about-face to the American preoccupations and turned to traditions of European scholarship instead - to Marxism, phenomenology and structuralism, along with the native traditions of literary criticism.

The difference in emphasis and perspective is in fact hidden in the very terms used to denote the same area of study on two sides of the Atlantic. What is called ' cultural science' in Europe (and 'cultural studies' in Britain) is known as 'mass communications science' in America. Raymond Williams has taken objection to the use of this American term, commenting: "the study of communications was deeply and almost disastrously deformed by being confidently named the study of 'mass communications.'[3] He gives three reasons for this. First, it limits studies to a few specialised areas such as broadcasting, film and 'popular literature', where there is "the whole common area of discourse in speech and writing that needs to be considered". Second, because the audience is always conceived as a 'mass', the only kind of question worth asking was how, and when, communications corrupt/influence people.

Framing the problematic in such a manner draws funds but imposes an inherent bias on the kind of research done. Third, the term limits and isolates study by excluding attention to 'forms' conventions, and practices' of speech and writing as well as the media and, thus, distorts understanding. Williams' highlighting on conventions, forms and practices reflects a distinctively European emphasis on praxis. The influence of literary criticism is also apparent.

Stuart Hall, another well-known scholar of cultural studies of England, objects to the word 'communication' is a somewhat similar manner. The study of 'communications' is, he observes, isolated from the expressive and ritual forms of everyday life - conversation, religion, sport, etc. -on one hand, and from the study of literature and art, on the other. The realm of study called 'communications' which directs us to one isolated segment/aspect of existence is replacing the realm of study of 'culture' which is originally linked with a sense of anthropology, directing us towards the understanding of an entire way of life.

European and American scholarship is this area is based on two different metaphors of communication. American studies is grounded in a view of communications as a process of transmitting messages at a distance for the purpose of control/change. A UNESCO project on communication defines it in the following way: "Communication is the process whereby

somebody sends a message to somebody else and gets somekind of response".[4] Hence, the archetypal case of communications is persuasion, attitude change, behaviour modification, socialization through the transmission of information, influence, or conditioning.

By contrast, the dominant view of communication in Europe is that of a process through which a shared culture is created, modified and transformed. For those who approach the problem from anthropology, the archetypal case of communication is ritual and mythology. For those from literary criticism, it is art and literature. This is not to minimize the growing interest in the history of communications institutions, and more recently, in the history of 'popular movements' of the subordinate classes and the role of com ' nications in it. But the main focus of the problematic has always been the same: what is the relatioinship between culture and society, or more generally, between expressive forms and social order? Tom Burns puts it succinctly when he observes that the task of art is to make sense out of life; the task of social science is to make sense out of the senses we make out of life. By such reasoning the social scientist has to figure out what his material-cultural forms like religion, the media, everyday speech - means, what interpretations it presents to life, how it relates to the senses of life historically found among people of a particular cultural setting, and if he is of a Marxist orientation, what it means in terms of ideology and domination.

Communication studies in the USA exhibit quite a different intention. In fact, for a conventional student of communications of American the relationship between expressive forms and society is no problem at all- it is an exercise in redundancy. The problem areas in communications are the conditions in which persuasion takes place. So studies are aimed at focussing on the sociological and psychological conditions under which attitudes are formed, changed or reinforced, behaviour is stabilized or redirected. Specific cultural forms - art, ritual etc.- enter the analysis only through the backdoor, so to speak (in so far they contribute to certain sociological conditions or constitute certain psychological forces). The relation of these forms to social order, the historical transformation of these forms, questions of meanings and significance and the interrelations between them and the questions of subjectivity - are never explored seriously. The domain, rather, has been dominated by attempts to create a behavioural science and to elucidate laws or functions of behaviour. These attempts include most of the work on attitude change and dissonance theory, influence and diffusion theory, and uses and gratifications analysis. It includes, obviously, the terrain of audience response/effects. The method that comes handy is functionalism, through which every element/stage of communications is tried to be explained less as caused by structural forces and more as satisfying certain needs or functions of the personality or society.

Geertz call this view 'strain theory'[5] because it starts (and ends?) with the assumption of chronic maladjustment/malintegration of the personality and society. Such a premise is also an apt comment on the state of the art.

The Hypodermic Model:

In the 'hypodermic' model, society is mass society, and mass communications 'inject' ideas, attitudes, and dispositions towards behaviour in passive, atomized, extremely vulnerable individuals. So, it is both a theory of society and a theory of the workings of mass media within it. Katz and Lazarsfeld, who are also sharp critics of this model, describe it in the following terms:

".....the media of communication were looked upon as a new kind of unifying force - a simple kind of nervous system - reaching out to every eye and ear in a society characterised by an amorphous social organisation and a paucity of interpersonal relations.

".....Partly, the 'model' developed from an image of the potency of mass media which was in popular mind. At the same time, it also found support in the thought of certain schools of social and psychological theory. Thus, classical sociology of the late 19th century European schools which emphasised the breakdown of interpersonal relations in urban, industrial society and the emergence of new forms of remote, impersonal social control, were reemployed."[6]

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In the 20s, the 'popular mind' which Katz and Lazarsfeld refer to, was recoiling from unprecedented boom of nation-state propaganda during the first world war, and the first wide-scale use of radio. The "schools of social and psychological theory" of which they speak are those governed by relatively simple stimulus-response(SR) psychology.[7] Total war required total commitment from a society which was gradually losing its Gemeinscheft character and was shaping up more like a mass society lacking effective bonds.[8] To solve the paradox, the entire nation was gradually engulfed by systematic, carefully designed propaganda. The 'hypodermic' theory bases iself on the nature and experience of such propaganda. In a mass society, it was argued, carefully designed stimuli through the mass media would be perceived in the same general manner by every individual member and provoked to roughly uniform response. The role of the mass media in mass society was thought to be all pervassive and extra-ordinary, as it comes out in the following passage of Lasswell, one of the proponents of this line of thought.

".....propaganda is one of the most powerful instrumentalities in the modern world.....Small primitive tribes can weld their heterogeneous members into a fighting whole by the beat of the tom-tom and the tempestu-ous rhythm of the dance. It is in orgies of physical ex-urberance that.....men and women are caught in the suction of tribal purpose".

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"In the Great Society.....,a newer and subtler instrument must weld together thousands and even million of human beings into amulgated mass.....This new hammer and anvil of society solidarity is propaganda."[9]

Later, Lasswell tried to take into account the contextual variables intervening between S&R by social categories and "individual differences" theories. However, the scheme for which Lasswell is known - who says what in which channel, to whom with what effect - does not reflect much of this concern. This scheme is a refinement of Aristotles earlier definition of 'rhetoric' as being composed of three elements - the speaker, the speech and the listener. Aristotle declared its aim to be "the search for all possible means of persuasion". Lasswell added two more elements to the Aristotlean framework of the who, what, and to whom of communication and this sophisticated the scheme by stipulating 'how' and 'to what for' in a schematic manner.

It is interesting to go into the unspoken assumptions on which the hypodermic theory stands, because it is through their systematic replacement (or, modifications) that more sophisticated approaches to mass communications are developed. There were very definite assumptions, though not always explicitly formulated, about what was going in between S & R. These were drawn from fairly elaborate understandings of human nature instinct.

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World War-I was a period when instinct psychology was in its full glory. It was assumed a given individual's behaviour was controlled by inherited biological mechanisms that intervened between stimulus and response. Consequently, basic human nature was thought to be roughly similar, especially in terms of motivations and energies to respond to given stimuli in given ways. Even those theorists who emphasised on the non-rational or emotional nature of such mechanisms, conceded that in the ultimate anlaysis these were inherited forces (e.g. (libido) which each person received at birth in fairly uniform manners/degrees. These assumptions about human nature, alongwith the general acceptance of the argument that the social order was emerging into a mass society due to industrialization, made hypoderomic mode, seem entirely valid. Melvin L. Defleur, in his book Theories of Mass Communications, puts the case as following:

".....it was stated that powerful stimuli were uniformly broiught to the attention of the individual members of the mass. These stimuli tapped inner urges, emotions, or other processes over which the individual has very little voluntary control. Because of the inherited nature of these mechanisms, each person responded more or less uniformly. Furthermore, there were few strong social ties and informal social control. The result was that the members of the mass society could be swayed and influenced by those in possession of the media, especially with the use of emotional appeals".[10]

It was only in the 30s, with sociology and psychology becoming more and more empirical in approach, that the hypodermic theory proved increasingly unsatisfactory in explaining reality. Along with this, the image of homo sapiens represented by the writings of William McDougal and his associates, was called into question. The need was felt to modify the basic assumptions of mass communication theory by introducing variables between S & R.

Nixon(1959) added to the scheme of Lasswell by identifying certain other elements of the process - the communication of the communicators and the conditions under which the message is received. The engineering model developed by Shannon and Weaver (1966) was a step forward. It conceives of communication system encompassing five distinct aspects (a) an information source producing a chain of messages to be communicated to the receiver, (b) a transmitter operating on the message to produce a signal suitable for transmission, (c) the channel, (d) the receiver, reconstructing the message from the signal (e) the destination, ie, the person/group for whom the message is intended.

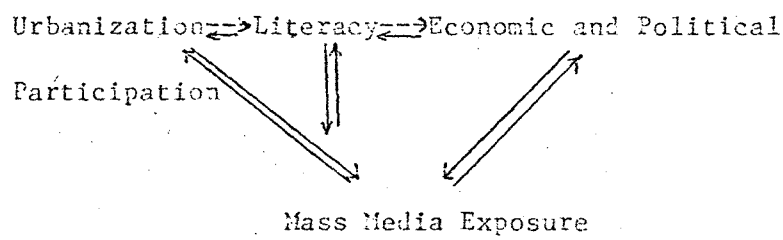
Schramm(1962) was able to adapt this model to extend electro-mechanical communication to human communication stressing that the messages refer to "encoding and decoding functions of the mind". Defining communication as "the sharing of information, ideas or attitudes" he places singular emphasis on "encoder" and "decoder" components of the scheme.

"Substitute microphone" writes Schramm "for encoder, and ear - phone for decoder and you are talking about electronic communication. Consider that the sources and the encoder are one person, decoder and destination are another, and the signal is language and you are talking about human communications."[11]

It is interesting to study how the hypodermic model-the revised version of Schramm(1964), Lerner (1968) and Pye (ed, 1963)-become a cornerstone, summarising the thinking of the time among mass media people. It was readily accepted as the communication model of development for Third World countries. All these three theorists claim that the media do have great potentials for teaching people to behave and think differently. The key to national development was seen as a rapid increase in economic productivity. The role of the media was to mobilize human resources by substituting new norms, attitudes and behaviours for old ones in order to stimulate increased productivity. One of the psychological states of mind that was given particular attention was empathy (Lerner, 1958). Empathetic persons were those having great capacity to relate to new aspects of a changing environment. Closely related to this is mobility, meaning a high capacity for change, future-oriented rational. Lerner argues that this is the personal styles that dominates in modern societies.

Mobility could be experienced directly but also indirectly via the media. The mass media should act as

mobility multiplier. His model, in its simpliest form, can be illustrated thus:



(Figure 1: Lerner's Communication Model for Development)

Increased literacy is assumed to lead to increased media exposure which should stimulate 'participation' (which in terms of this model can only imply monetary income per capita and voting). His model also posits a reciprocal relationship between literacy and mass media exposure. Later, McChelland added another factor, which he calls 'need for achievement'. Degree of achievement orientation is seen as culturally determined, being passed on through child-rearing practices and behavioural norms within the family.

The conclusion was, thus, that the task of the media should be to alter people's psychological or mental set. People should think in other ways than before. Though hypodermic model now has been 'dethroned' in American academic circles, this particular view of development still manages to influence policies in certain areas. A fairly recent example is Inkeles and Smith(1974), who views modernization primarily as a question of individual change.

The first explicit challenge to the traditional model of communication came from Berlo who argued against what he called 'bucket theory of communication' which

characterises communication as a process of taking ideas from the source into a 'bucket' such as a film, book, tv programmes, etc and depositing the content into the receivers head. Berlo, as against this, argued that meanings are not contained in the symbols used but are found in people who produce and receive these symbols. Correspondingly, communication is viewed less as the transmission of ideas/informations through the use of media vehicle and more as the selection and transmission of symbols which have a probability of eliciding the intended meaning from the receiver.

Later, even Schramm admitted the importance of the interactive aspects of communication : "the essential element is not something passing from sender to receiver like a base-ball from pitcher to catcher.....but rather a relationship". The critiques of the hypodermic model that are increasingly being aired can be listed as follows:

(i) It is unilateral, postulating 'active source' and 'passive receiver'. But in actuality, the receiver is always active, interpretating the message in terms of meanings already existing in him/her.

(ii) It is based on a static notion of communication in which the preeminent position belongs to the source. The point is that communication is the process where all the elements interact dynamically:"a phenomenon of multiple exchange of experience and not a unilateral exercise of individual influence".[12]

(iii) Communication is always a two-way flow involving interaction, common meaning and common awareness.'

It was this'hypodermic' model which Katz and Lazarsfeld proposed to dislodge by drawing attention to the social milieu within which audiences received media messages. As a corrective to the overdrawn 'hypodermic' notions, as an insistence on the complexity of the mediation processes, 'personal influence' paradigm of Katz and Lazarsfeld provided the much needed breakthrough.

The Personal Influence Model:

If 'hypodermic' model is a response to and estimation of the propaganda during first world war years, the 'personal influence' model of Katz and Lazarsfeld is a post-second world war phenomenon, clearly turning away from the study of propaganda. It is also called 'the two-step flow of communications'model and is based on the argument that media messages reach people not so much directly as through the selective, partisan, complicating interpolation of 'opinion leaders'. In the sub-title of Personal Influence, their famous and influential study of the diffusion of opinion in Decatur, Illinois in the mid-40s, Katz and Lazarsfeld were concerned with "the part played by people in the flow of mass communications". They looked for specific, measureable, short-term, individual, attitudinal and behavioural 'effects' of media content, and concluded that the media are not all that important in the formation of public opinion. Within American Sociology of mass communication of today, it is the single-most theory. Daniel Bell,with his characteristic sweep, calls Personal Influence "the standard work".

Let us focus on a peculiar paradox that has taken place in American Sociology of mass communication of late. Since the second world war , as mass media in the United States have become more concentrated in ownership, more centralised in operations, more penetrating in reach and pervasive in presence, sociological study of the media has become more concerned with the theme of the relative powerlessness of mass communications. Such a strange conjunction of events is not without its logic. Because of intellectual, ideological and institutional commitments, sociologists have not put the critical questions; that behind the idea of relative unimportance of mass media lies a skewed, faulty concept of 'importance' (similar to that of'power' maintained by political sociologists of pluralist persuation), thereby end up justifying the existing system of mass media ownership, control and purpose.

Todd Gitlin, in his recent book The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media And The New Left makes this point quite persuasively when he argues that the dominant media sociology of America "has drained attention from the power of the media to define normal and abnormal social and political activity, to say what is politically real and legitimate and what is not; to justify the two-party political structure; to establish certain political agendas for social attention and to contain, channel, and exclude others; and to shape the images of opposition movements.....By studying only the 'effects' that could

be 'measured' experimentally or in surveys, it has put the methodological cart ahead of the theoretical horse".[13] We add: it has procured a horse that could pull its peculiar cart. By skirting questions about ownership and production, about culture of politics and politics of culture, about ideology and hegemony in elements of everyday life, mass media studies have deflected attention from larger social meanings of communications.

As in all sociology, the questions asked and the focus of attention define the results even before they are recorded. In the tradition charted out by Lazarsfeld and his associates, researchers pay most attention to those 'variables' that intervene between message-producers and message-receivers, especially to the 'variable' of interpersonal relations. They conceptualize the audience as a 'tissue of interrelated individuals' rather than an isolated point-targets in a mass society-and it is here, inspite of all apparent antagonisms, that 'Personal Influence Model' shares its beliefs with the 'Hypodermic Model' which it replaced. Lazarsfeld sees mass media clearly as only one of several 'variables' that influence 'attitudes' or voting choices, and they are in the measureable 'effects' of the media especially in comparison with other 'variables' like 'personal contact.' They measure 'effects as changes over time in respondents' attitudes or discrete behaviour, as these are reported in surveys. In a sequence of

studies beginning with The People's Choice, Lazarsfeld and his colleagues developed a methodology (emphasizing panel studies and sociometry) commensurate with their concern for mediating 'variables' like social status, age and 'gregariousness.'

In the process, contemporary media sociology of the US has amassed an impressive bulk of empirical findings. But by emphasizing precise effects on 'attitudes' and microscopicly defined 'behaviour' it blotted out the significance of the fact that mass media is corporate housings and under some degree of State regulations. Also, the very nature of investigation made sure that the survey studies could record only little or no 'effects'. What characterizes Lazarsfeld's school is hard data, and not hard questions.

All disclaimers aside, the method of the Personal Influence study, and that of its precursors and successors, stands as a perspective of its own. Not only did a generation of successors work with personal influence model, but Katz himself[14] and many later commentators wrote on it as a self-contained hypothesis. It demands, hence, its own critique based on its taken-for-granted assumptions.

Assumption 1: Commensurability of Modes of Influence: The exercise of power through mass media is presented to be comparable to the exercise of power in face-to-face situations. This reduction of structurally distinct social processes to commensurables can be recognized as cardinal operation in the behaviourist approaches.

Assumption 2: Power as Distinct Occasions - power is to be assessed in case of studies of discrete incidents. Katz and Lazarsfeld decided to ask respondents to recall "incidents of influence exchange", and the specific influentials involved therein.[15] In particular, they would ask respondents how they had changed their minds in each of four issue areas: marketing, fashions, movies and voting choice. Then they would interview the next link in the chain. The occasion of influence was the face-to-face encounter in which individual A commended attitude 'a' or behaviour 'b' to individual B. Those who exercised influence on such occasions were defined as 'opinion leaders'.

Assumption 3. The Commensurability of 'buying' and 'politics'.

The unit of influence is a short-term 'attitude change' or a discrete behaviour; or, more exactly, the report of such 'change' by a respondent, and one which the respondent can attribute to some specific intervention from outside. The persumed comparability of political ideas and product preferences distorted the actual findings and also, exposured the ideological bias of Lazarsfeld's methodology.

Assumption 4: 'Attitude Change' as the Dependent Variable.

The microscopic attention to "attitude change" was built on a narrow approach to the nature of power. In Personal Influence power was the power to compel a certain behaviour, namely buying: or in the case of 'public affairs', it was the power to compel a change in 'attitude' on some current issue.

Respondents were asked if they had recently changed their attitudes on a current issue; if they had, they were asked who had influenced them.[16] If they had not changed their attitudes, they were assumed not to have been influenced.

The problem, however, is in such a context how are we going to explain 'non-decisions', since they are the effects,not the cause and the routes involved to come to non-decisions are important.

In the phase of high-consumption capitalism, when 'new' is the symbolic affirmation of positive value and 'old fashioned' an emblem of backwardness, "changing one's mind" about products is a routine event. And in the realm of public life, one is frequently confronted with new political agendas (ecology, for one), not to mention technological inventions, social 'trends', 'celebrities' and cultural artifacts, one is constantly provoked into having opinions. In such an historical situation, to take constancy of attitude for granted amounts to ignoring the question of the sources of the very opinions which remain constant throughout shifting circumstances. Limiting their investigation, Lazarsfeld and Katz could not explore the institutional power of mass media: the degree of their power to shape public agendas, to mobilize support for the policies of the state, to condition public support for these institution arrangement themselves. Nor could they investigate the sources of these powers.

Assumption 5: Followers as "Opinion Leaders".

Katz and Lazarsfeld took as given, definitive, and fundamental the structure and content of the media. The close attention they paid to 'opinion leaders' not only automatically distracted from the central importance of the broadcast networks and wire services; defined 'opinion leaders' as an act of mere following. Katz and Lazarsfeld did not take seriously the obvious : that their 'experts' were dependent for their expertise on a 'variable' explicitly ruled out of the scope of analysis. They were taking for granted the power of mass media to define news; and they were therefore discovering not ' the part played by people in the flow of mass communications", but the nature of the channels of that flow.

Our survey of the dominant unders_ndings and arguments of American media sociology as it exists today would remain incomplete without a proper consideration of another media-scholar whose ideas took the American reading-public by storm: Marshall McLuhan. Unlike most of his colleagues in this field, McLuhan never intended to develop a model but by the sheer force and novelty of his arguments, he posed an almost formidable challenge to both the schools discussed here. Though signs of mutation are already apparent, there is no denying the influence of McLuhan's ideas on contemporary media sociology.

Marshall Mcluhan's Electronic Phantasmagoria:

With the publication of Understanding Media in 1965, the work of Marshall McLuhan zoomed beyond the narrow scholarly circuits and acquired a general audience. The early review articles have been described aptly by James Carey as "rather like watching someone attempting to put an elephant into pantyhose"[17] - baffled, awed and, at times, contradictory. But there are certain strikingly similar assumptions about these reviews which in one way or the other still continue to exist. First, McLuhan's arguments were thought to have emerged 'phoenix-like' without any intellectual lineage. Second, his arguments helped seeing the media in an entirely new light, conferring them their long denied importance. (This assumption, through an indirect route, conferred new prestige to the advertising industry as well.) Third, irrespective of the complexities of the work, the dazzling conclusion caught the American imagination over-night: that electricity was the sole source of social revolution today, the "Great Reverser" designed to undo the devastation and complexities of past and present, and create a new world of peace and harmony. Such an assumption, however, was not reached from the blue, but are suggested in McLuhan's own work:

> "The electronic age, if given its own unheeded beeway, will drift quite naturally into modes of cosmic humanism.....the aspiration of our times for wholeness, empathy and depth of awareness is a natural adjunct of electric technology".[18]

Striking, however, is the change in McLuhan's position - the near-complete reverse of his previous arguments in "The Mechanical Bride and The Gutenberg Galaxy. In the Mechanical Bride, McLuhan envisioned that "a single mechanical brain" could "tyrannize over the collective consciousnss of the race in.....science fiction style." He was pointing out in those works the Threat of Modern economies irrespective of the potentials of technology: "...a power economy cannot tolerate power that cannot be centrally controlled."[20] But what is significant is that even in his early works he was keen on emphasising the 'darker side' of printing vis-a-vis electronic communication, though he did not then take up the case of the latter openly. He argued that printing centralizes political power in the state and cultural power in the metropolis, intensified spatial bias in communictions favouring 'remote control' and conferring differential advantage to long-distance communication; transformed the world, the primordial symbol, from an event in human world to a record for bureaucracies; privatised the basic transanctions of communications and made audiences passive consumers, etc. The list is long and the bias is clear, putting McLuhan in marked similarity with the conservative critics of the media we have discussed.

The crux of the problem was yet to be taken up: did the emergence of electronic communications from simple servo-mechanisms through advanced commuter information utilities reverse the general trends associated with printing

or did they intensify the process? McLuhan addresses precisely this question in Understanding Media. He takes a sharp position in favour of electronic communication, arguing that it is going to pose a decisive break on the pattern of development of human society and produce a qualitatively changed social organization and cultural life.

The ideological tilt of McLuhan's, argeements was noted right from the beginning. Harold Rosenberg, one of his early reviewers, commented "while McLuhan is an aesthete he is also an ideologue - one ready to spin out his metaphor of the 'extensions' until its web covers the universe.....the drama of history is a crude pageant whose inner meaning is man's metamorphosis through the media."[21] But at the same time this ideological image of electricity as the Great Reverser was underplayed - partly because of McLuhan's compelling style and partly because it was in keeping with a certain tradition of American thought. He argued that technology was both an extension and embodiment of the mind and, therefore, contained and manifested meaning. It could be read in an exegetical sense (this is an extension of Bacon's idea of nature as a text to be read); technology's meaning could be unearthed from its material form in the way critics do in their treatment of literary texts. This was supposed to be a rare insight and a methodological advance, and all the subsequent discussions on hermeneutic of technology and social life were based on this. We will discuss two points of McLuhan that have got special recognition.

First, McLuhan argued that forms of communication - writing, print, broadcasting, T.V., etc. - should not be viewed as 'neutral vessels.' Rather, these forms are active participants in the process by which the mind is formed and in turn forms ideas: the medium is the message. Second, McLuhan recognized that the new means available for producing and reproducing art would demand and create an entirely new aesthetic. Here he parallels the Marxist writer Walter Benjamin to a remarkable extent, as he does in his first argument another Marxist communications-scholar, Stephen Heath. He sensed that cultural forms operate not at the level of cognition or information or effect. The medium interacts with the society by changing the latter's dominant structure of taste, feeling and experience.

The new means of reproducing reality also meant, argued McLuhan, that the historic barriers between the arts, between the arts and other spheres of life and finally, between the audience is going to erode. The division of culture into high and low, folk and popular, mass and elite, etc. - divisions McLuhan thought was brought about by printing - would be discarded under the impact of new forms of communication governed by electronics. More crucial was the argument that the new ideas achieved in the objects of art would be demanded in the practical objects of everyday life. This is in keeping with his conviction that everyday objects were governed less by utility than by aesthetics: their meanings are to be sought in a principle of taste rather than a principle of interest and action.

Technological change, McLuhan points out, offered the scope for redefining the aesthetic: through altering the basic structures of social life, it offered the potential for altering taste and style. "Differing technologies", argues McLuhan "have the capacity to expand or contract space, expand or contract time, changing the meaning of fundamental coordinates of thought."[22] This idea has an obvious closeness to Innis's earlier argument of the spatial and temporal bias of the media. McLuhan situated this insight in a juxtaposed domain of practical action and aesthetic experience. This has remained a crucial argument for the majority of American researches of communications, including the rather untypical American scholar James W. Carey. Comments Carey: "McLuhan was basically correct, then, in directing our consideration to the possibility that the new media of communications might be cultivating a taste for open rather than closed spaces, rimmed rather than axial patterns, historical and geologically modelled time rather than mechanical syncopation, or more generally a preference, in Mary Douglas's phrase, for group over grid."[23]

The arguments of McLuhan have to be seen alongwith his gradual slipping into technological determinism, in which uses and relationships are technically determined by the properties of different media, irrespective of the whole complex of social productive forces and relationships within which they are

developed and used. Thus, the means of communications are recognised as mass of production but are ideologically projected as the only means of production, in which what will be produced is 're-tribalization' - the supposed 'global village' of restored, 'unfallen' natural men. What could draw such large audience to this position, ironically, rests on the rhetorical isolation of 'mass communications' from the complex historical development of the means of communication as related and determined parts of the whole historical social and material process.

Moreover, his basic arguments about technology did not open up scholarship but were delivered in a manner of conclusions that closed it down. His argument on the relation of print and nationalism can be taken as an instance. Instead of going into investigations of nationalism of countries in terms of the time of the introduction of print, the class sponsoring it, the uses to which it was put, its relation to oral tradition etc, he jumps into a rather soggy conclusion that lacks any detailed scholarship. The same can be said about his interests in a new hermeneutics and the recognition of the role of aesthetics in human action.

The argument that McLuhan's ideas are 'phoenix - like' without any intellectual parentage, is baseless. Ever since the decades of the American Civil War, electricity was pictured as classless. Through rise of productivity, it would spiritualize

labour and erase all divisions fo work, wealth and power. Peter Kropotkin, a geographer, Patrick Geddes, a biologist, and Ebeneezer Howarch, a city-planner, were pioneers in this line of thinking. But it was mainly through Lewis Mumford that the ideas of these scholars and their attitudes towards electricity and technology entered the contemporary American scene.

However, it is interesting to note Mumford's own intellectural evolution - from an optimist heralding the potentials of electrical communication to a bitter prophet of doom. The early Mumford saw in the symbol of electricity promise of a decentralized rural production, communal life in small natural associations that would be economically viable and with the growth of electronics, culturally viable as well. But, later he went to the extent of saying that the neo-technic refinement of the machine, without a co-ordinate development of higher social purposes, has only magnified the possibilities of 'depravity and barbarism.' To explain this phenomenon he has coined the term 'cultural pseudomorph' which occurs when "new forces, activities, institutions, instead of crystallizing independently into their own appropriate forms may creep into the structure of an existing civilization."[24] But even though he argued against capitalism as the fetter for realising the positive potentials of neo-technics, he never tried to locate this in the production relations in particular, and

social relations in general. As a result, his arguments for socialism remained just a plea and nothing more. This is because he shared with Geddes and other American sociologists of science/communications, the intellectual strategy of placing technological change, in a strict sense of the term, at the centre of the growth of civilization. In fact, the central redeeming feature that all commentators on electricity from Kropotkin through Mumford have seen in this technology is that it is decentralizing, destined to break up all concentrations of power -economic, political and social. McLuhan only takes this vision to its phantasmagoric climax.

ROOTS OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN MEDIA SOCIOLOGY

The novelty of McLuhan's arguments helped creating an almost over-night audience for him, but they are a bit too ahistorical even for the American media sociology to imbibe. He is being appropriated, we can say, only through the 'back-door' - that is, certain insights of his are being utilized, while the dominant framework remains the 'personal influence' model. However, in the discussion that follows, we would be looking at the roots of the paradigm as a whole - the search for specific, measurable, short-term, individual 'effects - and not solely at the sources of the specific personal influence theory within it.

If we step back from the Decatur study and its successors to their sociological tenor, we find a whole and interwoven

fabric of ideological predispositions and orientations. We find, in particular, an administrative point of view rooted in academic sociology's ideological assimilation into modern capitalism and its institutional rapproachment with major foundations and corporations in an oligopolistic high-consumption society; we find a corresponding marketing orientation, in which the emphasis on commercially useful audience research flourishes; and we find, curiously, a justifying social democratic ideology. These three are a constellation that arose together, but for the sake of analysis, we are going to treat them seperately.

The Administrative Point of View

As is quite evident, Lazarsfeld poses questions from the vantage of the command-posts of institutions that seek to rationalize and improve their control over social sectors. Those in the command-posts are concerned, in essence, with managing the expansion, stability, and legitimacy of their enterprises, and controlling potential challenges to them and the sociologist, from this point of view, is an expert who in his formulation of problems reflect precisely these concerns. Hence, media sociology's search for models that are predictive, which in the context can mean only those results that can be predicted from, or for, the controllers of the media.

From the administrator's point of view, the structural organization of the media system is not all at issue - it is

the very premise of enquiry. Thus, the administrative theorist (Lazarsfeld's own characterization)[25] is not concerned with the corporate decision to produce radio and television receivers as household commodities rather than public ones, though this fundamental choice has serious consequences for the social uses, power, and meaning of mass media. The administrative theorist is not concerned with the corporate structure of ownership and control, or with the corporate criteria for media content that follow from it: he or she begins with the existing order and considers the effects of a certain use of it.

This desire for harmonious relations among the commanding institutions, within a common hegemonic ideological frame, lies in the administrative theorist's bargaining mentality. The point becomes particularly clear in the following argument of Lazarsfeld:

> "Those of us social scientists who are especially interested in communications research depend upon the industry for much of our data. Actually most publishers and broadcasters have been very generous and cooperative in this recent period during which communications research had developed as a kind of joint enterprise between industries and universities."[26]

In the process, media research becomes coordinating, mediating and stabilizing. It manages external reality as data, and it prefers to work within the main institutions, those which have "the capacity to make the world sit still and become data, or to imagine it that way".[27]

The Marketing Orientation

An administrative mentality is compatible with a range of societies: from totalitarian to liberal. By itself, the administrative mentality cannot also account for the appeal of the search for 'personal influence', or the peculiar stress on narrowly defined behavioural or attitudinal 'effects' in social investigation. We are closer to understanding the dominant media sociology of America when we look to the particular variant of administrative thought that Lazarsfeld brought into communication analysis: the marketing orientation.

It is no secret that mass communictions research decends directly from the development of sophisticated marketing techniques With wonderful brevity, Robert K. Merton has summarized the logical and historical line of descent:

> "The severe competition for advertising among the several mass media and among agencies within each medium has provoked an economic demand for objective measures of size, composition and responses of audiences (of newspapers, magazines, radio and television) in their quest for the largest possible share of the advertising dollar, each mass medium and each agency becomes alerted to possible deficiencies in the audience yardsticks, employed by competitors, thus introducing a considerable pressure for evolving rigorous and objective measures not easily vulnerable to criticism."[28]

With the post - 1945 boom and the full-swing emergence of consumer society, advertising shifted its domain from providing information to meet existing, traditional demands, to glorification of commodities and the manufacture of demands and, more importantly, the demanding consumer. The corporations got caught in a fierce advertising compaigns. They needed a marketing 'science' to tell them what to say, how to say, over which channels, to whom. The queries are of fundamental influence in setting the directions of contemporary mass media research in America. The marketing orintation takes the consumerist frame for granted. The only question it is interested is the 'how' of effect/influence; all other aspects of communications are happily skipped. It is interested in how mass media could increase its reach and how ordinary social life could obstacle their power. It is not interested in the structural and cultural consequences of different models of communication ownerships.

The Ideological Field: Social Democracy

Theorists do not live by theory alone. 'Personal Influence' model alongwith other similar models in contemporary media sociology, is not only concretely founded on the prevailing political and commercial culture, it is also, for the most part, justified by an ideological position: social democracy of the Austro-Marxist variant.

There are several links between the Austrian social democratic ideology and positivist social science. While social democracy was failing in Europe, American capitalism of post-45 was waiting for its service. It provided the ideological fountainhead of a new sociology of administration and marketing. But, to be certain, the affinity between socialist voting and the buying of soap is not only methodological. It is built into corporate capitalist society as well as into Lazarsfeld's theoretical formulations, and into the whole thought-structure of American media research. Media ideology too is implicitly social-democratic, and that is perhaps one reason why certain socialists are alternately repelled by and defensive about mass culture.

The marketing orientation and social democracy share a common conception of 'The people': people are both sovereign and passive. They choose from among the major possibilities available, whether brandnames, occupations or political parties. When the consumers choose, they confirm the legitimacy of the supplies. To put it another way, social democracy would require a marketing orientation, a rigorous procedure for 'giving people what they want.'

But this is not enough. It would also require an administrative point of view, for the choices would be prepared from above. It would be the responsibility of the centralized, hierarchical supplier to know what the consumer wantSand the

process, no doubt, would be labelled as 'democracy'. In this logic, when people do not know what they want, they, therefore, do not mind being guided. The premise is that when people do not know, they do not object to domination: this,is of course, one of the ubiquitous ideological positions through which the American state justifies, preverses and enhances the interests of the multinational corporation.

As Katz and Lazarsfeld tell us in their Acknowledgements, the actual field work in Decatur, Illinois, was organised by none other than C. Wright Mills. In his analysis of data, Mills wrote "not just of 'influence' and 'opinion' but more specifically of 'ideology'.....and relates it to institutional and class structure. Mills finds evidence for the two-step theory of horizontal influence, but he also argues the importance of vertical or 'pyramidal' influence, especially in politics."[29] Mills speculated that the U.S. exists midway between the extreme models of "simple, democratic society" and "mass authoritarian society." Richard Gillham, his biographer, argued that "Mills' draft was actually a blurry document of divided loyalties. He was immensed in the particularities of positivist analysis while trying to pay lip service to a sort of popular radicalism."[30] But Mills did propose a very different framework for the Decatur data. He proposed to read back from the sociometric data on political attitudes to infer a structure of political decision-making; and he proposed the

beginnings of a theory of political communications as the foundation of a theory of American ideology in society. As Mills put it, cautiously: "the chain of political leadership is definitely a vertical affair."[31]

But Mills' alternative did not, however, grasp that postwar America was already moving towards a new form of high-technology corporate capitalism with a corresponding political culture based on consumption, in which bipartisan consensus would prevail and class opposition deflected. Hence, with a few exceptions here and there, the marketing orientation of Paul F. Lazarsfeld was for the moment uncontested and gradually established itself as the normal sociological opinion of the media.

A deeper alternative, both in theory and practice, however, could have begun by noticing the productivity gains that could accrue with 'scientific' organization of work, gains that made possible a consumer society in the first place. This distinct approach could analyse whatever autonomous political culture that can be detected under the surface of the consumer society. It could approach consumer culture as a displacement into the private, individual sphere of impulses against 'unfreedom' jelled into everyday life as both condition and consequence of the absence of a radical political alternative that could speak of prevailing unhappiness.[32]

A counter-paradigm could scrutinize the "culture industry" as both social control and failed, muddled, privatized revolt against the exploitative conditions of work and family in the world of organized capitalism. Empirically, it could then pay attention to the multiplication of means for the engineering of public consent, especially for cold war policies. It could look into the origins of political issues as into the origins of 'political attitudes." It could look at the consequences of mass communictions not only for individuals but for collective formations like social movements.

At the level of theory, it could grasp the compatibility of elitist structures and pluralist procedures in a 'totality' of domination. With a complex methodology including life-histories and participant observation, it could inquire into the degree of actual convergence of consumer choice and political knowing, of 'soap-buying' and voting in the lives of citizens and inquire into the origins of this covergence, rather than taking it methodologically for granted. Beginning with a sense of political structure, a media sociology could work towards what Dave Morley has called an 'ethnography of audiences'[33] showing how distinct class, ethinic, age and other audiences distinctly 'decode' the patterns in media messages over time. In other words, it could work to show a dynamic but determinate media process articulated with the whole of political culture. Most of it remain undone, to be

done. Instead, marketing orientation, alongwith administrative point of view and social democracy as the ideological propping, became media sociology.

We now proceed to examining the key-issues of Marxist understandings of culture and the media.

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CHAPTER-II

CULTURE, THE MEDIA AND IDEOLOGY: QUESTIONS OF DETERMINATION, AUTONOMY AND HEGEMONY IN MARXISM

It may be true that one has to choose between ethics and aesthetics, but it is no less true, whichever one chooses, one will always find the other at the end of the road. For the very definition of the human condition should be in the mise en scene itself.

(GODARD)

MARX ON CULTURE AND IDEOLOGY

The variations and conflicts around the meaning of the term 'culture' are central elements of a long, specifically modern enquiry. The term has been used in two broad senses[1]: one, in its predominantly twentieth century sense to mean artistic, literary and intellectual work in general, and the other, is its more anthropological and sociological use to describe and explain a distinctive 'way of life', including more general and ordinary practice, behaviour and ideas, along with arts and learning. It is precisely the relations between these two meanings of the term that are argued through, behind and beyond it, what in "any local instance may seem intolerably confusing."[2]

Culture has its roots, as Marx argues in The German Ideology, in man's 'double relations': to nature and to other men. From a very early point in the history of human development, man's relation to nature is mediated through society. In fact, one can argue that the adaptation of nature to man's material needs is effected only through the forms which his social collaboration with other men assume. No matter how infinitely complex and extended are the social forms which men have successively developed, the relations of material

reproduction of their existence form the determining instance of other structures. Understanding this relationship between the material-social and the rest of a developed social formation, is perhaps the most crucial, and controversial, element of a materialist theory. The central postulate of Marxist studies, however, remain (or, let us say, should remain) this originating premise of the foundation of culture in human labour and material production.

Marx's 'materialism' adds to this necessary premise atleast one more requirement: that the relationship must be thought within determinate historical conditions; it is historically specific. The much used (and, perhaps, more abused)'base-superstructure'metaphor has to be viewed in this historical specificity, seperate instances has to be worked out seperately, and contradictions analysed in definite and historically specific situations (or, instances). "The fact is .... that definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way enter into these definite social and political relations. Empirical observations must in each seperate instance bring out empirically and without any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production"[3]. (Marx)

The social and material forms of production, the way labour is organised and combined with tools to produce, the level of technical development, the institutions, the types of

civil association, of family life and the state - this ensemble of relations and structures exhibits an identifiable configuration, a pattern, a 'mode of living' for the social individuals and groups within it. The pattern also express how the combined result of this interconnecting levels was 'lived', as a totality, and indicates where and how to look for 'culture'. Thus Marx goes into, not merely the 'what' but also the 'how' of culture as a phenomenon. At the risk of conflating two divergent theoretical discourses, we might remember a point that Roger Poole makes about Levi-Strauss: Instead of asking for the hundredth time "what is'totemism'," he asks for us the first time "How are totemic phenomena arranged?"[4]

As a matter of fact, Marx and Engels rarely use 'culture' as a concept in the simple descriptive sense. They use it dynamically and developmentally - as part and parcel, infact constitutive, of productive force. Human culture is a form of human knowledge, expressed and perfected through social labour, and thus is the basis of every stage in man's productive and historical life. This 'knowledge' is materialised in production, advanced through the development of practice as well as theoretical techniques, and, above all, preserved in and transmitted through language. Hence, culture is the accumulated growth of man's power over (and exploration into) nature, materialised in the instruments and practices

of labour and in the medium of signs, thoughts, knowledge and language through which it is passed on from generation to generation as man's 'second nature'.

* * *

The ideas of Marx we have so far expounded, though generating opposition and hostility in the non-Marxist Schools, have very little scope of opposition within Marxism. There are however, certain streaks in Marx's own writings which, in order to counter certain dominant idealist misgivings, end up by viewing culture as 'secondary' or reflexious of the social-material process. This has to viewed along with Marx's central emphasis on the necessary totality of human activity and the inseperability of human consciousness from 'men's' material life process'. We need elaborating the point to make our argument clear.

Marx in The German Ideology argued:

"We begin with real, active men, and from their real life-process show the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms of human brain also are necessary sublimates of men's material life-processes, which can be empirically established and whcih is bound to material preconditions."[5]

This can be well read-off as a strong form of argument that all human activities, including the 'cultural' and the 'spiritual', have their origins in the whole real conditions of human existence. The argument, in this generality, would be widely accepted. Yet it is obvious that the language of

'reflexes', 'echoes'. 'phantoms' and 'sublimates' carries the implication of a secondary activity, which may be stretched to include 'consciousness' as well.[6] We have, of course, to remember that this was part of the polemic against the assumption that the whole history is determined by ideas. But the counter-emphasis, ironically, is in danger of converting human labour to a specialized and even reified aspect of human totality. This comes out more sharply in the following passage:

"In total contrast to German philiosphy, which descends from heaven to earth, we here ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what man say, imagine, or conceive, not from what has been said, thought, imagined or conceived of men, in order to arrive at men in the flesh.....We begin with real, active men....."[7]

In this way of seeing the problem there is a real danger of seperating human thought, imagination and concepts from "men's material life-process', and indeed of seperating human consciousoness from 'real, active men".

But this emphasis on the priority of the material-social should be viewed along with (and against) other arguments of Marx elsewhere. At this point,let us recall the oft-quoted passage of Marx, where he compares the architect with the best of bees:

".....What distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality.... He not only

effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but also realises a purpose of his own that gives the law to his modus operandi, and to which he must subordinate his will."[8]

In Marx's conception what constitutes the human core is labour. Infact, fundamental to Marx's political perspective is the understanding of the revolution of labour as the achievement of this fully human status, an achievement fettered by the social relations of capitalism. But what also comes out from such formulation of problematic is the emphasis on totality. Actually what Marx wanted to argue was that every 'impressive' system of ideas-religious, metaphysical, legal, political or economic theory - must be placed and replaced in the true social and material context and it is only in this sense that we must not base only on what men 'say, imagine or conceive' but should rather analyse the whole body of activities and conditions within which these ideas and systems are generated. But in trying to correct the received and fundamental error of idealism, Marx caused weakening of his own essential point, in some formulations making intellectual and cultural production appear 'immaterial'. Rather one would argue that if one takes Marx's sense of the total social process, then the external categorical distinction (between 'necessary material' and other forms of activity) will appear as fundamentally undoing. As Raymond Williams argues: "..... just because the necessary material production is human and social, it is cast from the beginning in whole human and social forms: indeed, precisely in those forms which are at root forms of the practical organisation and distribution of interest and energy which we call culture.9

Another aspect of Marx's understanding of culture which deserves attention is the concept of ideology. This is due to the importance it enjoys and the heat and dust that has centred around it in Marxist scholarship. The problem, as Marx initially viewed it, is how to account for the fact that in the realm of ideas, meaning, value, conceptions and consciousness, men can 'experience' themselves in ways which do not fully correspond with their real situation. In short, how can we account for the fact that 'in all ideology' men and their circumstances appear mystified, "upside down as in a camera obscura"? The reason, as Marx argues in The German Ideology, is that these men are "conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these"[10]. It is because men are, as it were, decentred by the determinate conditions under which they live and produce, they depend on circumstances and conditions which are not of their making and in which they enter involuntarily. So ideology results from the basic contradiction that men are both the authors and not the authors of their actions; in other words, man produces the social objective power (social relations and structures) but man, the producer, is controlled by that power, instead of being its conscious master.

An important point about ideology is that it is both true and false; it is neither the pure invention of consciousness which distorts reality, nor the result of an objectively opaque reality which deceives a passive consciousness. The phenomenal

forms are as real as the essence and yet invert the concealed essence. The point needs elaboration.

For Marx, capitalism is the most dynamic and rapidly expanding mode of production so far in human history. One consequence of its dynamic but antagonistic movement is that within its logic, production comes progressively to depend on the increasing socialization and interdependence of labour. But this continuing interdependence of labour in the sphere of production is, at every moment in capitalism, organised through the market. In the market, men's all-sided interdependence, the basis of their 'sociality', is experienced as something alien, "confronting the individual, not as their relation to one another, but as their subordination to relations which subsist independently of them. Thus both 'socialization' of labour and its opposite are true. The market is not 'false' in the sense that, within its limits, it cannot express and embody the full social relationship on which the system ultimately rests. Market relationship under capitalism are at once <u>real</u> and <u>ideological</u>. They are ideological, not because they are a fantasy, but because there is a structural dislocation between what Marx calls the levels of 'real' relations - the essence - and the form of appearance - the phenomenal forms . This distinction (and, also, the relation) between real relations and how they appear is the key for any understanding of ideology. Far from being a homologous

relationship, these two realms are two related but systematically dislocated articulations of capitalist social formations. As Stuart Hall argues: "To understand the role of ideology, we must be able to account for the mechanisms which consistently sustain, in realty, a set of representations which are not so much false to, as a false inflection of, the real relations on which, in fact, they depend."[12]

A final point to note, something which is implied in our discussion, is that ideology refers to distortions of consciousness. Larrain makes this point in detail in his book The Concept of Ideology. Ideology for Marx, he argues, has a particular negative connotation whose specific and connected features are, firstly, that it conceals social contradictions and secondly, that it does it in the interests of the dominant class. Hence, the relation of ideology and non-ideology is not one of simple falsehood and truth. This insight makes the relation between ideational and ideological realms an interesting area to investigate , which Marx, somehow, did not attempt to analyse at any length.

We shall wind up this section focusing on a rather tricky area of Marx's understanding of culture and ideas: the Base-Superstructure pair as an explanatory category, which Marx posits along with another pair of concepts: practice and consciousness. If one tries to locate Marx within the tradition of Enlightenment, one very clearly sees two main

currents of thought - the philosophy of consciousness and the new scientific revolution (both of 17th century origin) - confluencing in Marx, who accepts both but pits one against the other to create a new synthesis which surpasses both, causing a radical break in European thought. From the first tradition Marx drew the idea of active subject but one who is historically concrete, while from the second he derived his concern for material reality but as it is historically made by man. The tension between the two traditions - that reality should not be conceived as a given object which does not include subject's activity (first tradition), and that consiousness is not dependent on reality, being cannot be reduced to thought (second tradition) - remains in Marx all through in some form or the other, though in trying to solve it he comes to some of his best philosophical insights.

This tension is revealed in the way Marx tries to deal with the concept of ideology within a double perspective - first, relation between practice and consciousness and second, between base and superstructure. The logic and consquences of a practice are not exactly the same. While the former relates consciousness to a practice which produces primarily but not exclusively the economic relations, the latter conveys an image of consciousness related to a separate economic structure. The two connot be taken seperately. Without the former, the latter becomes a mere theory of reflection, while without the latter, the former becomes undermined, like 'freewill'. Marx, however, shifted from one polarity to the other without much analysis

and this has contributed to confusions and conflicting interpretations, as we shall see in course of our discussion.

CHRISTOPHER CAUDWELL :MARXISM, ART AND THE MEDIA

Caudwell's career as a serious Marxist writer is remarkable in two ways - it is brief in span (just about two years) and prodigious in output. It spreads in subjects as diverse as physics, history, psychology, religion and, particularly, culture. Unlike mechanical Marxist writers, Caudwell approaches art neither as primarily a reflection of historical reality nor as a mere vehicle for expressing the author's class perspective. Rather,for Caudwell art is primarily an instrument for social production. For him, as for Marx, it is the act of social production that differentiates man from animal. Science, while serving the same end, operaters more on the realm of cognition. Poetry is at the other end operating directly on emotion. Novel in its more literal representation of social relations contains more of the reflective cognitive or, as Caudwell puts it, 'referential' element. Yet in each case, art serves ultimately to direct the participant's subjective life towards social production. Hence art, Caudwell argues, can be a powerful instrument in encouraging social cooperation, social production.

Caudwell recognises that in a class society all art is class art or the life experiences of people and their interests are class specific. For Caudwell, art which encourages cooperation in the revolutionary class in any era is progressive art, the only art that can free people("Freedom is

the Consciousness of necessity" he reminds us through Hegel).[65] Art that is rooted in the perspective of dying class cannot reflect necessity accurately because such a recognition would invalidate that class's position. Caudwell observes that artists of the late capitalist period who retain view of the now dying class, the bourgeoisie, do suffer intensely because of their false consciousness. At once, they rebel against the alienating and dehumanising effects of capitalism (art is by nature humanistic) yet seek only individualistic retreats from society.

The question that automatically arises is: where is the 'good' art of the present? This is a sticky question for Caudwell, one which he does not answer to any satisfaction. For while he recognises that only proletarian art now can be liberating art and theoretically accords art an important role in social change, he hardly discusses progressive tendencies in the existing art that the proletariat is involved in. Rather he seems to despair its capacity as good, effective art until the revolution has already been won.

Caudwell categorizes most contemporary art as 'high' and 'low' brow art, where bourgeois art is refined and artistic(high brow) and proletarian art is escapist and trashy. 'High' brow art is more sensitive to thought and feeling, and technically innovative and so offers something worth saving for socialism.

It is in the passage describing the characteristics of 'low brow' art that Caudwell makes one of his few references to film, and particularly to popular films: "Mass-production of art enforces a dead level of mediocrity.....art's role is now that of adapting the multitude to the dead mechanical existence of capitalist production, in which work sucks them of their vital energies without awakening their instincts, where leisure becomes a time to deaden the mind with the easy phantasy of films.....'Low-brow' proletarian art grows on the proletariat's unfreedom and helps by its message of the starved revolting instincts to maintain that unfreedom in being. Because it is mere message, because it helps to maintain man in unfreedom and not to express his spontaneous creation, because of that, it is bad art".[13]

Mass art, Caudwell argues, characteristically reproduces alienation and false consciousness by providing only escape. Presumably Caudwell would include with the 'easy phantasy' of the opiate films (the detective, cowboy, and sentimental films of the 40s and 50s) the more recent cult of violence films. Seemingly he would gravi-tate towards 'high brow' bourgeois films rather than 'low brow' ones. Of course, he would not find 'high' brow films wholly acceptable, even as he finds the vision embodied in bourgeois literature ('high brow') deeply flawed by bourgeois illusion. In the passage quoted above, it would seen that Caudwell is contradicting his

general theory of art outlined earlier, as he speaks of 'high brow' bourgeois films growing on the 'freedom' of the bourgeoisie. Here, however, we should interpret freedom as the bourgeois illusion of freedom,(a consciousness fostered by their wealth and power)that individual retreat is possible. Thus we would extrapolate that Caudwell does not see 'high brow' art films of today as liberating films.

Even as Caudwell criticises writers such as Joyce and Eliot for their individualistic and idealistic perspective, so he would undoubtedly find films of Bergman - like 'Cries and Whispers' and 'Scenes From a Marriage' - a reaffirmation of the bourgeois vision of the temporality in contact and commitment among humans. Anna's isolation in 'Cries and Whispers' from heterosexual relationships and possibly her religiosity rather than her proletarian history are the only reasons offered for her emotional responsiveness. Likewise,the difficulties in communication between husband and wife in 'Scenes.....' are presented as aspects of male and female patterns of behaviour rather than a consequence of petty bouergeois alienation that would encourage the development of such patterns. Caudwell would undoubtedly find in such filmmakers as Bergman another example of the bourgeois artist who recognises the ossification and alienation of the society yet who is not able to recognise the transforming power lying dormant in the proletariat.

But Caudwell's preference for 'high brow' over 'low brow' films is not politically acceptable. His belief that these categories would enhance a revolutionary understanding of art is clearly false. Also, Caudwell is too easy on the degeneracy of the bourgeoisie and too elitist in his idea of what appeals to proletarian taste.

Caudwell's more original and positive contribution to Marxist theory of films, however, lies elsewhere : in his theoretical comments on some basic generic features of the film. He already perceived in his time that, like the drama, the film as a 'starring vehicle' would remain with capitalism. Yet Caudwell makes an important distinction between the drama and the film in this respect. Drama and film, like the novel, are symbolic forms, referential in nature - unlike music and poetry, which have a non-symbolic dimension in the sense they encourage us to remain more within the medium. Drama and film, on the other hand, tend to refer us immediately out towards the world of external social relations. However, in drama, Caudwell argues, a tension appears between the non-symbolic and the symbolic as the human actor or dancer keeps us riveted on himself/herself. Such a tension can be successfully overcome only in films where 'the mechanical flexibility of the camera makes the cast wax in a good producers(directors) hands'.[14] The egoism of the actor and actresses, their tendency to emphasise the non-symbolic side, can be more easily contained

by the director moving the camera from static close-up to other characters to larger events. (A classic example would be the films of Sergi Eizenstein). Such flexibility, such ability to restrain individualism means that film is a more appropriate form for collective experience. Infact, Caudwell feels the films potentiality as a form can only be fully realised when it is freed from the 'star system', epitomising the fragmentation and individualism of our society. This does not mean that individuality would cease to exist in a collective society. Rather, "individuality can be given more elaborate and deeper meaning" because it will be a collective meaning.[15]

DEBATES WITHIN THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL: T.W. Adorno's Antonomy of Art and Walter Benjamin's Marxist Hermeneutics.

Although concern over the effects of mass cultures dates practically from its beginning in Europe over 150 years ago, only recently has it become the subject of widespread debate. Between two world wars,culture critics like T.S. Eliot, F.R. Leavis and Ortega Y. Gasset took up the century old concern of the dangers of cultural democratisation but were generally isolated figures. In the 30s, American sociologists Herbert Blumber and Robert Parks of the Chicago School,conducted the first empirical studies of mass culture. But it was not until the 40s and the 50s after a group of German immigrants(associated with Frankfurt Institute), with horrors

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of fascism fresh in mind, produced an analysis relating to mass society and ultimately totalitarianism, that the debate on popular culture became commonplace in academic circles particularly in America.

If culture-critics like T.S. Eliot and F.R. Leavis were locked up in an elitist protest against the mass media, viewing them as the primary source of evil of modern age, the Frankfurt marxists' concern was how the mass media was deradicalizing the revolutionary class. Ideology becomes of crucial importance as a category and mass society gets characterised as "a relatively comfortable, half-welfare and half-garrison society in which the population grows passive, indifferent and atomised, in which traditional loyalities, ties and association become lax or dissolve completely,.....and in which man becomes a consumer, himself mass produced like the products, diversions and values which he absorbs".[16] Traditional centres of authority such as the family become less significant as socializing agencies and "individuals are related to one another only by way of their relation to common authority, especially the state".[17] The manufacture of opinion by the centralised mass media creates and strengthens these tendencies. Culture gets increasingly reified, the objects of man's labour and activity are transformed into independent, autonomous forces seemingly beyond human control.

The Frankfurt theorists strongly pleaded for autonomy of culture. They held that culture had never been merely ideological, or false consciousness, but rather in its complex

mediations preserved an autonomy from the base level of production. The Institutes' aesthetic theory is captured by Horkheimer's statement: "art, since it became autonomous, had preserved the utopia which evaporated from religion."[18] According to Horkheimer and Adorno, culture has been a critical force as long as it provided "utopian" alternatives to existing society. However, with the advent of mass culture in modern times, art threatened to degenerate into a mere reproduction of economic base. Adorno called the mass cultural institutions "culture industry" and argued that this was an aspect of the dialectic of enlightenment in which technical rationality has become the "rationality of domination".

By returning to the Hegelian roots of Marxism, the Frankfurt theorists attempted to recuperate the dialectical mode of thought which the Marxists of Second International had displaced by emphasising on economic determination and the inevitability of historical laws. In his essay "Materialism and Metaphysics", Horkheimer argues that Marxism is no monistic metaphysics based on the ontological primacy of the nature. He criticises the objectivist tendency in Marxism for eliding the role of consciousness and subjectivity in dialectics. In contrast to the copy theory of perception of vulgar Marxism, Horkheimer stressed the active role of cognition. He claimed that both Hegelian metaphysics and vulgar Marxism vitiated the dialectics by presuming an identity theory - the belief that

"an ultimate oneness of subject and object, essence and appearance, particular and universal underlies the contradictions of the apparent world".[19] Horkheimer emphasised the necessary non-identity, mediations between subject and object. Without such mediations there would be an over-emphasis on one of the elements of totality, a fallacy he termed 'fetishism'.

Adorno argued that the spread of technology served the culture industry, resulting in a sweeping transformation in the conditions of production and distribution of culture. This permitted the wholesale 'standardization', apparent in the culture industry's promulgation of hit songs, creation of singing and movie stars, and reliance on a series of invariant types, slogans and repetitive formulas. The content of mass culture tended to be interchangeable, art being subject to a positivistic form of circulation and planning. Adorno noted that standardisation had as its complement the technique of endowing mass produced commodities an illusory aura of individuality which he called "pseudo-individualisation": "while standardisation of song hits keeps the consumer in line doing their thinking for them, as it were, pseudo-individuation, for its part, keeps them in line by making them forget that what they listen to is wholly intended for them or predigested".[20]

Adorno points out that in traditional societies governed by the notion of cyclical time the dominant aesthetic category was that of beauty. In modern societies, however, where the flow of life has been all but reduced to a series of minutely subdivided instances, the dominant category of aesthetics has become that of dissonance. This is in response to the rationalised fabric of social life and all serious thought about art must take this fact as a point of departure. True art of today is dissonant art, faithful to the present day capacity for lived experience - a "fundamental incapacity", as Adorno calls it. Dissonant art, he argues, treats society as its adversary and maintains a social distance from the "utilitarian mill of social life". Hence, kernel of modernism is its 'radical autonomy'. In consequence of its growing need for autonomy, modern art increasingly takes leave of a mimetic, realistic approach to the representation of reality - the approach paradigmatic for the early Lukacs' so - called 'integrated civilization'[21] in favour of a more 'spiritualized, expressionist orientation'. It is in this spirit that Adorno wrote: "It has become self-evident that what concerns art is no longer self-evident, neither in relation to itself, not in relation to the whole-not even in relation to its right to exist".[22] As such, Adorno's attempt is to indicate modernism, to authenticate its 'right to exist' from a historico-philosophical point of view, however

precarious that right might be in contrast to the grandeur of classical works of art.

The expression 'autonomous art' served to distinguish the relationship of modernism with the social matrix from which it emanated vis-a-vis the more integrated relation of traditional works of art. As Benjamin demonstrates in his poineering essay, "The work of art in An Age of Mechanical Reproduction", until quite recently the production of works of art has been tied to a cultic function. Cave drawings (Megic), Homer's Illiad (myth) and medieval Christian paintings (religion) illustrate the succession of cultic guises art assumes in course of the historic march of 'disenchantment'[23] Adorno argues that the process of art's coming to self-consiousness of autonomy is vigorously renewed in the 19th century with romanticism and l'art pour l'art Viewed from a socio-cultural perspective, both movements originate in rebellion against the increasingly unspiritual prosaic nature of life under capitalism in its entrepreneurial phase. Hence, the artistic consciousness seeks refuge in the "sovereign, subjective power of the creative spirit, in the affirmative preserve of culture where the positive values that are repulsed in reality itself can be realised, albeit in sublimated form."[24]

This shift in the dominant category of aesthetics-from beauty to dissonance - Adorno calls 'deaestheticization' which is decisive for modernism and endows the concept of 'ugliness' a central position. By making ugliness thematic, modernism emphasizes its solidarity with the oppressed, the non-identical. Modernism thus leads to a tremendous democratization of the subject-matter and also an important extension of the boundaries of the permissible in art. In historico-philosophical terms, Adornos interprets modernisms' thematicization of ugliness as a reaction against the 'dialectic of enlightenment',[25] the logic of civilization. To Adorno, enlightenment is synonomous with the principle of rational control. According to his philosophy of social evolution, the dialectic of enlightenment signifies the 'progression' from domination of nature to the domination of men. Adorno describes the process in the following words:

"For once the subject comes to perceive itself as absolute and its other, nature, as a pure stuff of domination, this logic ultimately has its revenge on the subject, which forgets that the other is a moment internal to it, ie., man, too, is part of nature and is consequently victimized by his own ruthless apparatus of control."[26]

The aesthetics of ugliness, therefore, reminds civilization of the stage of development prior to the rational individuation of the species in the face of primordial nature,

the stage of undifferentiated unity of man and nature. Hence, for Adorno, the function of genuine art lies in the role it plays in the 'historical rememberance of accumulated sufferings'[27]:

In a better age, it would be preferable that art disappear, than that it forget the suffering that is its expression and from which it draws its substance.

* * *

Some important criticisms of Adorno's aesthetics have been formulated by Lucien Goldmann[29] to which we can refer. Both Goldmann and Adorno are in agreement in their receptiveness to the phenomenon of modernism, to the socially critical function of its necessarily fragmented and problematic character. This can be seen as a contrast to Lukac's dismissal of avant gardism and his defense of the principle of artistic realism as ideologically 'correct' alternative.[30] Yet for Goldmann, it is essential that the fragment itself ultimately develop into something more positive and concrete, the idea of the philosophical system: "There is a word which Adorno has not used - system - and this is the whole differnece between us".[31] Goldmann, on the basis of his Marxist world- view, adheres to the conviction that reality can be fully grasped in systematic terms,[32] an idea Adorno long abandoned as a methodological delusion to which "dialectical materialism falls victin by virtue of its Hegelian origin".

The real difference between the two thinkers are, however, to be found in their contrasting assumptions as to which form. 'systematic' of 'critical', the philosophical reception of works of art should take at present. For Goldmann, it is important that the philosophical articulation of the truth content of works of art be other than an isolated, merely critical insight, Instead, it should develop into the idea of a philosophical system: "The work of art is a total universe, which gives value, takes a position, describes and affirms the existence of certain things; when translated its corollary is a philosophical system". It is ultimately the correctness of the Marxist world view, Goldmann argues, that facilitates this process of 'translation: Consequently, for him, the essential task of literary criticism consists in setting forth the correspondences that exist between two complementary totalities: work of art, on one hand, and the Marxist system or world view, on the other. The socially critical elements of authentic works of art can be shown to intersect with the Marxist world view once they are 'translated' by the process of criticism. Goldmann attempts to show how the contradictions and tensions in authentic art ultimately coincide with the aspirations of a collective subject . For example, in reference to Hidden God, he remarks: "I explain Recine by Jansenism, by Jansenism as a structure" He argues for the importance of what he refers to

as a proper balance between moments of 'dogmatism' and 'criticism' in philosophy. "Whereas dogmatism prematurely assents the identify of the 'rational' and the 'real', emphasizing the moment of positivity, criticism discounts from the outset the possibility of qualitative change, and allows all substance to evaporate before the Medusa-like gaze of the negative."[33] If, to Goldmann, Lukacs parsonified the former trend, Adorno definitely represents the latter.

The limitations of Adorno's theory are manifested in his notion of art as a form of negation. As mentioned previously, the chief metaphysical assumption of critical theory was its rejection of identity theory - its refusal to seek facile or premature recorciliations to existing contradictions. According to Adorno, a successful work of art "is not one which resolves objective contradictions in a spurious harmony negatively by embodying the contradictions pure and uncompromised, in its innermost structure'[34] He steadfastly refused to endorse substantive representations in art. Until social contradictions are resolved, positive meanings must be suspended.

However, by attempting to avoid any form of ideological entrapment, Adorno's theory of negation degenerates into an idealistic aesthetics. According to Adorno, art must reject all socially determined communication which he equates with consumer manipulation and regression. Art can only resist

false consciousness imposed by culture industry by declaring its autonomy from all discursive practice, meaning and communication.

Instead of being an instrument of changing conciousness, Adorno conceives of art as a monad foregoing any communication with the audience. The creation of an oppositional mass art thus must await the negation of capitalism, without playing an active role in its demise. Again, Adorno believed that the culture industry has so implicated the masses in false consciousness that any form of revolutionary praxis is utopian. Thus his analysis enters in a vicious circle.

If, Adorno hails art as form of negation, Benjamin's faith is in engaged art. In his now-famous essay, "The Work of Art in The Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Benjamin explores the interrelationship of art and the history of technological development under capitalism. He deals specially with film as he consideres it the specific art form of modern times. Films (alongwith newspapers, photography and records) are all form of mass communications, made possible by the advent of mechanical reproduction. The mode of artistic production and communication in a given era is determined in large part by the level of technical development at the time. At the same time, the mode of production and communication plays a large role in determining the relation between working class and bourgeois society.

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Benjamin understood and appreciated the potential democratization of communication media in mechanical reproduction. Mechanical reproduction makes possible the involvement of the masses in culture and politics. Benjamin analyses how mechanical reproduction destroy the uniquenses of the work of art, the authenticity and 'aura' as he labelled it. If the mystique of the 'original' is broken down, if the work of art is torn from the "fabric of tradition", of which it was a part, then it loses its false importance - the "parasitical dependence on ritual" goes. Instead of being based on ritual, work of art begin to be 'based on another practice - politics"[36] The theologizing of art, art for art's/political practice of our time. When the distance (mystification)/between artist and society is lessened, then the false distinction between social roles, and educator is negleted. Benjamin explains:

"By absolute emphasis on its exhibition value the work of art becomes a creation with entirely new functions, among which the one we are conscious of, the artistic function, later may be recognised as incidental.[37]

In Adorno's theory of art and the mass media, the attempt to link culture, mode of production and social relations of production is conspicuously missing. Culture is viewed in independent, autonomous terms and analysed in ahistoric and idealistic categories. As Swingewood argues: "Culture is not a neutral

80 category; it is historical, specific and ideological. The issues here is both the concept and method of analysis: culture does not exist apart from its specific determinations in a social formation: culture develops in and through the many levals, or structures, of a society, which form the totality of social relations and practices. An idealist, non-historical and abstract concept of culture will tend.....towards an uncritical idealisation of the past."[38]

In her critique of Adorno's theory of film Diane Waldmann[39] notes that Adorno's belief that film is inherently conservative rests on an ahistorical ontology of the film medium, a belief that it is the essential nature of film to duplicate and reinforce reality. As she argues, films scale from the extremely abstract to the conventionally naturalistic. Although the dominant Hollywood aesthetic has been preminently naturalistic, it is not inherent to the medium, The films of Russian Moutage School of the 20's led by Sergi Eisenstein, as well as German Expressionist, silent films and surrealist films like Bunuel's Un Chien Andapou are examples of non-naturalistic aesthetics. Also one should not forget the avant garde directors of The New Wave (France and Italy), their attempt to disrupt filmic naturalism by using devices which could distance the spectator from filmic representation.

Benjamin agreed with Adorno and other Frankfurt members that artist best served the protetariat by developing the revolutionary potenials within their own division of labour. Solidarity with the protetariat was most authentically expressed as a producer, not as an 'ideological patron'.[40] But Bengamin believed, and here he differed with Adorno most sorely, that in today's world revolutionary potential of artistic production centred on its tehnical industrialization. Bertolt Bretcht was in essential agreement with this thesis, only with a qualification. He thought the argument that the "attainment of technical progress in literature eventually changes the function of art forms and is therefore a criterion for judging the revolutionary function of literary works - applies to artists of only one type, the writers of the upper bourgeoisie, among whom he counts himself".[41] For such a writer", he said, "there really exists a point of similarity with the interests of the protetariat: it is the point at which he can develop his own means of production."[42].

It would be naive to belive that Banjamin was myopic in his understanding of the fetters that capitalism imposes on the realization of the socialist potentials of mechanical reproduction of art works. Benjamin argued that this development is checked back by capitalist relations, as in the case of socialization of labour in general. It is this parallel in their objective situation which would eventually cause artists as "technicians to see as their task, the liberation of their own means of production, and thereby desert their class

and confirm very soberly their solidarity with the proletariat."[43] Meanwhile, the distortions of class society left the artist within the existing present with two alternatives: playing to bourgeois needs, or adopting an avant garde, l'art pour l'art position scornful of the masses. Without a social revolution the actuality of their common interests could never be realised. But Benjanin did believe, and here he differed vehemently with Adorno, that art has the power to intervene, and in the process reconstitutes itself, in the struggle for the enancipation of the protetariat. The relationship of material reality to aesthetic experession in one of mutual demystification. Benjamin saw that it is not enough, for example, simply to make people aware of human misery: photography can 'make human misery an object of consumption" and can even turn "The struggle against misery into an object of consumption".[44] "What we must demand from photographer" he wrote, "is the ability to put such a caption beneath his picture as will rescue it from the ranges of modishness and confer upon it a revolutionary use value."[45]

For Benjanin's sociology of cultures a major problem was the mode of inheritance of culture objects. If, as Marx argued, the ruling ideas have always been those of the ruling class and hence conspire against the oppressed as ideology, what must be the position of the historical materialist in evaluating and interpreting the cultural 'treasures' which makes up the intellectual inheritance?

"For without exception the cultural treasures one surveys have an origin which one cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents of those who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from owner to owner."[46]

The utopian dreams of humanity, about which Marx talked, were expressed precisely in those cultural "treasures' which were in the hands of the oppressors. And here was the crux of the problem, for which Marx does not have a satisfactory answer. Benjamin wrote: "It is well known that Marx nowhere really divulged how the relationship between superstructure and infrastructure should be conceived in individual cases."[47] Benjamin believed that cultural history, fare from being a superstructural study of secondary importance, stood at the centre of class education.The revolutionary goal was nothing les than a Messianic break with the past: the "liberation of mankind"

Throughout his life, Benjamin was groping for a consistent theory of materialist education which would make posible this rearticultion of culture from ideology into a revolutionary tool. To understand and plead for this revolutionary transformation of cultural 'commodities', he coined the term 'dialectical images'. The procudure had two

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stages. The first was destructive. The bourgeois historical and cultural apparatus which preserved cultural objects from oblivion, did so at the cost of revolutionary use value. Just as political revolution demanded the smashing of the bourgeois state apparatus, so too this cultural appartus has to be smashed. His particular attack was on the bourgeois structuring of history as a continuum, which he thought needs to be "blown apart by dialectics"[49] The historical materialist "stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary"[49] But not only this. Benjamin spells out his vision thus:

"The destructuve moment of the diatectic, leaving none of the cultural apparatus untouched, was to violate all the structuring binaries by which bourgeois culture has been valorised". The distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture was meaningless for revolutionary interpretation, but both could be redeemed. Similarly, that the whole problem of "popularization of knowledge", Benjamin claimed, "could not be solved as long as the object of educational work was thought to be public, instead of the class."[50]

So, Benjanin's revolutionary pedagogy, as it boils down, holds that Marxist political economy cannot, by itself, inspire an adequate break with capitalist consicousness because it did not challenge the ideological potency of cultural codes based upon servitude and misery. Revolutionary awareness requires

contestation of spurious continuity of ruling cultural traditions, attentiveness to the messages of resistance to be discovered to the past and affirmation of the "possibility of happiness concealed within even the most reified celebrations of the present"[51] Together, these processes of destruction and rediscovery, they constitute the two stages of 'dialectical image'.

Dialectical image should 'short-circuit' bourgeois historical-literary apparatus and make direct connection to 'discontinuous tradition' If all historical continuity, Benjamin argued, is that of 'oppressors', this tradition must be composed of moments of revolt against it. The Threads may have been lost for centuries. "The pattern formed when the present recognised the past in a revolutionary sense as its own concern, did not fuse together into a coherent whole."[52] Historicism also interprets the past in the light of the present, but the present as given rather than a revolutionary one, which robs historical practice of politics. Benjamin's own study of the Parsian Archades perhaps represents the best example of 'dialectical image', where the critique of commodity fetishism is to be accompanied by a concern to salvage the hedonistic impulse beneath the wrecked dreams of a seamy bourgeois spectacle. Elegant centres of bourgeois life, those arcades provided Benjamin with an extraordinary historical stage, "an allegorical representation of the origins of the present".[55] Along with this, Benjamin, in the Arcades project, was re-ordering his own experience of Berlin as child

and youth. He went for the most out-of-way objects, waking them up from the dead to illuminate what meaning each of these artefacts contain in terms of his own thesis of history. Though the archades were open to rich and poor, the way one experienced the space was roughly class-determind. Benjamins investigation into the design of the arcadia are rich in semiotic value. His 'readings', if we may say so, are heavily against the perspective of historical causality where the dialectic is seen as a chronological sequence of action and reflection. Direct linear causality, Benjamin argues, is part of a bourgeois cognitive apparatus that should be smashed. There exists in his writings the rudiments of a cognitive theory with profound implication for the theory-praxis problematic.

Benjamin argued. that the spontaneous creativity of children's play provides insights into this problematic. He found in child's consciousness the unsevered connection between perception and action which distinguished revolutionary consciouosness in adults. This consciousness is not causal in the behaviouristic sense of a stimulus-response reaction. It was mimetic, involving the ability to make correspondences by means of spontaneous fantasy. Benjamin argues the mimetic faculty does not have to stop with childhood. The problem was that in bourgeois culture it had been relegated to the realm of the aesthetic devoid of revolutionary praxis. He suggests that the development of mimetic cognition had not been a constant

inhistory' "Rather, we may suppose that the gift of producing similarities - for example in dances whose oldest function this was - and therefore also the gift of recognizing them, have changed with historical development."[54]

Film (and camera) represents the climax of mimetic potential and also a radical break. With this technique of representation, less magical, more scientific form of the mimetic faculty was made possible. Benjamin comments that the mimetic power of film enabled a reflexive science of gestures, rather than magical duplication of reality. The camera 'penetrates into' the subject. The darker side of technical mediation of experience, which Benjamin calls 'industrialisation of perception', made this new mimetic science possible as well as imperative. Benjamin argued that if industrial society has resulted in the fragmentation of experience, it had also provided the means of piecing it back in an altogether new way: one which, while remaining in the world of appearances, allows its expression in a critical, self-reflexive language. Such arguments are typically Benjamin's and encapsulates his difference with other members of the Frankfurt School, particularly Adorno. Throughout, Benjamin is emphasziing a dual process: destructive, one which blows apart the conventional codes of meaning and transcreative, one which puts together these blown-apart codes in a manner that imbues them with a new revolutionary meaning.

In his search for transcreated meanings, Benjamin follows a basically Marxist line because throughout he was trying to base his analysis on the ontological primacy of human labour-the development of technology.

It is in this spirit that Benjamin appreciates the principle of 'montage', where perception in the form of shocks was established as a formal device/principle" "Discontinuous images superseded one another in continuous series. In mimetic cognition the subject appreciated the object by becoming like it in a way that dialectically, imbued the object with subjectivity. Benjamin was suggesting that on the collective level it was possible to employ the mimetic capacity as a defence against industrialisation of perception, and as a means towards reappropriation of the subjectivity which had been alienated by the process. "When the subjective experience of the collective was mimicked in the gesture of a particular subject, it became the object of conscious awareness - self-awareness - for the others." [55] In this case, subjectivity becomes the object for other subjects. Thus, in Benjamin's attempts in what he calls "placing the image straight" from a historical materialist point of view, he also pioneered a new science - Marxist heremeneutics-about which we will be having occasion to discuss in some more detail in our next chapter.

We now turn our focus on a major debate of contemporary Marxism. This hinges on epistemological questions centring the categories of 'structure' and 'experience'.

FOCUS ON STRUCTURE AND EXPERIENCE: DEBATES ON METHOD

The concern with culture/ideology/consciousness has been a marked feature of intellectual work and politics in most western countries since the later 1950's. These movements were diverse and belong to histories that are distinct. But they have features in common and it is within and between them that contemporary Marxist debates on culture are centred. One might list two central tendencies in the analysis of culture: Raymond Williams' literary and cultural criticism (which he calls, 'Cultural Materialism', something we are going to discuss extensively in our next section) and E.P.Thompson's Socialist-Humanist history, on one hand, and the theories of ideology, science and epistemology associated with French structuralist Marxism, central to which is, of course, Louis Althusser, on the other. The dialogue got more complex and varied as Europe rediscovered the work of second-generation Marxist theorists, notably Lukacs and Gramsci, both of whom were thought, rightly enough, to have much to say on cultural/ideological questions.

These questions became most urgent within Marxism, partly because they were so plainly neglected before, with disastrous consequences. But in the heartlands of conventional sociology,

there was plenteous 'revolts' taking place. The revival of phenomenological philosophy in Europe is a case in point. This is only matched by transatlantic sociologies which were concerned, almost exclusively, with the processes of making sense of the social world, or even with its inter-subjective construction. A similar tendency can be seen in various sub-sociologies. A basic parallel between these intellectual currents and the newer forms of oppositional politics of the 60's - the 'new left', the student movement, Women's Liberation, etc. - can be drawn: both focused, in different manners, the inwardness of experience and understanding of the world in opposition to reductionism and determinism of dominant sociology and Marxism.

This transition (or, change in focus) took place in different ways in different countries. In Britain, where these debates generated perhaps the maximum interest, it can be clearly divided into phases. We might call the first the moment of 'culture'. Those who pioneered this phase are Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart (breaking away from 'elitism' of literary notions of 'culture') and also socialist historians like E.P.Thompson, E.J.Hobsbawm and the later Christopher Hill, where the orthodox marxist - leninist concerns of mode of production and long-range economic transition (a trend represented by Maurice Dobb) were softened down in favour of class and cultural issues, attitudes and

forms of spontaneous protests, primitive rebels, post - 1850 protetariat, etc. But very soon works on 'culture' and history in this tradition had to face the challenge that occured primarily because of systematic importation of books/ideas, particularly those of Althusser.

The moment of culture was a time of great creativity, but it was followed by another, quite different, kind of intellectual explosion. We may call this second phase, moment of Theory, which was partly effected by the establishment of a kind of common market in Marxist ideas, promoted by the newer editions of New Left Review. The whole NLR endeavour helped transform the nature of Marxist discussion is advanced capitalist countries, particularly in Britain.

Both these moments have a particular aspect in common which needs being spelt out: both tendencies take as central the analysis of culture/ideology and pose a challenge to 'economism' of all varieties. But the antagonisms between them are also real ones. The moment of 'culture' is quite English in very many senses (through later it tries to accommodate a re-worked Gramsci). The other tendency is basically French: The streams include the linguistics of Saussure, anthropology of Levi-Strauss, the epistemological concerns of traditional French philosophy, Lacan's adaptation of Freud, and, of course, the 'philosophical' reading of Marx of Capital by Althusser. Here also Gramsci was appropriated, but from a totally

different perspective and emphasis. We are going to discuss the two tendencies in separate sections, first section focusing on Althusser and the other on Raymond Williams. Finally, we plan to go into a comparative assessment with a view to advancing the debate.

Louis Althusser: Questions of Autonomy and Ideology of Culture

Marxist Structuralism sets as its task to free the concept of ideology from the notion of 'pure speculation' or false consciousness. In its debate against 'historicism', which emphasises the role of the subject-class and of consciousness in the origin of ideology, 'structuralism' holds that ideology has a material base/existence, which determines the subject.

Althusser calls the 'humanist-historicist' Marxism 'Hegelian,' because though society is seen as full of contradictions, mediations and dialectical movements, the social formation is, ultimately, reducible to simple structure, with 'one principle of internal unity', which 'unrolls' through all the levels. Althusser calls this 'expressive totality', because levels of social formations analyses are 'expressive'/ reflexive objectifications of a single contradiction of the base.

As against this, Althusser argues that we must understand a social formation as an ever pre-given structured complex

"whole."[56] There is "no simple essence, underlying or pre-dating this structured complexity, to which any single practice - e.g. the production of ideology - can be effectively reduced."[57] Althusser agrees that the principle of determinacy is fundamental to any materialist theory but argues that this determinacy must be thought, not as a simple determination of one level (i.e. the economic) over the others, but as a structured sum of the different determinations, the structure of their overall effects. He calls this double way of conceiving the 'relative autonomy' of practices and their 'determination in the last instance', over-determination.

The social position of the subject is not the origin of its ideological position - ideology has conditions of existence which can not be 'read off' from the place of the subject in the relations of production. Marx's condition to his/her existence cannot be manifest to him/her and consequently, he/she lives his/her relation to these conditions in an imaginary mode. Ideology is a representation of this imaginary modality by which man lives his/her relation to the totality of the conditions of existence and thus gets constituted. To Althusser, ideology has no history. Comparable to Freud, Althusser speaks of ideology as a new form of specific unconscious called conscious. Like Freud's unconscious, Althusser also posits eternity to ideology.

The question that immediately comes to mind is how the skills of labour power, and labour power itself, are reproduced in capitalist society. Althusser tries to solve this problem by arguing that this reproduction can only occur "in the forms and under the forms of ideological subjection"[58] Althusser distinguishes between the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). While the former operates through coercive means and secures the political conditions for the functioning of the latter, it is in ISA that ruling ideology is structured, concentrated and fought out. Althusser has put special emphasis on the educational apparatus, which he thought was the most important sector of ISA in advanced capitalism. Along with ISA, Althusser also elaborated his understanding of the formation of subject through the mechanism of 'interpellation'[59]

The main charge against Althusser is that his understanding of ideology hinges heavily on fuctionalism. Given the generality of his analysis, the reproduction of relations of production (and the apparatuses assigned to perform this function) can only occur within a functional 'fit'. For a general answer to the question Althusser poses: "How is it possible for capitalist social relations to exist?", functionalism seems inevitable. The ISA, conceived as a means to the fulfillment of a functional end, has no determinate effect on the form for which it is functional. It merely

performs the function of maintenance or reproduction. Related to the functionalism of Althusser's understanding of the ideological apparatus is his 'economism' in his conception of the economy. It is economistic because it generates and determines its own conditions of existence.

In a Post-Scriptum to his article on ISA, Althussar half-heartedly recognizes the functional character of his analysis. As a remedy, he introduces point of view of class struggle into his paradigm. Yet it only remains a foreign element to the general mechanism of ideology constituted outside its influence. Althusser argues that the ISA as a mechanism to perform the function of reproduction depend for their realization on class struggle. Thus a general functional mechanism (abstract) is modified in its effect by the 'concrete'. But as Paul Hirst[60] argues, the 'concrete' conditions and the general mechanism are merely brought together, without any attempt to relate them theoretically. Larrain has correctly suggested: "To avoid a dualism Althusser should do away with the theory of ideology in general, not merely supplement it.....In Marx's terms, the theory of ideology in general is an ideological Theory."[61]

Althusser rejects, in a correct opposition to humanism and historicism, the notion of constitutive subject and puts forth the idea of the constitution of the subject by ideology. But in his own functionalapparatus, subjects are reduced to

effects, not essence. Althusser recues the subject from being hypostatized as in the humanist tradition, but hypostatizes ideology itself.

Raymond Williams and Cultural Materialism

When Raymond Williams started work, the English culture analysis scene was going through an ideological vacuum. Jerry Eagleton,[62] a prominent young Marxist literary critic of Oxford, describes the situation in the followng manner: There was, he argues, a partial collapse of certain traditional sub-formations (notably religion), and the historically determined absence of others (a full-fledged sociology, for instance). This demanded filling - a task, which the then dominant group 'Scrutiny' attempted (in the tradition of Mathew Arnold) . Like Arnold, it was at once 'progressive' and 'reactionary' - vigorously alert to the moment of the 'modern' and its new ideological demands, but only able to meet with 'idealist' solutions: the 'organic community' of a mythicized English past, the 'university education' etc. as the spiritual essence of the social formation. These opposed stands of 'Scrutiny' get resolved, Eagleton argues, in a single category: 'elitism' "Committed by its nuclear social and economic conditions to a framework of over - arching authority, to 'standards' and 'leaderships'. the petty bourgoisie rejects at once the democratic 'anarchy' it discerns below it and the ineffectualness of the actual authority posed above

it."[66] In different versions, Scrutiny still influences a major variety of non-Marxist understanding of cultural phenomena in Britian. It is in this context, along with the various debates that were going on in the Marxist circles that the works of Raymond Williams have to be examined and estimated.

Raymond Williams comes from an unadulterated working-class background with a supportive rural community behind him. His enterprise has been a life's work, an oeuvre whose internal logic and structural unity are anchored deeply in his biographical experience. The English marxism available in him was not of much intellectual relevance. He pursued the implications of felt personal experience to the point where they have organically emerged as methods, concepts, strategies - which to some, is the source of the formidable power of analysis, while to others, his drastic limitation (Eagleton holds this view, seeing him just as an extension of the Scrutiny tradition).

Raymond Williams bases his analysis on the long revolution in culture, initiated by the extension of education and communication systems, as a third current of change alongside the industrial revolution and democratic revolution in the economic and political spheres respectively. These three processes together, he argues, define the texture and tempo of contemporary experience and is necessary to see the dialectical interactions between the spheres of culture,

polity and economy, 'without concession or priority to any one of them we may choose to abstract'. The emphasis on simultaneity and non-determination in The Long Revolution (hereafter, LR) has triggered a torrent of criticism from the left-both well-informed and ad homeniem. The situation demands that we go into Williams' position in some more detail.

Williams in LR observes:

"The truth about a society, it would seem, is to be found in the actual relations, always exceptionally complicated, between the system of communication and learning, the system of decision, the system of maintenance, and the system of generation and nurture. It is not a question of looking for some absolute formula, by which the structure of these relations can be invariably determined. The formula that matters is that which, first, makes the essential connections between what are never really seperable systems, and second, shows the historical variability of each of these systems, and therefore of the real organizations within which they operate and are lived.[64]

A second significant statement occurs in the course of his discussion of the standard question of the relationship between art and society:

"It is not a question of relating the art to society, but of studying all the activities and their interconnections,

without any concession of priority to any one of them we may choose to abstract."[65]

And again in Communications:

"The emphasis on communications asserts, as a matter of experience, that men and societies are not confined to relationships of power, property and production. Their relationships, in describing, learning, persuading and exchanging experiences are seen as equally fundamental".[66]

Aparently, these passages are in frontal contradiction with a central tenet of historical materialism: the primary or determination, in the last instance, of the economic within any social totality. His arguments for rejecting it seem to be twofold. First, he maintains that they are never separable in reality. Second, he argues that since they are in effect simultaneous in our experience, they must be equivalent in their significance for the overall shape of society. To these early positions, he has of late added two major qualifications. One, he talks about the disparity of a very marked kind between the different systems of a society in certain periods-the relative importance of different kinds of production and social process that can be very uneven. This he thinks necessarily limits the idea of the parity of structures. Two, he points out the temporal unevenness in the formation and evolution of these structures. Williams admits that he was not always able to negotiate this fact of historical discrepancy theoretically.

On the other hand, the thesis of the inseperability of structures-the inextricable interrelationships between politics, art, economy and family organisation is something which Williams has always maintained. He holds that the extraction of one area of emphasis within the society, the abstraction of the capitalist mode of production as such, tended to lead by separation to 'a substitution of terms of analysis for terms of substance'. But in order to maintain the thesis of inseperability of structures, Williams has made a fundamental change in his paradigm and this is: from giving analytical proirity to experience, the emphasis is now on the precise material elements of any cultural system, or as he puts it: "the indissoluble elements of a continuous social-material process." In certain periods, he argues, it is precisely experience in its weakest form which appears to block any realization of the unity of this process, concealing the connection between the different structures-not to speak of the unnoticed relationships of domination and subordination, disparity and unevenness, residual and emergence, which lend their particular nature to these connections. Williams continues: "Indeed, it could be said that my own time was just such an epoch . The project of my books was precisely to force back .....a renewed awareness of the indissolubility of the whole social-material process."[67] And at a later point, he concludes: "Once cultural production is

itself seen as social and material, then this indisolubility of the whole social process has a different theoretical ground. It is no longer based on experience, but on the common character of the respective processes of production."[68]

From industrial revolution onwards, there has developed a type of society which is less and less interpretable by experience, - meaning by experience lived contact with the available articulations, including their comparisons. The result is that we have become increasingly conscious of the positive power of the techniques of analysis. But at the same time, and here we agree with Williams, it is an ideological crisis of just this late-capitalist society that this inevitable awareness has also led to a privileged domination of techniques of rational penetration and corresponding undervaluation of areas where there is some everyday commerce between the available articulations and the general process that has been called 'experience', leading a philosopher like Althusser to equate experience with the realm of pure illusion or ideology, in direct opposition to 'science' or truth. On the other hand, Williams' tendency to treat experience as the deepest field of truth, if taken seriously, can be centrally undoing. It is evident that people may have very powerful experences, and be completely convinced of their connection to reality, which from a different social-historical prespective, may be preceived as saturated with illusion and structured somewhere else.

Discussion of the role of 'experience' in Williams' scheme remains incomplete without taking into account a particular concept that he has been trying to develop ever since 'The Long Revolution' i.e.: Structure of Feeling . It is that firm but intangible organisation of values and perceptions which acts as mediating category between the psychological 'set' of a social formation and the conventions embodied in its artefacts. It is as firm and definite as 'structure' suggests. Yet it operates in the most delicate and least tangible parts of our activity. "In one sense, this structure of feeling is the culture of a period: it is the particular living result of all the elements in the general organization".[68] One generation may, Williams argues, train its successors, with reasonable success, in the total character or the general cultural pattern, but the new generation will have its own structure of feeling. In Marxism and Literature, he advances this argument in the following manner: "The new generation responds in its own ways to the unique world it is inheriting, taking up many continuities, that can be traced, amd reproducing many aspects of the organisation, which can be seperately described, yet feeling its whole life in certain ways differently, and shaping its creative response into a new structure of feeling"[70]

We consider this position difficult to maintain in three ways. First, the whole problematic about generation has been

left out. One can argue that any given historical period will always contain at least three adult generations who are active and producing meanings within a single time-span. Williams tries to defend his position by pointing out that he tended to apply the term in analysis to the generation that is doing the new cultural work, which normaly means a group which could have a median age of around thirty, when it is beginning to articulate its structure of feeling. But which explanation obviously is unsatisfactory in the given context.

The second problem of the term in that while William maintains that structure of feeling focusses on the area of interaction between official consciouness of an epoch- codified in its doctrines and legislations-and the whole process of actually living its consequences, the concept can only be articulate and available in fully expressed work. The other side of the problem is that the concept illegitimately infers from this range a structure which is much wider and unexpected.

Finally, Williams leaves it ambiguous how the concept can be articulated to a variety of classes. He argues that structure of feeling as a concept can be applied in terms of class. But one does not find the concept operationalized in the way to date. One reason may be Raymond Williams' strong belief in participatory culture. An example could be the way he analyses the British novels of 1840's in 'The Long Revolution'. He argues that although the structure of feeling

of those novels, written mainly by middle class and lower middle class writers, was a class possession, it was to a surprising degree shared by the time. Williams, in contradiction to his more theoretical writings, was trying to explain this phenomenon of participation in exclusion of notions like hegemony and ideological domination.

Partly because of such positions, critics like Terry Eagleton and historians like E.P. Thompson have made charges of political gradualism and absence of class contradictions in his work. As a case in point, Eagleton points to Williams' well-known rejection of the concept of 'masses': "There are in fact no masses ;there are only ways of seeing people as masses." Eagleton argues that the massing together of individuals by industrial capitalism is a material condition of their political emancipation; and there is no doubt that, in rejecting the bourgeois definition of the 'masses', Williams firmly rejected the revolutionary definition along with it.

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Raymond Williams tried to deal with many of these problems in a recent article[71] where he attempts to formulate the base-superstructure dialectic from his point of view. He argues tht there are two related, but not same in implication, proposition in this area: (i) social being determining consciousness, and (ii) determining base and a determined superstructure. He points out, rightly, that the second

proposition carries a figurative element and also a suggestion of a fixed and definitive spatial relationship. In the development of mainstream Marxism, the second position got the status of key explanatory category - while what Marx actually wanted to say, argues Willaims, is that man's own activities are the origin of determination of man. Consequently, Williams defines 'determination' not as prefiguring, predicting and controlling by a preexisting external force (something almost theological) but as setting limits or exerting pressure, whether by some external force or by internal laws of a particular development. His definition of the 'base' is away from the notion of a fixed economic or technological abstraction, and towards, the specific activities of men in real social and economic relationships, containing fundamental contradictions and variations and, therefore, always in a state of dynamic process. The important thing to note is that base primarily is a process (which allows to view the contradictions involved in it) and not a state. Important also is what Williams considers the meaning of 'forces of production'. Within his analysis of capitalist mode of production, Williams argues, Marx had to give to the notion of 'productive labour' and 'productive forces' a specialised sense of primary work on materials in a form which produced commodities. "But this has narrowed remarkably, writes Williams and in a cultural context very damagingly, from his more central notion of

productive forces, in which.....the most important thing a worker ever produces is himself, himself in the fact of that kind of labour, or the broader historical emphasis of men producing themselves, themselves and their history."[72]

Similarly, he tries to rescue the concept of 'superstructure'from orthodox positions which see it as the reflection, imitation or reproduction of the reality of the base. Williams discusses other possible understandings of superstructure. It has been viewed, (i) as delays in time, the famous lags, of various indirectness (ii) as mediations & (iii) as 'homologous structures', where there is an essential correspondence (Hindess & Hirst's position) but no influence, of various structures. Williams does not spell out his own position but it cannot be (iv) because he holds that the notion of 'totality', while crucial to Marxism, loses its actual significance if devoid of social intention. To achieve this, one needs viewing the notion of totality within a framework of 'hegemony':

"This notion of hegemony as deeply saturating the consciousness of a society seems to me to be fundamental. And hegemony has the advantage over general notions of totality, that it at the same time emphasizes the facts of domination."[73] It is a characteristic of social order/system, particularly in modern times with advanced methods of communications and with ideological apparatus like

education process more active and inclusive, that alternative values and meanings are accommodated, domesticated and incorporated. But modes of domination can never fully exhaust the full range of actual and possible human practice. There remains some alternative values and practices which cannot be incorporated, which are oppositional in nature and they are tried to be suppressed. The dominant mode, in its fully formed state, is a conscious selection and organization from the full range of human practices. There are always sources of actual human practice which it neglects or is incapable to include. Williams applies two concepts - emergent and residual - in analysing culture in this context. By 'residual' he means those experiences, meanings and values - cultural as well as social - of some previous social formation, which cannot be verified or expressed in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practised on the basis of the residue. A residual culture, comments Willaims, is usually at some distance from the effective dominant culture, but "one has to recognize that, in real cultural activities, it may get incorporated into it".[74] By 'emergent' he refers to those new meanings and values, new practices, new significances and experiences that are continually being created. But, dominant culture also becomes increasingly alert to incorporate anything that is emergent and this process becomes easier due to the fact that emergent vaues and meanings are not yet a defined

part of effective contemporary practice. So there is a temporal relation.

A distinctive thesis of Raymond Williams, something which is central to his understanding of culture, is: Means of Communication as Means of Production. He argues that means of communications are not only forms but means of production, since communications amd its material means are intrinsic to all distinctly human forms of labour and social organization, thus constituting indispensible elements both of productive forces and of social relations of production. Williams points out how means of communication, both as produce and as means of production, are directly subject to historical development. This relation is for two reasons. First, because means of communication have a specific productive history, which is always more or less directly related to gener l historical phases of productive and technical capacity. Second, the historically changing means of communications have historically variable relations to the general complex of productive forces and to general social relations. These historically variable relations include both relative homologies and contradictions of general and particular kind.

Willaims identifies three ideological blocks which obstruct this particular understanding of means of communications. First, the means of communications are viewed as devices for the passing of 'information' and 'messages'

between persons (the 'media'), instead of means of social production. In such formulation people are seen (i) as bearers of a generalized/human sociality (ii) as members of a social group, without specific reference to the differential social relations within such group, or (iii) unspecificied'individuals' ("communication as transmission, but implying reception, by abstracted individuals, each with 'something of his own to say'.)"[75]

The second ideological block is the common- place distinction between 'natural' and' 'technological' means of communication: the former as 'everyday language', 'face-to-face' situations and latter as developed mechanical and electronic communication and generalized - with a marked ideological shift - as 'mass communications'. Williams argues that the ideology of such position lies in the way technical means are tried to be passed off as abstracted social relations. McLuhan's theory is a case in point.

The third ideological position, most Marxist understanding of the media suffer from this, centres around the a priori separation of means of communications from means of production. It is related to the specialized way 'production' is viewed in many Marxist writings - either as capitalist production (i.e. the production of commodities), or more general, 'market' production, where all that is produced takes the form of isolable and disposable objects. This is the root

of treating communications as second-order ('echo' or 'reflex') process, only after the decisive productive and social-material relationship have been settled.

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In the same vein, Williams opposes the notion prevalent in orthodox Marxist literary criticism: the idea of a pre-existing social reality with which the literary model can be compared. He agues in Marxism And Literature that even now when in some socialist countries certain so-called 'bourgeois novels' are being recovered, it is on the basis that there was a condition of class fragmentation and indifference in the actual society which demanded new forms. Such approach suffers from two limitations: (i) it in a way idealizes the 19th century capitalist society, by assumption, and (ii) it separates literature from on-going society and then judges it by a priori model, while literature, like any other important practice, is part of a single and indivisible real process. Williams' argument is that it is a certain perception of reality and certain awareness of interrelationships, not that it carries a certain model of composition with it, not also that it carries a second-order relation to a pre-existing reality, that characterises literature.

In keeping with the other figures of the moment of 'culture' (about which we discussed in the last section), Raymond Williams maintains certain strict reservations against structuralism in general, and structural linguistics in

particular. Discussing Saussure, he argues that structural linguistics is a form of abstract objectivism. Saussure's distinction between langue and parole, Williams argues, is an instance of the ubiquous bourgeois opposition between society and the individual. Later, Williams attacks the arbitrariness of sign, which could only arise, he maintains, where a linguistic system was seen completely from outside, its real social relations being abstracted. We consider, however, that the relation between langue and parole can be seen very differently: langue as the absent reservoir, the means of production of parole. We shall discuss this point in Chapter three.

STRUCTURALIST AND CULTURALIST APPROACHES: A RE-ASSESSMENT

One can point out without much problem the common ground of structuralism and culturalism. Both posed political opposition to 'Stalinism' and theoretical opposition to 'economism'. Althusser and Thompson can be profitably compared in terms of their perceptions of the immediate political context of their works and their rejection of economism:

".....This temptation results in the radical reduction of the dialectic of history to the dialectic generating the successive modes of production, that is, in the last instance, the different production techniques. There are names for these temptations in the history of Marxism: economism and even technologism.'[76] (Althusser).

".....In this tradition the very simplified notion of the creation of the working class was that of a determined process: steam power + the factory system = working class. Some kinds of raw materials, like 'peasants' flocking to the factories was then processed into so many yards of class-conscious proletarians. I was polemicizing against this notion."[77] (Thompson).

Both the tradition sought to vindicate Marxism out of a peculiarly hostile cold war situation and they both did this by developing Marxist work on non-economic questions. Both 'culture' and 'materiality of ideology' are ways of countering the reduction of consciousness to a mere reflex of economic relations. Both traditions insist that culture/ideology have a determinacy or autonomy of their own. Both, at the same time, insist on the relation between cultural-ideological and other process. There is also an important but controversial similarity between the two schools : both identify their object of study as 'historical'. This is clearly identifiable in the case of the culturalists - obvious in the case of E.P. Thompson and apparent in the manner in which Williams often writes ('Keywords' and 'The City and the Country', for instance). But it can also be argued in relation to Althusser. Here one should distinguish between Althusser and some Althusserians (Hindess and Hirst, for example, who along with the stress on 'homologous structures' and 'correspondence', minimize the

role of history of 'social formation'. Though at a more philosophical level, Althusser's notions like 'conjuncture', the de-construction of unified evolutionary 'time' and, in general, the theme of complex, structured and contradictory unities, have enriched our understanding of history and opened new areas of controversy. Finally, both the schools together express some central concerns of Marx : rationalist, materialist and historical. These implicit agreements constitute, at root, the claims of both these traditions to be 'Marxist'.

But the similarities also express their differences and common inadequacies. As we have already pointed out, if the structuralist stress was on 'mode of production', the culturalists thought the question of 'class' (defined both relationally and experientially) and 'culture' more important. E.P. Thompson's concern was, at least at the beginning, "a real silence in Marx on the subject of 'value-systems'".[78] His work has generally centred on the understanding of culture, consciousness and, specially, experience of the 'popular' classes of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The later Thompson, however, focuses more on cultural relations of authority in the eighteenth century, centering on a particular appropriation of Gramsci's 'hegemony'. The common inadequacies are also apparent. The culturalists started redefining the term culture and expanding it (absorbing anthropological insights en route) and including

heterogeneous aspects like language, mass media, literary text, etc. By making 'way of life' pivotal to their epistemology, culturalists have gradually included practices other than thinking and feeling, domains, roughly, be called 'consciousness'. Similarly, Althusser and his followers expanded the domain of ideology to include everything that is not economic production. The genuine insight that"ideology always exists in an apparatus" becomes the hyperbole that "ideology has a material existence".

The two trends have radical opposition between them but, unfortunately, are locked up in an one-sided critique. Structuralist critiques of culturalism, for instance, are often no more than exploration of the differences between the two positions. They might have clarificatory value, but since they too rarely have reference to the analysis of particular situations, they do no more. The critiques usually follow a particular line : (i) a text is organised around a specific problematic, (ii) certain problematics are supposed to be fundamentally flawed (especially Althusser's own trio of historicism, humanism and empiricism), (iii) if such a tendency is present, it is held to exhaust the whole content of the text. The text falls. A particular critic of Althusser.[79] has termed such precodure 'intellectual lumberjacking'. Such mode of critique is destructive and non-accumulative.

A major contribution of the culturalists, one that has underminded all economistic reductionism, is that the cultural actually entres into economic or market relations and far from being 'natural', economic rationality of any kind is historically and culturally constructed. Examples are Thompson's work on conception of time and Hobsbawm on the determination of wage.[80] But a particular culturalist fallacy is to escape abstractions - 'the theory of no theory'. This weakens their position and makes the general conceptions vague. Moreover, since 'values' and 'economics' are always viewed as consonant, bound organically together in real situations, culturalism always carries the danger to return to those determinisms against which it is arguing.

The important problem of culturalism, however, concerns the conception of 'class'. By conceiving class as a set of relations between human beings (relations of oppression or exploitation) the culturalists deliver a historical and relational view of class, much superior to prevailing sociological conceptions. But the problem with such conceptions is class relationships here are understood as essentially inter-personnel, as relationships and just that. That these relationships are over things(means of production and a surplus) as well as people is blotted out. Althusser has discussed this point at length in his Essays in Self-Criticism.

We now attempt to make an overview of the recurrent criticisms that are put against structuralist understandings of culture/ideology. Though structuralism serves as a powerful basis for critiques of culturalism, it supplies no alternatives to culturalist practices and suffers from some well-known limitations. The first of these is the problem of preferred level of abstraction. Althusser's philosophical reading of capital is extremely selective and suffers from a radical simplication of Marx's precedures and results. Balibar in Reading Capital tends to reduce Marx's entire analysis of the capitalist mode of production to a few formulations like (i) the invariant elements of modes of production, (ii) the variant modes of combination and (iii) transition in terms of non-correspondence.

Linked with this problem is that of radical simplification of social formation. Just as culturalism grasps social formations in terms of relations of classes. So structuralism simplifies the problematic by describing social formations in terms of modes of production and ideological conditions of existence. When Althusser tries to analyse a concrete situation (viz., the Russian Revolution), which invariably contains more than one mode of production (with both internal and external contradictions between them), he himself points out the failure to explore the full complexity.

Finally, structuralism's understanding of ideology suffers from a marked tilt towards functionalism. This is because ideology is conceived solely as a condition of existence for a given mode of production. We have already discussed this point in our section on Althusser.

GRAMSCI'S NATION OF HEGEMONY REVISITED

Williams' ideas of emergent, residual and oppositional cultures and his stress on 'selective tradition' bear an intimate relation to Gramsci's pivotal notion of hegemony. Cotemporary Marxist debates on culture centre aound and between (with the resultant tension and development) this notion of Gramsci and Althussar's ideas and formulation of ISA. Gramsci himself, however, could not develop a full-blown theory of hegemony mainly because of his sad plight in the fascist prison of Italy. From late 60's onwards, the notion, however brought about an immense theoretical revolution over the simpler and mechanical formulations of classical Marxism. This is particularly true about the debates on culture and in the process it has got appropriated, at times distorted, depending on the nature of emphasis.

The concept can be taken as the elaboration and penetration of ideologies into the commonsense and everyday practice of the dominated class. The hold of hegemony lies in the mechanisms of coercion, just as the force of coercion both presuppose and reinforce elements of hegmony. It is a process that is entered into by both the dominants and the dominateds.

Gramsci argues that 'hegemony' exists when a ruling class (or rather, an alliance of ruling fractions, a 'historical block') is able not only to coerce a sub-ordinate class to conform to its interests, but exerts a 'total social authority' over those classes and the social formation as a whole. As Stuart Hall puts it : "'Hegemony' is in operation when the dominant class fractions not only dominate but direct - lead: when they not only possess the power to coerce but actively organize so as to command and win the consent of the subordinated class to their continuing sway."[81] Hegemony thus depends on a combination of force and consent. In liberal capitalist state, Gramsci points out, consent is normally in the lead, operating behind 'the armour of coercion'.

Though 'hegemony' is organically linked with the total structure of society, the terrain on which it is accomplished is the state, politics and the superstructures, This is to say that the primary 'lived reality' of the subordinate classes is at par with the 'definitions of reality' of the dominant classes. Through this concept, Gramsci enlarges the whole notion of domination . He places it basically in the "relations between structure and superstructure which must be accurately posed and resolved if the forces which are active in a particular period are to be correctly analysed....."[82] In

this way, he sets the concept at a critical distance from all types of economic or mechanical reductionism. In his redefinition of power, the non-coercive gets full weightage. Above all, he allows us "to grasp the central role which the superstructures, the state and civil associations, politics and ideology, play in securing and cementing societies 'structured in dominance', and in actively conforming the whole of social, ethical, mental and moral life in their overall tendencies to the requirements of the productive system."[83]

The ruling coalitions of 'class fraction' depend on the ideology-shaping institutons for two reasons mainly : (i) to formulate the terms of their own unity, and (ii) to put limits to competing definitions of reality. The content of dominant ideology will reflect the complex interior formation of the dominated classes. Hegemonic ideology in bourgeois culture, as we have already argued, is complex and absorptive. Only by domesticating conflicting values defining reality does it succeed to remain hegemonic. Due to rival groups operating, bourgeois ideology is intrinsically unstable and conflicting, always framed and reshaped. Opposition movements wage their battles mostly, in favour of one set of bourgeois society's values against another. As an instance of late capitalism's intrinsic contradiction, one can argue that economic system generate ideologies that go against its own rational. Consumer society needs encouraging the workers to go hedonistic. But hedonism spills over from the consumption

realm to the production realm. This is what Danial Bell righltly calls 'the cultural contradictions of capitalism'. But contradictions operate within hegemonic framework, which narrows the range of potential contending world views. In the process, hegemony's internal structure gets continually renewed and defended, challenged and modified. The ideal of 'neutral' presentation of news can be viewed from this angle.

* * * *

Althusser moves very close to the terrain of Gramsci's work when he argues: 'what is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of real relations which governs the existence of men, but the imaginery relation of those individuals to the real relations is which they live."[84] In such statement, there are two significant stresses which should be noted. First, he insists that since the terrain of ideologies is not simple but complex, and consists not simply of 'ruling ideology 'precisely in its contradictions. Ideological reproduction thus becomes not only the "stake but also the site of class struggle". Second, he insists that the form of the 'unity' that the ISA achieves in more of a "teeth - gritting harmony' than a functional 'fit'. Both these aspects emphasise continuing struggle and contradictory reproduction, bringing him closer to Gramsci's argument; but these remain marginal to the heartland of his theory, which centres on the

concept of continuing reproduction of the social relations of a system. This is what makes Althusser's outline more functionalist and explains the tension of much of contemporary Marxist debates on culture which base heavily, both on Althusser and Gramsci.

A Note on Relative Autonomy And Media Specificity

The term 'relative autonomy' has been made popular by Althusser, who however fails to clear the veil of mystery that surrounds it. He holds that the various superstructures (law, politics, ideology) are characterised by a 'relative autonomy' from the base. These structures take concrete forms in material apparatuses (such as the judicial or the state apparatus) which have their own specific unity and coherence. Each plays a part in determining social events, although the economic structure remains 'determinant in the last instance' But the character of this determination remains a mystery. Also, we often present it as an antithesis of relative autonomy, as if it were a version of the antithesis of 'freedom' and 'necessity'. To quote Althusser only:

"The lonely hour of the last instance never comes".

The problem in its general form has long been a central topic of debate among the Marxists. Engels wrote numerous letters after the death of Marx protesting, with increasing urgency, the economic reductionism taking hold of the Marxist

movement. The shortcomings of vulgar 'determinism' are apparent: (i) it reduces the culture object (say, film) to a single meaning, as an one-to-one political allegory, thus impoverishing it (ii)to the extent that it is true, it applies so broadly as to be useless (for example, if we call as Hollywood films merely 'bourgeois', we cannot distinguish between them or explore them in any meaningful way).

iii) it fails to account for empirically perceived limits to the ruling class use of the ideological appartus (for example, the almost total absence of any film glorifying American's role in Vietnam)

iv) it leads to a political quietism - if culture practice is merely the reflection of something else, there is no point trying to accomplish anything within it.

The spectre of vulgar determinism leads to another extreme: the substitution of a vaguely radical culture theory for a properly Marxist culture theory, an inability to situate given films within the analysis of classes and class struggle developed by Marx. The problem is determining how to avoid the traps of 'vulgar determinism', without sidetracking determinism, and hence materialism altogether.

To help develop an adequate concept of determination and autonomy, we would do well to remember Poulantzas' arguments about the State, another area of Marxist study where theorists have paid careful and rigorous attention to the question.

Poulantzas argues that the state is a factor for unity and cohesion in society: 'The apparatus which keeps it from flying apart under the pressure of its intrinsic contradictions'. Its role is to regulate these contradictions is order to maintain the 'unstable equilibrium' of the system. In order to regulate the contradictions, it must include them, so that these contradictions are condensed within it. The State, in short, while maintaining (and in order to maintain) dominant class relations is also (in Poulantzas' words)" shot and constituted with and by class contradictions".

As a cohesive, regulating factor of the social formation it must make allowances (within strict limits) for the class interests of the dominated as well as the dominant classes. It is not a question of 'concessions' made by the State (for this would imply that the State is a unified and conscious entity capable of entering negotiation) but rather of conscessions and compromises within the State. Since its role is to reproduce/ maintain a complex block, it cannot be a monolithic block, but by virtue of its very structures, divided. The State is the area controlled and 'fixed' by the bourgeoisie, but in which, nonetheless, a real struggle goes on.

Hence, relative autonomy is not an escape from determinism, tied down only by the 'last instance'; it is the specific form through which determinism is exercised. Also it is not an idea- but the result of a material set of social practices. The concrete from taken by this autonomy depends

on the conjunction of class struggles at any given point. Liberal democracy and fascist dictatorship for example, are both political forms of capitalist domination, but they clearly have diferent degrees of autonomy inscribed in their structures.

This understanding of the State as a factor of cohesion is a social formation would seem to apply without much stretching to ideology as well. We, however, cannot import a description of the State directly to the problem of ideology without distorting/denying the particular unity and cohesion of ideological structures. Ideology and politics do not operate in the same way, and we need a clearer distinction between them, based (for example) on the specific character of representation and the specifically commercial nature of much of the ideological apparatus.

What ideology, however, does share in common with politics is that both are characterized by class domination and relative autonomy. Thus while the study of the state cannot by itself generate an adequate general understanding of ideology, it can help us to formulate some of our questions about it. It suggests, for instance, that we should not conceive ideology as a <u>thing</u>, as a complete and coherent system of ideas which the bourgeoisie utilizes to brainwash the rest of the society. Rather, we should approach ideological processes as social relationships, "shot through and constituted by" class contradictions. The concept of ideological domination always

has an implication of struggle; it does not imply the complete elimination of social contradictions from the sphere of discourse. Poulantzas puts it as follows:

".....the structure of dominant ideology cannot be deciphered from its relations with a 'class consciousness' considered in a vacuum, but from the starting point of the field of class struggle, i.e., from the concrete relations between the various classes in struggle, the relation within which class domination functions. Hence, we can understand not only why the dominated classes necessarily experience their conditions of existence within the discourse ideology, but also why that discourse presents elements borrowed from ways of life other than that of the dominant class."[85]

If we view these contradictions as characteristic instances of relative autonomy as it operates in the field of ideology, we may come closer to an understanding of ideological practices in culture. Let us take the instance of films. The film is a determined product of society because the class contradictions which determine the whole structure of society operate as well within the ideological structures. It is further determined in the sense that the dominant ideological discourse in society is generally dominant in popular films. Yet this domination is not exercised as a simple tool of mind control, as 'bourgeois propaganda'. There are always, what Poplantzas calls, "elements borrowed from ways of life" of

dominated classes. These are not wholly absorbed into a 'bourgeois world view' but retain an integrity as one of the aspects of contradictory and conflicting units. One of the ideas of dominant hegemony, as we have pointed out in the sections on Williams and Gramsci, is to domesticate such alternative explanations of reality, to incorporate them. It might be possible, then, to view an individual film, as well as the ideological apparatus as a whole, as a site of ideological class struggle. It might mean that within the action of the film, the relations of ideological domination are worked out as potentially subversive elements. But the popular film actually performs to make of the various contradictory elements cohere in an unstable equilibrium, in terms of the dominant discourse. So, a film is not a homogeneous totality with a single 'ideological message', but rather a conflicting totality.

For a more comprehensive understanding of ideology and relative autonomy of the media, one has to consider the product of a medium as a work of signification with its own internal dynamics and operations (and internal history), which is precisely the domain that certain Marxist understandings ignore. In a similar argument (in the context of cinema), Stephen Heath uses the term 'machine'. He argues: "cinema itself seized exactly between industry and product as the stock of constraints and definitions from which film can be distinguished as a specific signifying practice"[86] Here

'specificity' implies not only a sense of media peculiarity but also a semiotic particularity, i.e., signification through codes unique to the cinema and broader socio-cultural ones. 'Practices' highlight the sense of 'process': "film as a work of production of meanings". Hence, film does not merely represent/express but is itself an active process of significtion through which meanings are produced. Two implications are evident. First, the media are not 'empty' forms which neutrally transcribe socio-political ideologies, but have their own level of effectivity which is, in the context of cinema, the property of the cinematic 'machine' and not solely of the cinematic institutions. Second, the media do not merely express ideologies, they are actively constitutive of ideologies. That is, ideologies are not merely ingredients to be detected in the media, but also its products

Jean-Paul Fargier tries to theorise the first position at a general level when he argues that cinema is considered not merely as a vector of ideologies already in circulation, but as producing its own specific ideology: 'the impression of reality'. There is one particular problem with this formulation: it is not clear whether the 'impression' is fundamental to 'bourgeois cinema' or that its appearance is irreducibly ideological. But it does help to clarify the point that the 'ideological effect'of the cinema cannot be understood outside of the operations of its particular conventions and

constraints which, because they carry their own specific effectivities, do not necessarily correspond to the maker's 'intentions' or his/her political beliefs. However, as in the case of the concept 'social totality' which, to be rescued from a mere sociology of interconnections, should be seen along with the notion of 'domination' (discussed before), so also if ideology has to be retrieved from what John Hill calls 'significatory egalitarianism', it must include a notion of ideologies not just as discursive systems but as ultimately maintaining a structure of dominance. Not, of course, directly as in some crude Marxist analyses, but in complex and contradictory ways whose specific inflections have to be analysed in particular and concrete ways. After all, one need not subscribe to any thesis of 'cultural transparency'.

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CHAPTER-III

STRUCTURE, SIGN AND COGNITION

The mind sees the words not in their usual order but projected around it, like the walls of a grotto, for long as their mobility, that principle which makes them exceed whatever is said in discourse, is not exhausted. All are quick, before they fade away, to glitter, reflecting against one another, with distant, oblique and contingent flashes.

(Mallarme)

A system is a kind of damnation which drives us to perpetual abjuration. We are always forced to invent another and this strain is a cruel punishment.

(Baudelaire)

In The German Ideology Marx argues against 'theoretical bubble blowing' and against those 'learned gentlemen' for whom

"it is altogether simply a matter of resolving this ready-made non-sense they find into some other freak, i.e., of presuposing that all this non-sense had a special sense which can be discovered while really it is only a question of explaining these theoretical phrases from the actual existing relations"[1]

Banal classifications and unnecessary polarisations ('metaphysical speculations' and 'violent abstractions' as Marx would have called) characterize (and even mar) a significant portion of Marxist scholarship even today. The contemporary arguments centring the so called 'economism/structuralsm' split on the question of determination is a case in point. In arguments which pose the two tendencies as two poles, 'economism' is supposed to be characterised by its emphasis on determination of the ideological by the economic, while 'structuralism' is held to be distinguished for bracketting off determination in favour of 'fetishism of the text'. Such sterile dichotomies can only lead to, as it has at times done, a kind of theoretical deadlock. Any attempt to explain 'theoretical phases from actual existing relations' shows how complex the situation actually is.

This problem is particularly evident in Marxist analyses of media's place in contemporary capitalism, where most arguments seem to have got struck in the twin foci of 'determination' and 'effectivity'. Marxist discussions on the cinema may serve as an example. On one hand, there is the 'materialist' concern to place cinema in terms of its social and economic determinants, via technology, economy (logic of capital accumulation and cinema's subservience to it) or class complex. On the other hand, there is the 'critical' concern to account for the cinema in all its cultural and ideological ramifications, its complicity with a continuing structure of domination and control. Yet, and this is important, there is not enough effort given to articulate this twin foci. Heat and dust notwithstanding, much of the debate gets caught in the game of alternative choices (the language of 'on one hand' and 'on the other'). The concern for articulation gets effectively withered through a dissolution of one choice for another: the effect of ideology becomes "readable' in its determinations (ownership of means of production, logic of the market, etc) or determination gets altogether washed off from the ideological scenario, 'unreadable' directly or indirectly. Even if one is cautious enough to avoid taking side with any one of the two alternatives, at times analysis tends to resort to such ultimately evasive formulations whereby ideology and economy are seen to coalesce, but in some mysterious liaison whose

specificities remain excluded. Comolli/Narboni (1971) is a case in point: "every film ..... is determined by the ideology which produces it ..... but is all the more thoroughly and completely determined because ..... its very manufacture mobilises powerful economic forces." But as typical (and powerful) cases of 'polarities', one could perhaps discuss that of Murdock and Golding, British media scholars, and of the editiors of Cashiers du Cinema (1972), the prominent French journal on film with structuralist persuation. Within and between them gets revealed much of the tendency of polarization we are arguing against, their contributions to media analysis notwithstanding.

Setting out with the broad ambition of examining textual ideology through an analysis of its conditions of production, both end up by previleging one over the other- in the case of Murdock and Golding media (for that matter, ideological) specificity collapses into economy while for Cashiers du Cinema the reverse is true: film/ideological specificity is set free from its determinations. Murdock and Golding (1974, 1977, 1978, 1979) violently attack those brands of Marxist theory which have placed cultural criticism above economic analysis, beginning with cultural artefacts and working back to economic base and not vice-versa. By abandoning sustained analysis of the economic base, Murdock and Golding argue, "we are jettisoning the very elements that give Marxist sociology its

distinctiveness and explanatory power." Even without actually returning to economic determinism, one would nevertheless claim "that control over material resources and their changing distribution are ultimately the most powerful of many levels in cultural production".[2] The thesis considers the case on media integration and diversification in contemporary Britain and concludes: " (1) the range of material available will tend to decline as market forces exclude all but the commercially successful and (2) this evolutionary process is not random, but systematically excludes those voices lacking economic power and resources"[3]

Murdock and Golding clearly underemphasises (i) the need for originality in the drive for media expansion, and (ii) the possibility of oppositional viewpoints with the commercial media. Consequently, they conflate the long-term interests of capital in general and short-term interest of the individual entrepreneur.

We are, however, more concerned here in the way the problem of ideology and economy is defined and resolved by them. For this we would like to focus on the 'gap' that remains for them between economic production on one side and media forms and specificities on the other, which they can only overcome through reduction of the media to transcriptions of socio-political ideologies originated outside. For example, Murdock and Golding take issue with a large chunk media

studies for concentrating almost solely on the newsfares and not taking fictional/entertainment forms seriously. But their thesis would not allow them to do pricisely this. By attributing unproblematic transparency, the differences between various media in terms of expression and conventions is sidetracked and the way formal conventions actually work in meaning-production ignored. As John Hill argues in "Ideology, Economy and the British Cinema" : "The imaginary is not only the end product of an economic process, but a product of a work of signification as well with its own internal dynamics and operations (and internal history)"[4]. This is the domain that Murdock and Golding ignore.

If then it can be argued that Golding and Murdock devalue the significatory level of the media and this has effects for how they can formulate a theory of ideology, a reverse tendency (and its implications) can be observed in the works of Cashiers du Cinema editorial group (1972). But before we actually go into the analysis of Cashiers's arguments (centring on the film 'Young Mr Lincoln'), let us take note of the objections against "textual' analysis from conventional Marxist positions. They are as follows:

(i) Textual analysis cannot provide an adequate account of the relations of production governing a text's construction. This is undoubtedly correct, but nonetheless turns the pertinent issue on its head: for while production relations

might not indeed be able to be 'read' back from textual analysis, this does not imply that the converse is true, that textual processes can be read forward from those same relations of production.

(ii) The second objection is to do with 'inference'. The argument is that textual analysis is a form of content analysis and thus necessarily 'circumstantial' and 'qualitative'. This argument is not acceptable on two grounds. First, calling textual analysis 'content analysis' hardly does justice to the significant advances of much textual analysis (as it is traditionally understood). Second, this argument would have really made sense if we are to assume that inference is a problem peculiar to content analysis and not to sociology in general. But sociology, as it stands today, is yet to lay claim to have solved the problem of inference.

(iii) The third argument is that exclusive concentration on textual analysis would necessarily be partial and truncated in its explanation of ideological production. This might be true but, as in the previous cases, in establishing the opposite, one runs the danger of no less partiality and truncatedness.

With this, we are in a position to review Cashier's famous analysis of the film 'Young Mr Lincoln', something which brought for them both applaud and criticism. The general opinion is that their understanding of historical determination is inadequate but the actual textual analysis is excellent, as if these two realms are comfortably seperable. Cashiers define the objective of the piece as follows:

"to distinguish the historicity of (a number of 'classic' films including 'Yound Mr Lincoln') inscription: the relation of these films to the codes (social, cultural....) for which they are a site of intersection, and to other films themselves held in an intertextual space, therefore, the relation of these films to the ideology which they convey, a particular 'phase' which they represent, and to events (present, past, historical, mythical, fictional) which they aimed to represent" (Cashiers du Cinema,1972, p 6).

While roughly agreeing with the critics of Cashiers in their diagnosis of the failure of the piece, we would like to argue that it is not a matter of 'unhappy contingency' but rather a consequence of the founding premises, undermining the original project.

Cashiers selected a specific media artefact - one film- which they sought to account for in fairly specific ways. This they did through a rather 'un-materialist' mode of operation - accounting for the movie's creation through the intention of one individual: the Republican Zanuck, who wanted to make a film about the Republican Lincoln in order to assure a Republican victory in the Presidential election of 1940. But what got actualized, according to Cashiers, was not this specific ideological undertaking, but "a reformulation of the historical figure of Lincoln on the level of the myth and the eternal". Thus a division can be drawn between the ideological

determinations of the film (Zanuck's intention) and what got actualized (the film as such), the two aspects being related to each other only remotely. For Cashiers this is enough a reason to make a distinction between their own analysis and that what they call 'demystification' whereby 'an artistic product' is "linked to its socio-historical context according to a linear, expressive, direct causality" (p. 7). . The implication is that political and economic analysis can only vaguely, if at all, place and analyse the film's ideology. We do not quibble with Cashiers for refusing to 'read off' ideology from its social determinants; rather we would like to examine its theoretical effects.

In taking issue with other types of reading (commentary, interpretation, mechanistic structuralism and demystification) Cashiers specify their attempt as active reading, highlighting the film's (for that matter, any cultural artefact's) process of signification. Cashiers attempts not only to abstract broad ideological statements of the film, but rather wish to follow "the film's process of becoming-a-text," its dynamics. The aim is to trace the audience's diachronic experience of watching a film,and more: "A process of active reading is to make them say what they have to say within what they leave unsaid, to reveal their constituent lacks." (p 8). The initial concern for a socio-historical situating can thus be seen to be misplaced for instead of exploring the apparent contradictions (if at all)

between the moment of consumption and the moment of production, Cashiers argues: "We do not hesitate to force the text, even to re-write it insofar as the film only constitutes itself as a text by integration of the reader's knowldege". Thus the dilemma is in the very formulation of the problematic: if the text only exists through 'the integration of the reader's knowledge', in what sense is Cashiers said to be forcing or re-writing? True that "the essential reality of the cinema is to be seen as that reality of which the viewer is convinced" (Bazin), but should not there be some recognition of the correctness of meaning-extraction?

.Thus whereas critics like Murdock and Golding fail to pay adequate attention to significatory processes, Cashiers conversely emphasize this to the point of accrediting them an almost total autonomy. This is linked to the problem of consumption. For Murdock and Golding the problem did not arise, since for them the audience can be more or less 'read out' from the text (and the production of the text). Cashiers, on the otherhand, correctly refuse to see the audience as locked into some pre-ordained textual meaning, but in doing so tend to ignore the moment of production and the socio-historical context in which the text is received.

Hence, one can very well suggest that just as the text cannot be read off directly from production, so audience response cannot be read back from the properties of the text alone. The emphasis on 'signification' breaks with the notions of passive consumer (this is a point worth preserving)- audiences are rather seen as directly and actively producing meaning: but meaning production through a knowledge and activation of codes which are, in the ultimate analysis, social and historical. As Barrett argues in Ideology and Cultural Production: "Analysis of the media cannot rest with an analysis of production and text alone, but must include a theory of readership and analysis of consumption". It is centring this project precisely that most of the debates on structure, sign and cognition are taking place today. A clearer picture would emerge through a developmental view of the whole project, starting from Lucien Goldman's genetic structurealism via an examination of the linguistic foundation of analysis of structure and sign, the various film theories centring on cognition, the works of Metz to, finally, the radicalization of semiology in the writings of Barthes and of contributions of Tel Quel.

We start from Goldmann's understanding of genetic structuralism because it is here for the first time that the two opposed tendencies we were discussing are tried to be synthesised: immanent properties of a work of art, on one side and the broader social-historical determinations, on the other.

GENETIC STRUCTURALISM OF LUCIEN GOLDMANN

For Goldmann, structures are defined in terms of their functions, which relate to the situation of some specific group and its social experience. In the works he has analysed, he has tried to establish homologies between the mental categories of the social group and the imaginary universe of the writer/artist. In analysing a text, Goldmann argues, one has to take into account not only the immanent comprehension of the text, but also "the explanation of the genesis of the structure which enables us to interpret the whole of the text under consideration in a coherent manner". [5] As for Goldmann, this structure can be defined as "the conjunction of aspirations, feelings and ideas which bring together the members of the group (or more frequently of a social class) and oppose them to other groups."[6]

As Lukács had done before, Goldmann makes a distinction in terms of consciousness of a class: the real consciousness and potential consciousness of the class. The 'real' is the factually found consciousness of a class at a given historical juncture. Its structure would depend on the nature of the class (its position) and also to several factors which may be accidental in nature. The potential/possible consciousness is that which the class might achieve (i.e., it has all the structural requisites) without changing its nature. Goldmann

calls potential consciousness "the fundament of the real consciousness". Contrary to the opinion that sociology of literature/media is best at explaining the hack works, Goldmann's sociology deals with the finest works of literature, philosophy and art of nineteenth century Europe. He holds that the great works of literature and philosophy are the best expressions of the potential consciousness of a class, while literary works are the imaginary transpositions of the class Weltanschauung, the philosophical works are the conceptual translations of the same. The collective world view can exist only in the individual consciousness but seldom is fully expressed by any single individual. Only those exceptional individuals who can sense the fundamental traits/trends of social life coherently, can produce literary or philosophical works of great heights. It is with this understanding that Goldmann examines the work of Pascal and Racine.

Goldmann believes all human behaviour is 'significative structure' to be described and explained by the investigator. To him the fundamental methodological problem of human science is the confrontation of 'comprehension' with 'explanation'. While 'comprehension' is concerned with the description of basic, universal and permanent structures, explanation aims to understand human/social phenomena by means of causes or universal correlations.

Goldmann's concept of genetic structuralism tries to resolve this duality, seeing them as two sides of the same problem considered from two different aspects of the object. Every partial structure is explained by its location within a wider structure, while at the same time the partial structure is understood in itself by its comprehensive description. What gives meaning and significance to social phenomena is the structures that govern them, but at the same time these structures themselves are " the result of man's earlier praxis". So to understand and describe social phenomenon one has to go into the genesis of structures. As Piaget has shown in his book Genetic Structuralism, 'de-structuration' of pre-existing structures and structuration of new structures occur simultaneously. Goldmann argues that significance of social phenomena lies in their being structured, while these significative structures are the result of genesis. Following closely to Marx's understanding of social change, Goldmann argues that every structuration aims at a provisional equilibrium, which becomes contradictory leading to a process of destructuration. Any account of structure in itself is description/comprehension, while within the dynamics of the wider structure lies the key to explanation. From such understanding, Goldmann could conceive of a chain of successively wider structures - comparable, perhaps, to the medieval concept of chain of Being. Hence, in Hidden Gods

Pascal's Thoughts as an internal significative structure within the wider structure of Jansenism is considered comprehensive description and the latter explanatory structure. In turn, Jansenism becomes comprehensive structure when it is tried to be explained in the structure of the noblesse de robe, which holds the key of explanatory analysis of the former.

Thus Goldmann in his own way solves a methodological problem of contemporary Marxist sociology of culture by taking care of both immanent composition of the text and genesis of the structure. He finds traits of this approach in Hegel, Marx and Freud - in the way, Hegel and Marx treated historical facts in a reflexive way and Freud analysed deviant psychological phenomena by inserting them in a wider structure and explaining their genesis in early childhood. For Goldmann, if neither the individual (author) nor the text by themselves represent adequate structures in which to insert the meaning of the text - if they are not 'appropriate totalities' for a scientific, rigorous study - another structure is needed which could be wide enough and objectively controllable to perform the task. This Goldmann finds in the reference to social classes and their worldviews.

At this point, an interesting parallel may be drawn between the structuralism of Goldmann and that of Levi-Strauss. Jorge Larrain puts it succinctly:

"The logic of the world-view (of Goldmann) is somehow similar to the logic of myth in Levi-Strauss; it refers the terms of a real contradiction to a new conceptual or imaginary opposition which makes the situation more bearable. In the case of Jansenism, the real contradiction between the noblesse de robe and the absolute monarchy is transposed into the paradox of a hidden God, somehow present but mute. Yet Goldmann's understanding of the nature of contradictions differs from Levi-Strauss's in that he privileges class struggles and not "logic paradoxes' of the human species. Besides for Goldmann the basic explanatory structures are essentially historical and not universal."[7]

A number of sociologists and literary critics, particularly Hyppolite and Vernant, has taken issue with Goldmann over the postulated relationship between structures and functions, arguing for the primary and autonomy of structures. Vernant suggests what is important is the internal aesthetic function of literary structures and not their social function. Goldmann tries to counter this criticism by arguing that these structures exists within a number of "encompassing totalities" to each of which they are functionally related. Yet, as Mariam Glucksmann has argued (N.L.R., 1979), Goldmann seems to be forcing the work into preconceived categories external to them, resulting in blindness to other aspects. She comments that instead of addressing exclusively to the problems of

genre, Goldmann should have taken up seriously the multiple levels and references of the works ("Analysis of genre is patently insufficient for a total conception of literature".)

What remains unclear about Goldmann's understanding of the multiple significance of aesthetic structures according to the context in which they are being considered is whether these structures remain the same in the different contexts. It is likely that different structurations will be revealed. Yet Goldmann wishes to establish the priority of sociological reading withoiut specifying why 'psychological'reading, for example, would not be considered equally important. This is a problem which Goldmann's 'sociological aesthetic' has to consider.

Lucien Goldmann, along with Georg Luck cs, belong to an age of Marxist aesthetics whose epochal visions show how a text is intimately connected with its time. ("I can say first of all I confined myself to showing the existence of unitary and coherent world vision around which the works of Racine, Pascal, Malraux and Genet revolve." The Dialectics of Liberation (ed.) D. Cooper, 1969). Though unlike Lukacs, for Goldmann the correspondence takes place not so much at the level of content as of form, the level where the contradictory and unachieved consciousness of the time gets reflected, it is primarily what and why of a text (and not so much how) that constitutes the centre of investigation. Illuminating as his works are, his kind

of symbolic attention returns too unhindred to history. It hinges on a view of language as transperent, as an easy covering of the real whose conceptualization was somehow pre-linguistic.

It is significant that Goldmann's work on the French experimental nouveau roman should manage to discover "the degree to which these writings carried a realistic, critical and perfectly coherent vision of contemporary society." (The Dialectics of Liberation, p.147), whereas Stephen Heath sees "the drama of writing, against the natural representation of linear writing, against the fixity of stereotype and repition" (The Nouveau Roman, p.39). At the roots of such difference lies different understanding of the historical process and the role of language and ideology within it. Goldmann (along with Lukács) sees history as a process of becoming through which the worldview of a class attains its full expression. Art is a reflection (and realisation) of this vision: "emancipation of daily practice similar to .....the emergence of the scientific form of reflection." To Stephen Heath, like most other post-Althusserian structuralist, history is a complex process of contradictions within and between economic, political and ideological practices, a process whose development is uneven. Within this, the particular practice of ideology at any one time is determined by the overall relations between practices within the social formation. "Art is a practice of language

within ideology: as such its task is to contribute to the building of a particular reality. It uses language in particular to carry this out". (Heath). Here lies the difference between the two interpretations of the nouveau roman. Heath sees representation itself as being ideological. Realist writing is viewed as a particular way (the dominant mode) of using language in bourgeois society and hence, it is argued, inevitably tangled up with the particular social forms of that society. As Stephen Heath makes the point:

"In this sense, the 'realistic' is not substantial but formal (a process of significant 'fictions') and, in connection with the novel, it may be described in the notion of the vraisemblable of a particular society, the generally received picture of what may be regarded as 'realistic'.... Evidently, this vraisemblable is not recognised as such, but rather as, precisely, Reality; its function is the naturalization of that reality articulated by a society as the 'Reality' and its success is the degree to which it remains unknown as a form"[8]

STRUCTURE AND SIGN :THE LINGUISTIC FOUNDATION

Barthes once defined structuralism ('in its most specialized and consequently most relevant version') as a mode of analysis of cultural artefacts which originates in the methods of contemporary linguistics. This view is supported by both the proponents and opponents of structuralism. Levi Strauss, in his famous essay L'analyse structurale en

linguistique et en anthropologie, argues that by following the linguist's example the anthropologist might reproduce in his own discipline the 'phonological revolution', while Paul Ricoeur, a virulent critic of structuralist method, also confirms the direct link between linguistics and structuralism (as a method in social sciences), of course with a different aim. "Signification" writes Brathes, "has been my essential preoccupation. I have been engaged in a series of structural analyses which all aim at defining a number of non-linguistic "languages".

Two basic arguments are given for the adoption of linguistic models for cultural studies. First, social and cultural objects/phenomena are those which are loaded with meaning, hence signs. Second, they do not have essences but are defined by a network of relations, internal and external. From a conventional viewpoint, if the stress falls on the former, the work becomes primarily of semiological significance while if the latter aspect is emphasised it becomes of structuralist orientation. But as a matter of fact, the two are inseparable. Without a proper consideration of the system of relations (where meanings are actually produced), one cannot study signs. Reciprocally, what is pertinent among relations of items can only be explored by considering them as signs.

Fundamental to structuralism is the idea that if human actions or productions are meaningful, it is only because

underlying them are system of conventions and distinctions. The well-known example is of marriage-ceremony which gains meaning as a social or cultural phenemenon only with respect to a set of institutional conventions and distinctions/differences. Introducing the works of Marcel Mauss, Levi-Strauss observes: "particular actions of individuals are never symbolic in themselves; they are the elements out of which is constructed a symbolic system, which must be collective". What determines the cultural meaning of any act (or object) is a whole system of constitutive rules not so much to regulate behaviour as to create the possibility of particular forms of behaviour. It is only in this sense that culture is thought to be composed of a set of symbolic systems. In this logic, what defines a phenomenon bearing meaning is its distinction from other phenomena within the symbolic system where they are placed. Thus in structuralism the object is itself structured and defined by its place in the structure of the system.

The linguists who works are utilised in understanding sign and structure of cultural phenomena are Saussure, those of the Prague circle, Hjelmslev and Chomsky. One very important reason for deriving insights from linguistic models is that, in the case of linguistic signs, the arbitrary(or conventional) basis is obvious while in the case of non-linguistic signs there is always the danger that their meanings might seem

immanent (or natural). Linguistics, Saussure argued while postulating the science of semiology, is designed to study the system of rules underlying speech and hence by its very nature compells the analyst to go into the arbitrary basis of the phenomenon he is studying.

Saussure distinguished between speech acts (parole) and the system of language (langue) and this gave a proper object of study in the heterogenous mass of linguistic phenoma. The Pargue circle of linguists (particularly Jacobson and Trubetzkoy) took this idea even further by concentrating on the system which underlies speech sounds. They distinguished between actual speech sounds (phonetics) and the investigation of those aspects of sound that are functional in a particular language (phonology). Trubetzkoy argued: "Phonology should investigate which phonic differences are linked in the language under consideration, with differences of meaning, how these differentiating elements or marks are related to one another and according to what rules they combine to form words and phrases".[9] The Prague circle was able to provide the structuralists with the clearest linguistic model to the structuralists because it showed the systematic nature of the most familiar phenomena, distinguished between the system and its realization and concentrated not on the substantive characteristics of individual phenomena but on abstract formal/differential features which could be understood in relational terms.

Hjelmslev's influence on social science is primarily because of his insistence that his glossematics provided a theoretical framework which humanistic disciplines need in their way of becoming scientific. He emphasised more strongly the formal nature of linguistic systems. In fact, he thought that in principle the description of language need not make reference either to the phonic or graphic substance in which its elements may be realised. "A priori it would seem to be a generally valid thesis that for every process there is a corresponding system, by which the process can be analysed and described by means of a limited number of premises."[10] This thesis became one of the axioms of structuralist method.

Finally, Noam Chomsky. Although his model has been accepted only by a few structuralists and generative grammer as such plays no role in the development of structuralism, what makes it important in this context is a methodological statement of remarkable clarity it offers. As Jonathan Culler has put it: "Although within linguistics itself the differences between Chomsky's approach and that of his predecessors are extremely important, at the level of generality which concerns those looking to linguistics for models to apply elsewhere, Chomsky's work can be taken as an explicit statement of the programme implicit in linguistics as a discipline but not heitherto adequately or coherently expressed."[11] Thus

through an indirect route (or, as a contrast), Chomsky's theory of language makes clear what the structuralist project actually has been, the implications of it and in what manner accounts of structuralism as a branch of science have been (or have not been) misplaced or misguided. The point, hence, is not how Chomsky influenced structuralists but how (and why) his model helps to clarify and adjudge basic concepts and analytical procedures that structuralists have drawn from linguistics.

But Sussures' isolation of langue and parole has remained the kingpin of modern linguistic discussions, one on which the entire linguistic import of structuralist studies of cultural phenomena is based. While langue is a system, a set of interpersonal rules and norms, parole comprises the actual manifestations of the system in speech and writing. Within linguistics there are controversies about the exact territories of the two, but what is important for the structuralist is a pair of distinctions which the differentiation of langue and parole is designed to cover: between rule and behaviour, and between the functional and the non-functional. In social and cultural realm, the rule is always at some distance from actual behaviour and the gap is of potential meaning. Behaviour may not always tally with the norms but this does not put the existence of norm into crisis: in fact, it is the duality of adherence to and deviation from the normative that attributes meaning to the system. Another important point about langue is

that one need not be aware of these rules or norms consciously. What is important is the intuitive grasp of these which permits actions without overt reflection. But though these rules (the langue) may be unconscious, they have empirical correlates. It is the jobs of the linguist to construct a system of rules that would account for this knowledge by formally reproducing it. So it is not behaviour so much but the knowledge that bears upon this behaviour which is a linguist's concern.

Saussure argues that if cultural studies are to proceed in an analogeus way, they must identify a set of facts to be explained and then determine what rules or conventions must be postulated to account for them. Any discipline concerned with the social use of material objects has to take insight from another distinction between langue and parole : this concerns the opposition between functional and non-functional. If the sentence is The hat is on the mat and the speakers, irrespective of region, age or sex, utter the sentence (the actual physical sound varying considerably) correctly, the variations in pronounciation are non-functional since the meaning conveyed is same. But if some speaker alters the sentence to: The cat is on the mat, there is a complete change in meaning and hence the variation of the sound from h to k is functional. In a similar manner, in cultural studies one has to distinguish between the cultural objects themselves and the system of functional distinctive features which gives

membership (example, class) and endows meaning. Trubetzkoy draws a parallel from this angle between the ethonologicl study of clothing as a project and the description of a phonological system (Principles of Phonology). Ethnologist who is investigating the features carrying sociological significance may ignore many aspects of garments considered important by the users. By isolating those distinctions by which garments are converted into signs, the ethnologist tries to reconstruct the system of features and norms which members of a society take for granted. Though the example as it stands is sound, Trubetzkoy, we can argue, has ignored a crucial problem of 'decoding' or 'reading' - the problem of subjective bias - that later proved undoing for many semiological studies. We would come to this point later.

Another important point of Saussurean linguistics which has been exploited in the study of structure and sign of cultural objects is the argument that the identity of two-units is not one of substance but of form. The way in which Goldmann, as we have already pointed out, tries to link the great works of literature with their contemporary social reality is a case in point. Saussure gives the famous example of the 8.25 pm. Geneva-to-Paris Express, which one takes to be the same train though every aspect (engine, coaches, personnel, even small variations of time) of the object train is different every day. This is because, Saussure argues, the 8.25 train is not a

substance but a form and defined by its relation to other trains. The train's identity as a social and psychological fact is independent of those traits/characteristics of the object train. Similarly, what defines an object is its differential value: the letter 't' can be written in numerous ways so long as it does not get confused other letters as l; p, b, etc.

Semiology and structuralism have appropriated this notion of relational identity and differntial value. As a semiologist argues: "In formulating the rules of the system one must identify the units on which the rules operate and thus must discover when two objects or actions count as instances of the same unit."[12] It also constitutes a crucial break with the notion of evolutionary identity. Saussure argued that the relation between individual units and its historical antecedents are irrelevant in understanding the units as elements of the system. Though in the context of linguistics it may make good sense, it is basing on this argument of Saussure that much narrow structuralist displacement of history has taken place in social studies. This point we would like to focus while studying the radical break that Roland Barthes brought about is semiology.

Saussure's account of the social nature of language (langue) needs to be clarified. To begin with, he characterise langue, which he views as the only genuine subject matter of

linguistics, as a social institution. Langue differs from other social intitutions precisely in that it is a system of communication, a system of signs. It is interesting to note that although langue is conceived of as a social phenomenon, the only access to it is provided by the individual consciousness of the speakers, namely, by what we would today call 'the native speaker's linguistic intuition.' With his langue - parole dichotomy Saussure formulates (but does not solve) the problem of the social vs individual, or objective vs. subjective modes of existence of language. The question as to the precise nature of langue (and, by implication, of linguistics) may be reduced to the following: How does a convention or rule exist (ontology), and, how is it known (epistemology)? At times these questions are misunderstood in modern linguistics, equating 'subjective' with 'intuition' and 'objective' with observation. But the simple fact is that, taken in itself, observation too is wholly individual and subjective process. And within the framework which views these two concepts in such banal and incorrect manner, the notion 'social' remains incomprehensible.

What Saussure has to say about language being a fait social is in itself correct. But when he attempts to answer the question of the nature of the (synchronic) 'laws' of language, however, his account becomes confused. Given that langue is a social institution, it would be natural to think that 'laws' of language are analogous to constituents of institutions, i.e.,

rules. Saussure, however, is at pains to distinguish linguistic rules from social ones, on the basis of the alleged fact that although the former are general, they are not imperative. What he means by the now-imperative character of linguistic rules is that language does not posses any inherent force that could guarantee the maintenance of a given rule. But it can be argued that this is a universal truth about all social rules, not only is linguistic. In fact, Saussure himself had implicitly admitted this when he stated that social rules are valid within certain limits of time and place. Actually, he made the fundamentally wrong distinction between linguistic and social rules, when it should have been between social and natural rules. This is the principle source of fallacy of Saussure, something which has misdirected much of semiology and structuralism succeeding hi We will have occasion to review how culture-studies try to deal with this problem of Saussearean linguistic in their attempts to apply its insight. Right now, however, we take a de tour to the well-known theories of film.

SIGN, COGNITION AND THE CINEMA

From Eisenstein to Metz

Umbert Eco points out at the historic imbalance of communication theory which has focussed on the sender. In this basic way, he calls our attention to the 'message - reader complex' in much the way that McLuhan corrected our collective tendency to ignore the character of the medium in describing the communication process. Eco emphasises analysis of message not from a traditional content analyst's point of view but from an understanding that sees the message as a structured whole

from which each element gains its significance. His primary interest lies in the meaning of the messages and the universe they constitute and how the discourse is shaped. Obviously, the arrangement of problematic in this way is to unveil the realm of cognition. Thomas A. Sebeok, in his book The Sign and It's Masters, has specified two constructs of semiology which has contributed to the analysis of the message: (i) The role of the reader in interpreting texts and (ii) The relation between a sign and the user's world of reference.

In this inward journey of understanding the message - reader sitution, structural linguistics (as we have discussed in the previous section) comes to immediate use. And with this comes the realization that film (or, for that matter, any other mass media product), is a culturally/ideologically determined heterogeneity of codes rather than an original and unique expression of certain 'human' themes. Certain interpretations of Saussurean linguistics, however, puts the 'receiver' at equivalence with the 'emitter'. These interpretatons see 'message' and its internal structure independent of the social and historical codes. Correspondingly, much of early semiology has got stuck with immanent (-in-itself) analysis. Later, it was realized that codes are not purely textual, in the sense that their recognition, distribution and activation would vary socially and historically. Eco has argued that decodification process is oriented not by the internal context and explicit

indication of the codes but also by the circumstances of communication and the receiver's own code. Hence, reading should be a means of accounting for how, under certain conditions, a text will tend to be read in particular ways because of the way meaning is placed through the articulation of particular aesthetic, social and historical codes.

Seen from a certain angle, much of the journey of semiology as a science of signs - from the early Metz to Barthes and Tel Quel theorists concerns just this: the acknowledgement of the importance of the social-historical in understanding the nature of codes. In the remaining part of this chapter, we are going to highlight on this, what may be called the increasing 'radicalization' of semiology, in some detail.

Theorists like Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Balazs wanted to establish a scientific programme for understanding the psychological dimension of the cinema. Eisenstein especially attempted to integrate the scientific study of film with psychology, sociology and linguistics. Most of his early work was directed at an analysis of montage: the joining together of spatially and temporally continuous shots by means of cutting. He viewed montage as a major formative element of cinema and tried to understand its psychological basis. He argued that the contrasts within and between shots give rise to conflict or tension which renders a film sequence emotionally exciting and attributes meaning to montage: "in regard to the action as a

whole, each fragment piece is almost abstract." Something photographed in one montage piece can hardly carry meaning: it provides only the barest skeleton of information. Only when it is reconstructed via a montage of fragments can it be fully revealed - narratively, emotionally and aesthetically.

Later Eisenstein broadened the notion of montage. Less emphasis was placed on conflict. In his book, The Film Sense, he mades an analogy between montage and aspects of word-blending. Thus Lewis Carroll's blend word 'frumious' is not the sum of furious and fuming but rather an entirely different word. The notion of conflict is unnecessary for an account of the processes of creative neologism. By the early 1940's Eisenstein acknowledged that in his early work too much attention had been given to juxtaposition of shots with too little attention given to the analysis of what was being actually juxtaposed. Even so, in The Film Sense he generally maintained the montage framework he had previously developed, although explicit use of the notion of conflict was avoided.

In marked contrast to Eisenstein are the 'constructivists', mainly Pudovkin and Balazs. For Eisenstein, the montage construction and its constituent elements are indivisible. But Pudovkin and Balazs maintain a conception of montage as a linkage of pieces - a 'concepetual glue' that pasted together the otherwise independent components. Pudovkin described the 'phenemenology of montage'as being constructed by expectations,

inferences, deductions, and associations. In a similar manner, Balazs argued that the viewer presupposes the existence of a typically human intelligence underlying any particular sequence of images displayed. Based on the presupposition, the viewer strives to unravel the relations that bind these images together and the meaning they are to convey. As such, the understandings of the constructivists have a lot of potential for understanding the cognitive nature of cinema-viewing and, in extension, the sign-system. However, while their exposition is full of interesting observations, it does not attain a very high level of sytematization. Still then, one can develop a tentative psychology of cinema basing on the arguments of these film theorists. This would centre on the analogy between real world experience and film experience.

Münsterberg represents the first attempt in this field. He argued that the viewer of popular cinema experiences montage sequence (what is now called 'Hollywood montage') on analogy to our own private dream fantasies. In the same vein, he analyses close-up shots as objectification of perceptual attention, the flash-back as an objectified act of memory, and the sequencing of shots in a cinema scene as "an objectification of the sequencing of attentional foci in ordinary real world behaviour."[13]

But later on, psychology of cinema got splitted into two opposed viewpoints: the <u>empathy</u> theory of Balazs and Pudovkin,

and the Arnheim theory of partial illusion. According to the former view, film mimics the ordinary perceptual or imaginal experiences of the viewer. The viewer then sees what would be the most likely or reasonable real world intrepretation of the sequences of images on the screen. Arnheim, in contrast, argues, that cinema creates on partial illusion of reality.and it is in this partial illusion of reality that the aesthetic potential of cinema resides. In film, colour is distorted absent, sizes and shapes apear in distorted perspective, the field of view gets chopped off at the screens borders, spatial and temporal continuity is interrupted. At the same time, it can portray real life in naturalistic surroundings. The essential properties of cinema emanates from this dual nature: on one hand, a strong affinity for reality and on the other, a partial, distorted picture. This is related to the difference between the partial cinema illusion and the world itself.

As it stands, partial illusion theory seems more sound than its counterpart. It can explain how cinema experience can improve on real world experience by being more directive. Thus, it can be of much exploratory value in understanding the ideological role of cinema. Unfortunately, proponents of the partial illusion theorists failed to relate these questions with the essential properties of cinema, as the empathy theorists failed to more than anecdotally account for the essential similarities between the cinema experience and other facets of the real world.

References to film as language abound in the works of the cinema theorists we have examined. Eisenstein, Balazs, Pudovkin all describe film as language. Eisenstein elaborated the film-as-language metaphor in his claim that there is a structural correspondence between the linguistic word and the cinematic shot, and between the linguistic sequence and the cinematic sequence.[14] He argued that, like a word, the shot is incomplete as an independent unit. Both the word and the shot derive bulk of their significance from the interactions (or, collisions) in which they partake. Balazs also share this view. However, until recently almost nothing significant has been done to ensure that the metaphor has any content - either as a methodological assumption or as a theoretical claim. As Wollen has aptly put it: "Writers about cinema have felt free to talk about film language as if linguistics did not exist."[15] A noteable exception is Christian Metz, who has investigated film from a seriously linguistic point of view. Unfortunately, Metz's important works have led as much to confusion as it has to clarification. We review Metz, summarising and criticizing some major point raised by him and, at the same time, focusing on the development of his views - from a 'neutral' film semiology to one which is centred on politics in the broadest sense.

The task with which Metz started developing a film semiology is that of applying the methods and models of Ferdinand de Saussure to the study of film. As Saussure points out: "In the syntagm a term acquires its value only because it stands in opposition to everything that precedes or follows it or both."[16] In this sense, de Saussure's approach to linguistics envisions a taxonomy of contrasts. The approach of Metz is very much that countenanced by de Saussure. According to Saussure, The semiotic of a given field rests on a dual foundation of linguistics and the structurcal peculiarities of the particular field in question. Metz enriches this programme, by adopting a three-fold support: the study of film, linguistics and narratology (the study of narrative structure). His intention is to begin the semiology of cinema with the semiology of the narrative film. He is particularly scornful of attempts at making anti-narrative or anti-spectacle films and manages to co-opt these by claiming: "The modern film is more narrative, and more satisfyingly so, and that the main contribution of the new cinema is to have enriched the filmic narrative." Roland Barthes strongly opposes this claim arguing that dismissing 'writerly' cinema, Metz has dismissed certain areas of film-making practice (that would not fall under his prescription for fictional narrative) as well, proving his ideological bias. We will come to this issue in the next section.

In Film Language, Metz argued against rigid analogies to verbal language. He claims (as against Eisenstein) that there is no equivalance between the word and the image - the latter is not a discrete unit that can be reduced into smaller basic units and analysed. Metz sees the image as being too close an analogue of the thing in real world: "The mechanical nature of basic filmic operation (photographic and phonographic duplication) has the consequences of integrating into the final product chunks of signification whose internal structure remains afilmic, and which are governed mainly by cultural paradigms."[17]

This mimetic notion of the image is the opposite of that held by Barthes and particularly Umberto Eco, the Italian semiologist whom Metz cites as responsible for many of his later changes. Eco posited the rather startling idea that the iconic (photographic) image is, like the verbal sign, "completely arbitrary, conventional and unmotivated". He points out that there are so many transformations involved from the object to the representation of the object that the image has none of the properties of the object represented , but that, at most, the iconic sign reproduces some of the conditions of perception

For Metz, there is little distinction between 'inside' the film and 'outside' the film. Analysis of the ways that a given ideology in the film might be mediated through the codes

of visual representation is thus precluded. Metz's concept of visual representation would allow ideology to be thought of as existing only at the level of the content and easily extracted from the film. The idea that the ideology connot be seperated from the cinematic codes which mediate, transform and deform it, can be used to argue against political efficacy of 'popular radical' films. Such a film might have a 'correct' ideology at the level of content but its message must pass through the sieve of bourgeois codes of representation which for the most part deflect or even negate the radical intention of the film. Metz apparently is unaware of such problems.

There is another point at which Metz sees the mechanisms of narrative as 'natural'. He belives that the motivation of a viewer for linking film segments together "must be explained by the spontaneous psychological mechanisms of film perception" and he quotes from another theoretician (Anne Souriau) who said that the spectator "interpolates spontaneously the visual material that the film presents." It is important to remember that whenever two pieces of film are joined together, some sort of signification occurs other than a mere chronological 'reality'. Metz wants to have this linkage remain neutral; he does not account for the fact that we learn to read a series of images and their connections in a culturally and ideologically determined manner.

It is illuminating to contrast Metz's stance of neutrality with that of Umberto Eco. Eco sees semiology as a tool for revolutionary activity and talks about 'semiotic guerilla warfare' : if one can not seize or change the institutions of production, one can at least change the way they are perceived. The comparison of these two theoreticians is a good argument against ideology that maintains that a 'political' analysis is always necessarily a reduction of the aesthetic object under study. It is exactly at the point where Metz's bourgeois ideology insists that he reads political/cultural determinations as 'natural' that Eco belives a cinesemiotics must begin.

In his more recent works (Langauge and Cinema and Citique of Cinema as Imitation), however, Metz has changed his position considerably though he still restricts himself to the study of classical narrative film. He does not deal with the continuity of particular films but goes much deeper, exposing and questioning the very mechanisms by which all fiction films operate. Metz although has attempted point out the codes upon which this mechanism is totally dependent. In Language and Cinema (LC), he examined the interrelations between specifically cinematic codes as fast cars, middle-class households,cocktail party, fashion, travel, etc, are manipulated and placed within the narrative films. But even in LC, Metz is at pains to assert the importance of neutral or

apolitical science, although in person he would assert that he was interested in that period of narrative cinema which was mainly a naive or unselfconscious reflection of bourgeois ideology. The claim is untenable. In his recent book (Critique of Cinema As Imitation), he again studies this type of cinema, but with a specifically political intent incorporated into his research. He combines two approaches: 'vision theory' to explore the physiological relation between the spectator and film and 'dream theory'. His concern now is to understand the mechanism by which narrative/fiction films affect audiences and how these mechanism establish fiction film as an historical institution (replacing novel) operating within western capitalist culture. As a marked constrast to his earlier works, Critique demonstrate how the physiological and psychological mechanism that films draw on serve to maintain film as commodity which people would like to consume.

Metz argues that the Hollywood fiction films manipulate the spectators's psyche and even sell the establishment to our sub-conscious. Through an analysis of the relationship between the spectator and projected film at the time of viewing, Metz tries to unveil the process of such cultural conditioning. He uses vision theory to anaylse the physiological aspect of it. Normal retinal vision transforms 3-dimensional objects into 2-dimensional images. But in film, since it is projected on a flat screen, the image is processed in the brain without

having to be transformed into a 2-dimensional one. But the spectator is unaware that monocular vision is being substituted for binocular vision.

The objects in the image not only function as an effigy of the real world but also simulate the actual mechanism of perception. The use of rear projection is totally dependent on this subversion and serves a good example of the phenomena. In shots where characters are seen riding in an automobile, the unwary spectator thinks that the background moving behind the car is really part of the shot. A film image (the projected background) is re-filmed along with the 3-dimensional car and characters. The illusions goes unoticed. Thus the illusion of movement is also because film is able to subvert the vision process by providing an image similar enough to that recieved by 3-dimensional perception and as a result is accepted as real. Again, while the spectators sit motionless, the camera movement seems to change the size and distance of objects. The combination of spectator motionless camera movement, and editing, destroys the spectator's normal point of reference. This film's way of manipulating visual perception gives a physiological-perceptual basis ot the 'realism' of fiction film even to its spectacular and fantasy creating elements.

Applying Frend's Interpretation of Dreams, Metz traces important similarities between the state of one's psyche during a fiction film and a person's psyche during a dream. The

dream situation is not exactly like the film viewing situation but they have certain important aspects in common. Like in a dream situation, the film spectators are seated motionless in a dark room. They, of course, do not close their eyes, but their normal 3-dimensional field of vision has been replaced by a two dimensional screen. The film provides an illusion of the real world in the form of visual, and audial stimuli, which the spectator identifies in the same way that the stimuli are identified in a real world situation. A dreamer similarly perceives stimuli created by the brain. Unlike a dreamer, the film spectator, however, is basically conscious that he/she is watching a film, but at certain moments there is a 'willing' suspension of disbelief. These moments corresponds to a person's subconscious state during a dream. Metz calls this 'transfer of perspective' for the spectator has transfered his though-process to the 'fiction of the film. Metz identifies these moments as fundamental to the process of brain-washing and propaganda.

Metz gives a psychoanalytical interpretation of the relation between a fiction film and our psyches during these sub-conscious periods in terms of the tension between ego (desires) and superego(guilt functioning as self-censorship mechanism). This is specially so in terms of socially embedded values or morality : the various conditionings, which may differ with each person but which play important role in

letting us know which of our desires are normal and which are perverse. We process our perception through our system of desires and fears (censorship) and give them connotation and opinion. This is how the fiction films, argues Katz, 'communicates' with our psyche. It presents illusions of real works situations which plug themselves into our psyche and play upon our desires and fears. Desires, both normal and perverse, are appealed to and restraint and controls of these desires are applied within the narrative of the films. Most importantly, while appealing to our desires, these fiction films condition our sperego or self-censorship mechanisms to pattern after those shown in the films. The spectator learns to shape his/her desires as they are shaped within the narrative of the film.

POLITICS OF SIGN AND SIGN OF POLITICS: Myth'fication of Daily Life in the Understanding of Roland Barthes.

Susan Sontag, in her otherwise brilliant introduction to the Fontana edition of "Barthes: Selected Writings", makes a point which we consider as fundamentally undoing for any understanding of the enterprise of Roland Barthes, an enterprise which will remain in the decades to come of quintessentially radical value for the science of sign and structures. She argues that Barthe's relation to politics is ever and always evasive in nature and describes him as 'one of the great modern refusers of history.' This judgement is on the

basis of her observation that World War II never gets mentioned in his writings, that his understanding domesticates subject (which she thought place him in diametrical opposition to Walter Benjamin who could not help connecting his ethical burden with politics) and that he regarded politics as a kind of constriction of the human subject which has to be outwitted. Without calling into question Sontag's understanding of politics (which is not within our scope), we may safely conclude that this was a grossly wrong estimate of the man and his works. The prodigious variety of his work notwithstanding Barthe's essential endeavour has been (as Sontag only makes us aware) to organise the theory of his own mind. And if one wants to understand that theory through his basic contribution which, of course, centres semiology in particular, and linguistics in general (again, let there be no mis-reading of Barthes comment: "In linguistics I have never been anything but an amateur" which was only to disavow the 'vulgarity' of system-building), one appreciates the primary importance that history and politics assumed for Barthes. Infact, Barthes' quarrel with his colleagues in semiology has been precisely based on this - that the political (and essential) purpose of semiology should be the demasking the moment of naturalization in bourgeois society and that for this semiology requires a certain stance within history : in order to expose this process of naturalization, it is necessary to see society as a process

of structuring that is created by the interdependence of human activities.

As Stephen Heath argues, semiology "is the elaboration of models fitted to realise the system of intelligibility of each objects". But this soon deteriorated into (through, we can perhaps argue, a concentration on the study of language itself) a 'euphoric dream of scientificity' (Barthes). This hints at the narrow structuralist project of drawing up models of the systematicity of each system, such that any possible enunciation could be predicted by the operation of the model. Barthes argues that such scientificity can operate with monological systems, whereas social systems are complexes of diverse practices whose relation to each other and mutual effectivity is constantly in a process of mutation (and formation). It is Barthes' Marxism which tries to reorient seniology in terms of this understanding holds it from declining into a sterile formalism "elaborated by models whose only relevance is to a world that stands still."

In Mythologies, Barthes parallels Marx of The German Ideology in his understanding of ideology. The analysis of myth was for him 'the beginning of semiology'. It explains how the ruling ideas of a social formation come to seem universal and natural. Hence, it conceives of ideology as a system of ideas, the product of a ruling class which form the reality of a society. Barthes argues that the petit-bourgeoisie do not live

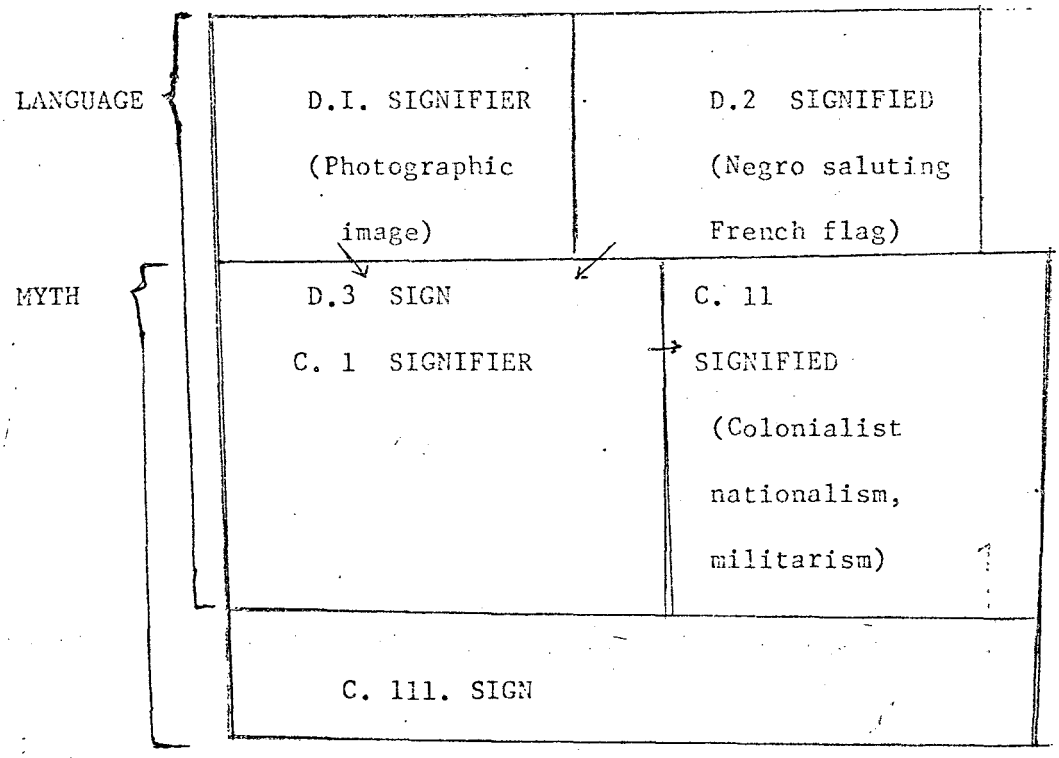
the material realtity of the bourgeoisie (who own the means of production), but they live bourgeois ideological reality as 'the natural , unacknowledged limits' of their universe. As Barthes puts it: "The bourgeoisie ceaselessly absorbs into its ideology a whole humanity which has none of its fundamental status, and can only live it in their imagination, that is, through a fixation and impoverishment of consciousness. By spreading its representations across the whole catalogue of petit-bourgeois images, the middleclass sanctions the illusory lack of differention between social classes."[18]

Myth takes over the ideas embodied in 'high culture' and makes them homely: high culture is vulgarised into a kind of public philosophy. The petit-bourgeois world is a world of sameness;democratic political change takes place within this sameness, altering the structures but maintaining bourgeois relations and, hence, ideology. Barthes identifies many forms of thought and practice (as diverse as cooking and children's toys) as they essentialise various social norms, and features: Barthes argues:

"The social productivity of the world, the fact that it is constituted of complex relations which are in constant flux, disappears beneath system of essences. The real is the immediately visible and this visible does not appear to be a form of representation. Such is the work of myth."[19]

In this process of naturalization, there are two systems of

meaning operating: the denotative and the connotative, the object-languages (the film, the car, the toy etc) and the myth which gets attached to it. The myth takes advantage of the form of this denotative language to insinuate itself. In the famous example that Barthes gave, the photograph of a black soldier saluting French flag in a magazine cover, the denotative meaning is invaded by a second meaning. The connotative meaning springs from a mixture of colonialist nationalism and militarism, here implying (it was during the Algerian war of independence) that the negroes are perfectly willing to defend French rule to their death. The connotative meaning hinges on the denotative: there is a perpetual to-and-fro movement between them and the bond seems natural. The world supplies to myth a historical reality and myth gives in return a nature image of this reality. Hence, Barthes argues that myth is a devise of conceptualising and sign-ifying the world, a process which is motivated by the necessity of a dominant order to present itself as a natural order.



(Figure 3:1)

As shown in figure 3:1 the whole of denotative sign is used as a signifier by the connotative system. As soon as an object or practice (whatever may be the form) signifies, as soon as it is endowed with meaning, it submits to the differentiating system of language. It becomes a unity of concept and signifier.: a sign. It then opens to the connotative process, where the sign as a whole is taken up to be the articulator of a second concept, the realm of ideology. Barthes, however, makes it clear that in the diagram, "the spatialisation of the pattern is only a metaphor". But what is clear is that myths themselves are a product of a process of signification: "the world enters language as a dialectical relation between

activities, between human actions: it comes out of myth as a harmonised display of essences"[20]

Barthes later questioned this initial formulation of Mythologies, considering it somewhat naive since it implies the possibility of a kind of pre-mythic signification. This assumes a kind of natural link between the signifier and signified which constitute the denotative sign. As Sebeok comments: "the development of semiology increasingly exposed the contradictions of a science based on systematicity and differentiation whilst still attempting to operate the distinction between denotation and connotation. It demostrated increasingly that the connotative system is an integral part of the signifying system that gives intelligibility to each sign."[21] Barthes' later writings show how both connotation and denotation are inseparable to give an account of the structure of meaning of social practices and objects, like furniture, food habits (steak and chips followed by ice-cream, but not steak and rhubarb followed by spinach and cream, although there is nothing in the material nature of these foods to prevent such a combination), table manners, chess,etc.

In his Introduction to Semiology, Georges Mounin urges that semiology should restrict investigations to cases where signifiers have clearly defined concepts attached to them by a communicative code. Distinguishing between interpretation and decoding, he argues: "the decoding is univocal for all

recipients in possession of the code of communication".[22] His paradigm case is that of traffic signs, where one can look up a signifier in a code book and discover it signified. But such an approach is unsuited for the study of any complex system. Mounin's view, by extension, would argue that literature is not a system of signs because one cannot speak of encoding and decoding by fixed codes. Such an approach to the signified Jacques Derrida calls 'metaphysics of presence', which "longs for a truth behind every sign: a moment of original plentitude when form and meaning were simultaneously present to consciousness and not to be distinguished."[23]

C S Peirce points out that there is a fundamental incompleteness of sign. The signified cannot be grasped directly but requires an 'interpretant' in the form of another sign. Barthes' contribution to semiology lies precisely on this emphasis on plurality of codes and multiplicity of readings. This comes out most clearly in his S/Z , his treatment of Balzac's little known novella Sarrasine. The selection of Sarrasine is significant. It shows Barthes' commitment for 'morality of ends' (as Susan Sontag calls it), his treatment of a piece of literature more as a problem than as an end.

The common assumption of the breakdown of the tale Sarrasine in 561 pertinent units of significtion (lexia) is

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that this is Barthes' way of achieving an intricate textual analysis, an accounting for all the possible meanings of the Balzac novella. From the outset, however, Barthes makes it clear that his aim is not an exhaustive, definitive analysis of a single work. Such approaches seek to impose, argues Barthes, an order on the text, making it lose, what Barthes calls, its difference. The type of analysis produced in S/Z focusses on this difference as multiplicity and plurality: Barthes does not assume meaning but rather addresses to the multiplicity of meanings. On this count he distinguises between the 'readerly' and the 'writerly'. Barthes' own point of reference, Balzac, in many ways serves as a casebook example of the 'readerly': discourse which does not seek really to challenge the reader but to rather present the reader with a world that is coherent, well ordered and already meaningful. The 'writerly' text, however does not assume the meaningfulness and coherence of discourse but rather challenges it, and in so doing challenges the reader as well, shaking his or her assumptions and judgement of reality in day to day world. Twentieth century literature abounds in the example of the 'writerly'.

While we can find many 'writerly' texts, a 'writerly' practice of reading is much more difficult to find. Barthes says there is a 'legality' of reading at fault and not simply the ways the texts are written or produced. To interpret the

text is not to give a meaning, but on the contrary to appreciate what plural constitutes it. So Barthes was actually attempting a subversion of the equation between the reader and the consumer. The precision with which Barthes deals his object or point of reference, the novella of Balzac, carries with it a gesture of destruction of the object itself as a homogeneous bloc with clearly defined boundaries. Hence Barthes was trying to give a 'writerly' reading of a predominantly 'readerly' text.

* * *

Film is ripe for the kind of considerations elaborated in S/Z. The classical stance of realist attitude which Barthes describes as symptomatic of literary criticism, of most interpretations, has characterised approaches to film. In some ways, the dominance of the 'readerly' is even more acute in film, for films are subservient to a narrow law of reading in ways that are more explicit than in literature. Barthes argues that Metz is a victim of such stance. It is the reader's task, to Barthes, to follow the cracks, opening them up even wider. Since ideology is borne more commonly by those conventions which are unnoticed, the kind of readings proposed by Barthes is a political task, an attack on the dominant modes of perception. The 'writerly', hence, is a function of the process of production itself (writing or reading) which is the task of dominant classical models to repress.

Barthes emphasises that one of the major characteristics of codified nature of human activity is the dependence of one type of codification upon another. He refers to the way realistic description, for example, depends on painting. "To describe is thus to place the empty frame which the realistic author always carries with him before a collection or continuum of objects which cannot be put into words without this obsessive operation" [24] Similarly,film depends on such a mechanism of naturalisation by piling one discursive reference point upon another, making it appear all the while that such an accommodation only better serves to illuminate reality. The most codified filmic genres (the western, the love story,etc.) possess their measure of verisimilitude by constantly referring back to other models. Filmic protagonists must be recognisable; that is the audience refers its knowledge back to other films.

Barthes talks about five types of codes: hermeneutics, semes, symbolic, proairetic (code of action) and referential.[25] Tracing out codification is but a means to appreciate the plurality- however limited- of the text, of the 'writerly', which the classical text is never totally successful in repressing. Barthes emphasises that we can define each code only in relationship to others and these relationships are themselves are in constantly flux. The five codes are woven in 'stereographic' space. Thus Barthes refuses

any hierarchy of codes".....if we make no effort to structure each code, or the 5 codes among themselves, we do so deliberately, in order to assume the multivalence of the text, its partial reversibility."[26] Although one can use these five codes as a potential model for other analysis, what seems to us more important is an evaluation of how these five codes articulate ideology. Barthes insists throughout S/Z that codes are ideologically determined mechanisms, conventions that serve the interests of a particular ideology. The important gesture of S/Z is not to deal with ideology as a singular category. Barthes knows well that all textual mechanisms are permeated with ideology and that we cannot for example, separate the ideology of a text from its style.'

Barthes' endeavour could still be critiqued, perhaps, for failing to situate the text of Sarrasine within the social and economic reality of 19th century capitalism. From the point of view of ideology, which is where the text is located, he deliberately chooses not to isolate the text as a miniature appendage of the economic structure of capitalism. The text itself is overdetermined. The author attempts to resolve contradictions, unsuccessfully, or rather to dispel contradiction. The classic or realistic text possesses an economy of narrative. The explicitness with which Sarrasine enfolds a narrator who tells a story in exchange for sex

illustrates that".....narrative is determined not by a desire to narrate but by a desire to exchange : it is a medium of exchange: an agent, a currency, a gold standard."[27] Similarly, the semes of the text are organised according to a thematic economy; their exchange value, says Barthes, depends on their cultural familarity. In short, the text is a micro-economic system determined by a narrative logic, a narrative logic which is ultimately the'natural'laws of capitalism.

Yet Barthes clearly refutes the capacity of ideology to be the major determinant of the text. He does not see the text as an ideological system but rather as a network permeated by ideology:

"The primary evaluation of all texts can come neither from science, for science does not evaluate, nor from ideology, for the ideological value of a text (moral, aesthetic, political, alethiological) is a value of representation, not of production."[28]

Implication here is that as long as we live in ideology (be it proletarian or bourgeois), we live in a world of closed system, of readerly discourse, of channelled meaning. If this is so, the basis of this demystification, which Barthes talks about - the text as difference, the liberation of the writerly- can hardly be a-ideological.

TEL QUEL : Semiology at a deadlock?

Tel Quel semiologists started where Barthes ended but got more entangled in a specific problem that Barthes was facing in his later writings. The transition of Barthes can be viewed like this: from an analysis of the intelligibility of works to an 'open' approach which stresses the creative freedom of both writer and reader, from the idea of a transcendent model for several texts to each text as its own model (S/Z), each text to be treated in its 'difference' (textual code not being the parole of a narrative langue). Like the later Barthes, Tel Quel semiologists also highlight the multiplicity of readings and plurality of meanings. They challenge the view that readings should be studied as a rule governed process, describing the status quo instead of an active force that liberates semiotic practices from the ideology holding them. They argue that the ideology of culture promotes a particular way of reading from which conservative semiology attempts to frame rules to attribute them the status of norms of rationality. Texts are open to multiple readings. Each text contains within itself the possibility of an infinite set of structures. It is grossly ideological to privilege one set over all others by setting up a system of rules. Hence, what semiologists of Tel Quel tradition are emphasising is the

concept of meaning as production. For Kristeva sign is both a product and a process of production. Sign as a product is open to structuralist description of a system of relations. But she argues that it is more important to understand sign as a process of production, i.e., how meaning is produced in the text itself. Text is a double-layered phenomenon, both gaining meaning from each other: Pheno-text (the printed text) and Geno-text (its genesis). If the former is 'signified structure', the latter is 'significant productivity', the former being intelligible only through the latter. So, for Tel Quel, text is not a product, a finished massage, but a meaningful production - the emphasis obviously is more on structuration than structure. Thus, like the later Barthes, the Tel Quel semiologists hold the idea of ideology not as a level of connotation attached to denotation but as the reduction of the production of meaning to only one signification which appears 'nature'.

But whatever may be the theoretical attraction of this view, it suffers from a particular problem in practical applications - a problem which Barthes faced in his later works and which has got more magnified in Tel Quel's arguments, almost hamstrunging any future development of semiology. Understanding a phenomenom of culture must always take place on some defined context; production of meaning in a culture is at any specific time governed by specific conventions. As

Culler puts it: "In the days when Wittgenstein was discussing the problem of meaning and intention one could not say 'bububu' and mean 'if it doesn't rain I shall go for a walk', whatever may be the case today. The semiologist can study the implicit rules which enable readers to make sense of texts - which define the range of acceptable interpretations- and he can try to change those rules, but these are different enterprises which the facts of cultural history alone would enanle one to separate."[29] Precisely because Tel Quel argues for unlimited freedom in readings, it is more important to apply certain 'principles of relevence'. It is no doubt true that there should be attempts to unchain the process of reading from the constraints of the understanding of culture (generated usually by the dominant hegemony) but it also requires one to formulate some "rules to apply to the combinations or contrasts produced by random extraction and association.

Derrida very succinctly gives the reason for going beyond the variety of structuralism Tel Quel is taking issue with. The notion of structure has a teleological character : the structure is determined by a particular end; it is recognized as a complex contributing to this end. The analyst of structure, Derrida argues, has the task of displaying the work as a spatial configuration in which time past and time future points to one end, which is always present. In his word: "In particular, a structuralist reading, though it

takes place in time, always presupposes and appeals to this simulataneity of the book as seen by God Derrida argues against the 'logocentric fiction' which, while recognizing the arbitrary nature of signs, thinks of signs as settled once for all and henceforth governed by established conventions.

As the structured nature of structures became clear, arguments for systems decentre got overnight purchase. The question posed was: could not the movement of analysis include a critique of that centre, so that it was not left as unintended postulate? Kristeva argues that semiology cannot develop except as a critique, of semiology, discovering at the end its own ideological end. [illegible] phenomena that a postulated centre excludes, the centre can be displaced from its role. The purpose should be to uphold the text of infinite possibilities which serves as the subject [illegible] Kristeva calls 'geno-text'), "the possibilities of past, present and future are given there, before being worked or imposed in the 'pheno-text'.

not clear

However, the fear that concepts which govern analysis of meaning might be attacked as ideological premises has led the Tel Quel theorists to attempt to dispense with them altogehter. One cannot use the concept of 'geno-text' to any purpose since one can never know what it contains. Thus, in effect, it prevents one from rejecting any proposal about the

text. Every relation becomes a possible source of meaning. Derrida says" "The absence of an ultimate meaning opens an unbounded space for the play of signification". Hence, it is all the more necessary to re-introduce certain 'principles of constraints'; without restrictive rules there would be no meaning whatsoever. If each text had a single meaning then it was possible to argue that this meaning was inherent to it and depended upon no general system. But since, plurality of meanings is what is argued for by Tel Quel semiologists, a defined practice of reading is absolutely necessary. And this is what these scholars are unable to provide, undoing their enterprise which is otherwise provocative. It is a curious non sequitur to reject the concept of a system on the ground that interpretative codes which enable one to read the text produce a plurality of meanings.

A NEW PARADIGM IN THE OFFING?

Not very far back, Raymond Williams in an article[30] in The New Left Review (1981/October) makes an interesting proposition. The article is a kind of stock-checking of the various tendencies of Marxism and sturucturlism with the aim to formulate a unified alternative paradigm for cultural studies. Williams argues that many streaks of both Marxism and structuralism have got accommodated within the dominant paradigm of cultural studies (he was talking specifically about literature), where they can be seen as diverse approaches to the same object of knowledge. They can be taken as the "guest, however, occasionally untidy or unruly, of a decent paradigm". Yet there are certain other tendencies which do not fit (and, in fact, are quite incongruient) with the received definition. To Williams, it is these oppositional tendencies which have been able to create visible cracks in the dominant paradigm and of its established professional standards and methods. He urges the forging of these various oppositional tendencies into a unified new paradigm. As a first step towards this unification, he tries to identify the diverse tendencies in Marxism and structuralism, as they bear on what 'by received habit' we call literary studies, and to indicate which of these tendencies are compatible with the ruling paradigm as it exists and which are not.

Williams points out three different ways in which the idea of reflection has been applied in Marxist studies of literature and classifies the field accordingly. First is the most general proposition: "that the whole movement of society is governed by certain dispositions of means of production and that when these dispositions - forces and relations in a mode of production as a whole - change through the operation of their own laws and tendencies, then forms of consciousness and forms of intellectual and artistic production (forms which have their place in orthodox Marxist definition as 'Superstructure') change also".[31] This position gets translated in Marxist writings in two ways. One of these may sound rather crude today: it argues that if literary and intellectual production, in the broadest sense, is a reflection of fundamental social conflicts, the business then is to identify the contradictions and weed progressive literature from the reactionary kinds of writings, to take positions and discover possibilities to produce new kinds of writings that lay bare the hidden nature (sources and reasons of) of social conflict. In this argument literature was viewed as a dependent process on an assumed total position or class-views. When this view had to face the challenge of a much closer kind of literary analysis (of I.A. Richards, F.P. Leavis, etc.), it succumbed. The other version of this thesis is a good deal more sophisticated (or, is becoming more and more so). In this modern version, the word 'reflection' is abandoned and arguments are in terms of 'lags in time', distances and non-*a priori* correspondence between cultural practice and the overall social order.

The second position uses the idea of reflection as a passive version of mimesis: the value of literature lies on how faithfully it reflects reality. It is only from this view that Marx praises the delineation of French social life by Balzac, a man otherwise at the other end of political understanding from Marx. This view takes issue with 'tendency literature' in what instead of reflecting, one turns towards political presuppositions of one's own. But, as Williams argues, in the way the problematic is framed (asking how this particular novel or that particular film reflects reality), it gets comfortably adjusted within the ruling paradigm.

In the third version of 'reflection', any direct parallel of a work of art and reality as it is observed is taken to be illusory. The writers task is to urveil the underlying forces and movements of a society. This is the position most clearly of Lukacs who attacks naturalism which (as he argues), in trying to portray in a photographic manner the immediately apprehensible, gives a wrong impression of reality. From the 1920's onwards, the various debates centring 'mediation' can be bracketted in this category. What these arguments aim to refute is the reductive versions of the earlier positions of reflections, 'the untransformed content'. Walter Benjamin's idea of correspondence (art is no literary transformation of some element/s of reality but some observable correspondence between certain kinds of writings and certain social and economic practices), and Lucien Goldmann's idea of correspondence not at the level of content but of form (through which the works reflect the contradictory and unachieved consciousness of the time and hence can be viewed as processes of building up, stablizing and breaking down)- are examples of the'mediation of reality' arguments.

Discussing the roots of structuralism as it is being applied in cultural and literary studies, Williams argues that it comes from the early variety of Russian formalism and not the later, more historically and socially oriented one. Hence it is natural that literary formalism in Britain and

France was initially comparable with structuralism in anthropology and linguistics only in a limited way. Unlike in anthropology and linguistics where a dominant argument has always being to locate a sign/event in the whole signifying system, in literature "instead of appropriating the novel event to an already known system, the attempt was made to find its meaning within a specific structural system : in practice by the relations of this unit to other units, and then the discovery of the general internal rules of the specific system."[32] This kind of literary structuralism is by no means incongruient with the dominant paradigm; infact, as Williams points out, this brand of structuralism was there in literary analysis as early as the 20s in the kind of criticism('practical criticism') that I.A. Richards was practicising.

What can be more reasonably called 'structuralist' in literary or cultural analysis, is when the analysis of internal organisation is not so much an end in itself but "a necessary way of analysing specific or systemic form". Goldmann's analysis (both formal and historical) is a case in point. But in more specifically structuralist intervention, it gets bogged down to exploring discoverable rules of general literary organisation (of 'Narrative', or of 'Drama' etc.)

The third variety of literary structuralism has been influenced by Althusser. It argues for relative autonomy of

each practice, which is part of a wider system to which it cannot be reduced but ultimately related. The binding force of the whole system is ideology. The pervassiveness that is attributed to ideology in such literary analyses makes Williams to compare its position to that of the "Unconscious" in certain types of psychoanalysis. Literature, in this view, has a relatively privileged position. It is not just a carrier of ideology(something that one from orthodox understanding of 'reflection' would argue) but due to it specific, relative autonomy, the 'ideological' can be internally distanced and questioned. As Terry Eagleton argues in Criticism and Ideology".....although it cannot escape ideological construction, the point about its literariness is that it is a continual questioning of it internally."[33] Hence, the essential point is what is "incongruously happening in the text which undermines or questions or in certain cases entirely subverts it." Thus this type of structuralism, in its mature version, gets more and more close to the later day semiology which we have discussed in the preceding two sections.

In semiology, as we have seen, the emphasis has shifted from seeing literary works as produced by the system of signs to the position which argues that productive systems have themselves always to be constituted and reconstituted. Hence the central debate is now centring the fixed character of sign and about the system of its production and interpretation.

Williams, in a mood of self-criticism, argues that the most of what he has written can be incorporated within the dominant paradigm - except in works like The Country And The City where the "characteristic forms of writing are placed within an active, conflicting historical process in which the very forms are created by social relations which are sometimes evident and sometimes occluded."[33] This method of analysis he calls 'cultural materialism (ref: Chap.II, Section VII) which takes into account "all forms of signification (including quite centrally writing), within the actual means and conditions of their production."[35] Williams argues that like the later-day variety of semiology(which could come out from the narrow structuralist displacements of history) and the first category of reflection, cultural materialism also cannot be fitted within the dominant paradigm. All these three trends necessarily include the paradigm itself as an object of analysis, rather than as a governing definition of the object of knowledge. Hence, Williams makes a case for unifying these three trends to provide a new paradigm which would be a full-fledged alternative to the ruling one.

We do not have any dispute with Williams about much of what he argues. Only at two points we would like to express our disagreement. First, we do not consider that the first category of reflection can be a source of insight for the construction of new paradigm for the simple reason that though

it insists on relating the actual variety of literature to historical processes in which fundamental conflicts necessarily occur, crucially implicit in it is the understanding of culture/literature as a secondary process vis-a-vis a grand model of society(explained in terms of forces and means of production, primarily economic). This view has been responsible for much of the vulgarization that has taken place within Marxist cultural analysis, something that Williams himself is best qualified to speak on. In any case, any argument that holds culture as being defined by something that takes place 'outside' its realm ultimately gets attached to the older version of realism as reflecting and illuminating a general, and generally knowable, reality. This is in opposition to the fundamental postulate of both radical semiology and cultural materialism. Rather, we hold that the third category of reflection as it gets expressed in the writings of both Benjamin and Goldmann (the latter's differences with certain radical semiologists like Stephen Heath, which we have discussed, notwithstanding) could be proved of use. And this is because of their emphasis on the fallacy of 'untransformed content', while being aware of literature's anchorage with the deep structures of society.

Our second difference with Williams is on his assumption that semiology is becoming more and more historically aware. The claim is justified only in a limited way. Recent-day semiotic readings are no doubt taking issue with the idea of

fixity of sign, and the argument that codes are basically social-historical (and hence their meanings cannot be discovered within the rigid structure of the text) is gradually gaining ground. But except for the writings of Barthes and Eco (and a few others), semiology has not advanced much in this direction. The discussion of the previous section should serve as a support of our argument.

As a case in point, one could perhaps examine the position of contemporary Marxist semiologists like Rosalind Coward and John Ellis. They have tried to being together linguistics, Althusserian Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis to formulate a proper historical-social reading of signs and structures. Like Althusser, Coward and Ellis argue that ideology has a material character : apart fro.. the fact that it is expressed in material apparatuses and practices, it also works to fix the subject in certain position in relation to certain fixities of discourse. But Althusser, they argue, fails to see that the subject, thus produced, is traversed by contradictions and hence cannot explain the ideological crisis of the subject in conflict with ideology. Coward and Ellis hold : "The work of ideology produces the continuity of the ego, it puts in place the contradictory subject, puts him in positions of coherence and responsibility for his own actions so that he is able to act. This why the subject appears to be the origin of his own activity".[36] They propose the existence

of a subject which like society, is 'in process'. As Kristeva argues: "The logical expression of objective processes, negativity can only yield a subject in process, the subject that constitutes itself according to the law of negativity, that is, according to the laws of objective reality..... A subject immersed in negativity ceases to be 'external' to objective negativity, a transcendent unity, a monad to specific rules, but rather places itself at a moment which is the 'most interior', the most objective in the life of spirit."[37]

And this,Coward and Ellis argue, can only be provided through a judicious explanation of Althuserian Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis. Actually they wanted to incorporate Freud (via Lacan) into Marx (via Althusser). The underlying assumption is rather naive: Freud minus Marx is idealism, while Marx minus Freud is mechanical materialism. In the process, they put Althusser's blame on Marx and Lacan's on Freud. Hence, for Coward and Ellis (as like for Althusser), the fact that ideology has a material base lead to the assumption that ideology is the material base. This is in total contradiction with Marx's understanding. While Marx argues that the subject is produced by/in material practice (emphasising the determining character of the historical-social), Coward and Ellis hold (like Althusser again) that subject is produced for/in fixed relations of production. Coward and Ellis extend the argument that ideology as articulations which

constitute a support for the subjects meaning to the point where ideology acquires the status of crucial determining factor within society: hence its main function of fixing the subject for/in a certain meaning can only be challenged at the level of the individual. They incorporate Lacan's understanding from this point of view only, which furthers them from the basic Marxist positions.

This being the state of the art, one views William's optimism about the gradual (but sure) emergence of a Marxist semiology with strong skepticism. As he himself observes that Marxism has been generally weak in the area of the problems of subjectivity and till the time it is so, understanding the production (and nature) of meanings and values would remain ridden with problems.

NOTES

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25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., p.20.

27. Ibid., p.90.

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29. Culler, op.cit., p.20.

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32. Ibid., p.61.

33. Eagleton, T., Criticism And Ideology (Verso, London, 1980),p.17.

CHAPTER - IV

A SHORT NOTE ON CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

"Imperialism in any case does not need propaganda. Their ideology is distilled in bottles of Coca-cola and TV series. The only time they need to resort to propaganda is when there is shortage of material production, that is to say, in a period of crisis."

(Armand Mattelart)

Capital assistance and advisory services are one more form of exercising structural control over newly established media system. The media systems established by BBC and ORTF in many recently independent states incorporated features of these organizations which were in many respects against genuine local requirements. Reuters has launched similar projects of capital assistance and personnel management in many Middle East, African and Latin American countries. These borrowed structures, requiring import of media products, contribute not only to the continuation of technological dependence, but also of the ideological underpinning presented by the donor.

The implicit nature of the media as a new mode of domination is best reflected in the role of advertising. In the process of cultural hegemonization, the common demonations are the refrigerator, the car, the magazines, etc. This movement follows the modern advertising law of the creation of desires (only to be replaced by new desires, as Benjamin argued) which, surreptiously implanted by the media, take roots in the object. Objects which the giant multinational conglomerates have to sell are advertised by those media which can reach the largest number of prospective buyers. A considerable share of advertising demand coming from the multinational conglomerates, it is not surprising that the kind of consumerist programming to be found in the US prevails, and that the largest advertising agencies in the world market are American.

of cultural imperialism is conceived, in a specific sense, as the instrumental use of media in implanting imperialist values. Precisely because it refers to very specific range of phenomena, communications can act as a distinct analytical tool and we should start our discussion of the subject with a definition of communications apparatus.

DEFINING COMMUNICATIONS APPARATUS

To comprehend the nature of means of communications, we need considering production in general under capitalist conditions. In a process of "crystallization in the form of an object set apart", its abstraction from the real conditions of production, the 'natural' objects are cut off from their origin and submitted to definite processes of accumulation and exchange. Thus the bouregeois society determines their value, independent of the nature of things and products, and avoiding all reference to the basic value - assigning factor: the labour expended in production. Such a rational construct, whose very objective is to obscure all basic (production) relationship in society is what is known as fetish, and it is an ensemble of fetishes through which the capitalist mode of production legitimizes itself.

Though generated under the general logic of fetishization, the means of communications operate under and operationlize dominant social relationships, in the universe of bourgeois consciousness they are presented as a force of liberation. This is how E.B. Weiss celebrates modern communications technology:

"The communication revolution has developed the desire for commodity consumption, collective social responsibility, the youth revolution, the revolution in fashion, the era of individual judgement - in short, a new society."[1]

Thus distanced from the societal sources, where it is actually inscribed, the communications technology in its fetishized form appears to have transcended all class-antagonisms, presenting its receivers the image of a society where no one leads or controls. It is this personification of the media, attributing it an 'actor' status, that leads to the formulation of a concept of public opinion, which is intended to legitimize bourgeois way of communications with citizens and consumers, and forms an integral part of the network of the bourgeois state apparatus.

As state apparatus is not simply a superstructural formulation, it is a way of reproducing the legitimacy of social structure in the most everyday behaviour, the state apparatus of communications through different genres, for example, comic books, cartoons, photonovellas, TV series, etc., tends to operationlize, in one way or other, the bourgeois social order. This is why it is necessary to incorporate within an analysis of communications apparatus not just the power devices, but the dynamic in which people receive the messages of mass culture, register them and resist them.

TOWARDS COMPREHENDING THE PROCESS

With the above conception of the communications apparatus, it is necessary to be rid of the naive belief that the inventory of

mass-culture only includes TV shows, comic strips, films, advertising, radio plays, records - in a word, the cultural products, which one can buy in the marketplace. An adherence to this restrictive conception will lead us to an inverted vision of the imperialist cultural penetration in various societies of the world: in this logic one tends to conceive mass culture far from us, having nothing whatsoever to do with our day-to-day affairs.

In order to grasp the encompassing nature of mass culture, we not only need to transcend the pattern of analyses reduced to monetary factors, but visualize it as an element of a total structure which has evolved in response to and intending to fulfil the requirements of the imperialist counter - revolutioknary endeavours in the Third World societies. The above listed objects are merely the most visible signs of the total ideological offensive of the dominant classes which attempt to ensure a response which, though positively oriented towards their own needs, is structural and integrated with the patterns of practice of the dominated classes.

This objective of determining the popular response and the capacity of the dominant concerns to control it, explains why mass culture is not simply a bundle of autonomous objects which are conceived, shaped and manufactured once for all. This category has a profoundly historical character. The very originators and patrons of culture, who wear an appearance of peremanence, undergo deep-seated transformations in concurrence with the changed internal conditions and problems of continuance and expansion of the imperialist world.

There are a number of ways which portray the essential aspects of the process: The United States advertisement agencies in Latin America restricted themselves, till recently, to presenting consumer products. But following the emergence of vigorous mass movements, they are now openly engaged in promoting models of political development, intending to 'chanellise' the aspirations and movements of the opposition groups. The gearing of electronic and aerospace corporations, great as they are, to certain 'civilian' goals is another example of attempts to adapt commonucations apparatus to changed requirements. In advanced countries the form and content of the educational television as envisioned and brought about by the multinational corporations demonstrates the kind of changes taking place within the metropolitan power-structure itself; also indicating how alert and sensitive is the approach of general social domination to changing context.

These are instances of an ideology in practice. Before we proceed to analyse it, we would sketch briefly a basic feature of international media activity.

A NETWORK OF DEPENDENCY RELATIONS

In analysing the international media activity of today of basic significance is the understanding of the emergence and strengthening of various economic and political processes related to imperialism of nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The social formations of the so-called developing societies are anchored to that wider process of the expansion of the international capitalist system. The Third

World social formations Schiller argues, assume specific roles which define their internal structure and determine their specificity within a logic set by the core of the system. In his well-known book, Communications And Cultural Domination, he puts the view that communications is an attempt to reconcile an increasingly universal market economy with the priorities of highly centralised corporate powers. It is a tool by which 'developed' nations (or, the corporate 'lords' of the metropolis) seek to initiate 'underdeveloped' nations (people in the periphery) into the accepted terms of development. On a global scale, communications is a mechanism, a language a system of belief, a way of generating "common understanding", which tends inevitably to reinforce the social relations of capitalist world market. With the core setting the terms for the world market, the communications industries within that market enforce a core-determined logic upon the cultures of periphery. Schiller observes: "Industrialism is not a stage towards which the rest of the world would deterministically gravitate.....terms and character of production are determined in the core of that market and radiate outward.....Cultural modernization is revealed as but a euphemism for the systematic mangling of the Third World cultures. The export of the communications industries are poisoned candy."[2]

By virtue of early advances in industries and techniques the initial key choices in formulation of the media-systems were made by a few 'advanced' countries, which assigned them a shape according to

general market conditions. Economically weak and consequently politically dominated countries either willingly or perforce engaged in duplicating these existing models. The development of mass press with a news-entertainment-advertisement amalgam is an Anglo-American phenomenon duplicated in most part of the world. Radio and TV as one-way communication media, developed mainly in the US, remain a dominant model for the rest of the world. The above examples demonstrate to what extent communications devices are standardised throughout the world, sustaining a technological infrastructure developed in America, leading to a situation of technological dependence and subsequently strengthening the relations of politico-economic dominance.[3]

An analysis of the film industry in respect of industrial structure and the nature of finance sheds significant light on another aspect of dependence. The early structure of Hollywood film industry-with a vertically-integrated production, distribution and exhibition system, a public relations and sales structure giving birth to 'star-system', and a division of labour defined by fixed formulae - was copied by the film industry throughout the world. The way British and French interests penetrated many parts of Asia and Africa in colonial or immediate post-colonial period, shows that multinational media organization represent an important channel for the export of media finance. American interests are in a similar way represented in Latin America particularly, and other parts of the world, generally.

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The implicit nature of the media as a new mode of domination is best reflected in the role of advertising. In the process of cultural hegemonization, the common demonations are the refrigerator, the car, the magazines, etc. This movement follows the modern advertising law of the creation of desires (only to be replaced by new desires, as Benjamin argued) which, surreptiously implanted by the media, take roots in the object. Objects which the giant multinational conglomerates have to sell are advertised by those media which can reach the largest number of prospective buyers. A considerable share of advertising demand coming from the multinational conglomerates, it is not surprising that the kind of consumerist programming to be found in the US prevails, and that the largest advertising agencies in the world market are American.

This advertising as a major source of media-revenue contributes to the continuation ofa particular form of communications activity. The English language press of Asia, partially controlled by Anglo-American interests, receives a share of all Anglo-American advertising which further strengthens this control.

The dependent nature of communication activity can be seen also in terms of export of television programmes and news items. The television companies throughout the world are dependent on imported programming, most of which comes from the US. Even where there are official attempts to reduce this dependence, this proves to be extremely difficult in practice.

In the sphere of news circulation, we find this dependence in a more marked form. Many media systems outside the major powers are dependent on two major sources for general international news: news agencies and some most influential broadcasting companies. These agencies derive most of their revenues from western markets and, therefore, attend more to the news interests of these markets than to those other countries.

AN IDEOLOGY IN PRACTICE

In a dependent society, the media advance a conception of change which essentially is intended to rationalize reproduction of a programmed pattern of life. Through a rhetoric of change, the relationship between economic base and ideological superstructure is sought to be belied. Making an efficient use of the modern means of communications, dominant interests are able to extend the

aspirations of the people far beyondthe real bases of social life. This process of implanttion of aspirations determined by imperalist powersis what is termed "revolution of rising expectations." Thus extremely induced aspirationsprovide the ground for importing forms of developed societies without caring for their content - tht is, without those factors which make development possible.

Thus accompanied with the quantitative expansion of the media, we observe a process of change within the content of ideology of domination. 'A host of categories corresponding to the 'pseudo-culture' arise along with the 'revolution of rising expectations', which advance the conception of a pragmatic democracy based on a utopia of consumption. The supposed neutrality of consumption is indictive of the fundamental features of this technocratic ideology which seeks to emphasis the non-politicl character of the social projects it undertakes. We find its example in the arguments advanced in the international debates relating to the peaceful uses of artificial sattelites. A case in point is the argeement between the US and India inaugurating the SITE (Satellite Instructional Television Experiemnt) programmes. Lest it is accused of political intervention in the internal affairs of another country, the US made a categorical statment that their responsibility was restricted to the 'technological' sphere. In the text of the agreement, however, we come across the following: "The first goal of this project is to increase agricultural productivity, to support the objectives of family planning, and to contribute to

national unity. Secondary objectives include community hygiene, the formation of professors and students, and artists, and other similar items.....the US would not be responsible for the TV programming. In the framework of this project, it will be India who speaks to India." In return, India, responsible for the content of the programming, "will evaluate the results of the experience and make sure that they receive a general dissemination. As much as possible, the evalution will be conducted in quantitative terms. It will, therefore,be possible to estimatethe impact of family planning programmes by comparing the birth-rate in villages equippedwith television to those without television. Agricultural productivity and the increase of revenue will be evaluated in the same way."[4]

Here we find that the projected neutrality of instruments remains incapable of maintaining the apoliticist facade. Still the technocratic ideology proves successful through the totality of its means. By perpetuating the myth of the neutrality of objects of daly environment, it tends to vulgarize the bases of social domination. Robbed of all powers to shape the world of one's daily interests, an individual is reinforced by the technocratic ideology which has assumed the form of ideology of everyday reality, into the sphere of conformity. It is within this general conformist frame that the dominated class undergo alternating or concurrent polical experiences of nationalism and populism in many Third World social formations.

THE NATIONAL BASES AND POPULIST IMPERATIVES

In consideration of cultural imperialism there are two major diversions within radical theorizing. On the one hand, there is the tendency to consider imperialism, in every meaning of this category, a superstructural phenomenon outside of each country's class reality. On the other hand, there jis the tendency to suppose the existence of one single imperialism, whose ideological representations are based in metropolis.

Though the growing penetration of metropolitan compJanies in the market place as discussed earlier is important, it does not exhaust the whole phenomenon of internationalization of cultural production. Rather, it increases with the 'national' dominant classes realizing the efficiency of the models produced by the metropolis, and going on to adapt them to their own conditions. Cultural imperialism must, therefore, be understood as a correlation of forces, a combination of national and international forces. The fact that today in the era of multinationalization, various third world states are tending to import fewer metropolitan cultural products and manufacture more cltural products within their own country, shows the extent to which the cultural message must necessarily be coherent with the state apparatus found in the particular country. Two things are indicated hereby:

(1) In order to demystify the conception of imperialism, it is important to go back to the analysis of national cultures (culture elaborated by local ruling classes as well as the popular culture,

practices of resistance of the dominated classes).

2. It is important to link in each and every case, the cultural product to the class structure to which it is directed. Going into the specifications of class structure is not possible here. Still we should be able to visulaize the exact role of communications activity. Communications as specifically concrete cultural vehicle, and being an extension of civic institutions like labour unions, schools etc. have the objective of forming cosensus among all the social classes with regard to existing plan of development supported by the State. It is along this objective that we find the emergence of various populist movements which are the basic propelling factor for increased communications activity in these societies.

The nature of populist movments is determined by a peculiar dialettic of people and classes. Both of them constitute poles of contradiction and are equally constitute of political discourse. Their distinction, however, lies in the following: whereas class contradiction sets the articulating principle of political discourse in a singularly identical manner, the contradiction in case of the 'people' projects towards a twilight zone. It is this abstractness in case of popular contradiction which lends itself to articulation within diverse class-political discourses leading to the generation of a number of populist ideologies.

The degree of populism of an ideology depends on the nature of antagonism that exists between the dominated class truggling for hegemony and the power bloc. La Clau argues tht it is the most

oppressed and dominted, who through their attempt at hegemony, precipitate a crisis within the dominant political discourse tending to develop the antagonism to the point where the 'people' cannot be incorporated by any faction of the power bloc. Populism, thus, can be defined as an "expression of the moment when the articulating power of the dominated class imposes itself hegemonically on the rest of the society."[5]

The kind of class-alliance we find in these societies continues to favour middle sectors. The dialectic between 'people' and classes leads in this case to different form of articulation. The populist radicalization is associated here to a sphere of representative images which tend to keep the antagonistic elements of popular democratic interpellation within the 'desirable' limits, that is, keeping off the abolition of the State as an antagonistic force from the objective of social transformation. Accordingly, the communications have the function of integrating the opposed majority into the values and aspirations of consumption - or the utopia of consumption - corresponding to the middle sectors. Accelerating patterns of the media such as TV, advertising chains and other service companies going along with the multinationals amply demonstrate it.

NOTES

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EPILOGUE

Marx says that revolutions are the locomotives of world history. But the situation may be quite different. Perhaps revolutions are not train ride, but the human race grabbing for the emergency brake.

(BENJAMIN)

I beg your pardon for disturbing you during your class struggle. I know it is very important. But which way to the political film?

(Woman to Glauba Rocha is "Wind from the East")

A PLEA AGAINST THE TRADITION OF MODERNIZATION

Our survey of the ideologicl imperatives implicit in all form of communications projects in no way indicates an attempt at systematization or obsession to bring disparate ideas, objects or phenomena under a unitary, explanatory structure. To our conception, any such attempt would be a simple imposition of an artificial, rationally constructed Schablone on actual, ongoing processes of history. For the communications media as they have historically evolved indicate a necessary moment, determined by a particular conjuncture of historical forces, the possibility of other patterns in the past, and alternatives in the present, notwithstanding.

What we have been intending to do all along our arguments is to develop a sense of contradictory modes of existence determining, and at the same time being determined, by the necessity of articulating them historically. As all ideological battles are not just about history, rather in and through history, it is only in the process of forming an alternative culture that a proper comprehension of various aspects of today's culture is possible. If 'cultural' life today is perverted by its portrayal and analysis in certain standardized images, it is only with the "return of the repressed" cultural forms to the mainstage that a new culture shall begin.

From this perspective alone we would argue against the "national" cultural endeavours which, imbued with a sense of modernism, tend to extend the same homogenizing logic which leads in the terms of

political-economy to commoditization all objects and human-social creation. The expanding communications network, in today's frame, very perceptibly accentuates the process of cultural homogenization and suppression of specific local-historical forms. It is thus the erasion of the cultural memory of the masses that is the central concern of those media studies advocating indiscriminate use of communications means for the modernizing mission. By impliction, it becomes a crucial issue also for those studies conducted from a diametrically opposed perspective: a perspective that finds its significant expression in Benjamin's emphasis on the moment of deconstruction.

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