IDEOLOGY AND THE CRITIQUE OF DOMINATION II*

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II
Constructive Proposals

The critical discussions of the previous part prepare the way for a more constructive contribution. Drawing upon the criticisms which I have made of other authors, I shall attempt to sketch the contours of an alternative approach to the analysis of ideology. I undertake this attempt with few pretensions: what follows is merely a sketch, rough and incomplete, of an approach which has yet to be filled out and put to use.[43] My aim is not so much to resolve specific problems, but rather to identify some open issues. I shall locate these issues within three general areas of concern. First, there is the task of conceptualising ideology. I shall pursue this task on the assumption that ideology must be conceptualised within the framework of a general social theory, a theory which explores, among other things, the relations between action, institutions, power and domination. The second general area of concern is that of methodology. Here my reflections will be guided by the desire to elaborate a systematic interpretative theory which incorporates the dimensions of social and discursive analysis. The third area in which relevant issues arise is the area of epistemology. The analysis of ideology cannot evade, I believe, questions of critique and justification. I shall confront these questions by seeking to clarify, in a tentative and exploratory way, the notion of truth and the conditions under which claims to truth can be sustained. In this part of the essay I shall no longer restrict my discussion to material in English, but shall draw freely upon the contributions of French and German authors. Hopefully it will become clear that, while these authors have had an influence on recent work in English, their contributions have more value than some of that work would suggest.

Conceptualisation of ideology
The concept of ideology cannot be considered in isolation, but must be situated within the framework of a general social theory. That particular conceptions of ideology are affected by general theoretical assumptions is evident from the contributions discussed in the first part of the essay. Seliger's conception of ideologies as action-oriented sets of beliefs is closely connected to his pluralistic view of Western politics, a view which tends to play down the institutional and structural conditions of political action. The contribution of Hirst, on the other hand, preserves the deterministic emphasis of Althusser, insofar as he conceives of subjects as 'supports' of processes — including

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processes of calculation — which already exist in advance. What is missing from the theoretical frameworks of Seliger and Hirst is, among other things, a satisfactory account of the relation between action and social structure: each author accentuates one aspect at the expense of the other, and each aspect is dealt with inadequately in the work of both. The importance of grasping the interplay of action and structure in the everyday reproduction of social life has been demonstrated most clearly by Anthony Giddens.[44] Rejecting the reductionist tendencies of 'interpretative sociologies', on the one hand, and of functionalism and structuralism, on the other, Giddens elaborates a *theory of structuration* which seeks to integrate an account of action with an analysis of institutions and social structure. 'Structure', according to Giddens, may be conceived as the 'rules and resources' which are implicitly drawn upon by actors in their everyday activity and which are thereby reproduced, most often unintentionally. While this conception is highly provocative, it nevertheless suffers, in my opinion, from certain limitations. For 'structural properties' are apparently defined by each and every 'rule' which actors employ, and there would seem to be no grounds intrinsic to this conception for regarding some rules as more fundamental than others. Moreover, as soon as one turns to a more concrete analysis of the social world, Giddens's conception of structure as rules and resources appears to be inadequate, if not altogether irrelevant.[45] While wishing to sustain his attempt to develop a theory of structuration, it seems to me necessary to alter the specific terms of his account.

It is my view that the relation between action and structure must be conceived of by distinguishing three levels of abstraction.[46] On each of these levels I shall draw two further distinctions; and I shall allude to — although here I cannot pursue — the multiple ways in which these levels are linked. The first and most immediate level is that of *action*, whereby agents participate and intervene in the social world. Action as a flow of activity, monitored by agents capable of accounting for what they are doing, can be distinguished from particular actions, such as hitting, frowning, switching-on-the-light, which may be regarded as events describable in various ways. The second level of abstraction is that of *social institutions. Specific* institutions may be viewed as constellations of social relations, together with the reservoirs of material resources which are associated with them; *sedimented* institutions are those configurations which persist in various specific forms. Thus one is concerned with a specific institution when one inquires into the authority relations and capital resources which constitute, for example, the University of London, whereas one is concerned with a sedimented institution when one studies the university system as such. The third and most abstract level is that of *social structure*. I propose to conceive of social structure as a series of elements and their interrelations which conjointly define the conditions for the persistence of a social formation and the limits for the variation of its component institutions. Two categories of structural elements may be distinguished. On the one hand, there are those elements which must be present in any society, since they represent necessary conditions for the persistence of social life as such. On the

other hand, there are those elements which are necessary conditions, not for the persistence of social life as such, but for the continuation of a particular *type* of society. So whereas production may be a necessary feature of any society, production by means of capital and wage-labour is not; and it is the interrelations between the latter elements which define the institutions of a society as capitalistic. Agents acting within an institutional context apply flexible 'schemata' which provide guidelines for coping with new and unanticipated situations. So long as agents do not flout such guidelines in a way which propels institutions beyond the limiting conditions, then their action may be said to reproduce social structure. However, one cannot preclude the possibility that these conditions may be exceeded by the cumulative consequences of collective action, a possibility which underlines the essentially creative and transformative character of action.

Each of the three levels in the relation between action and structure realises an aspect of the phenomenon of *power*. At the level of action and in the most general sense, 'power' is the ability to act in pursuit of one's aims and interests: an agent has the *power to act*, the power to intervene in the sequence of events and to alter their course. In the sociologically relevant sense of 'power', however, the power to act must be related to the institutional site from which it derives. 'Power', at the institutional level, is a capacity which *enables* or *empowers* some agents to make decisions, pursue ends or realise interests; it empowers them in such a way that, without this institutionally endowed capacity, they would not have been able to carry out the relevant course. Power as an institutionally endowed capacity is *limited* by the structural conditions which circumscribe the range of institutional variation: thus the distribution of power in a capitalistic enterprise is 'structured by' the relation between wage-labour and capital. When the relations of power established at the institutional level are *systematically asymmetrical*, then the situation may be described as one of *domination*. Relations of power are 'systematically asymmetrical' when particular agents or groups of agents are institutionally endowed with power in a way which excludes, and to some significant degree remains inaccessible to, other agents or groups of agents, irrespective of the basis upon which such exclusion is carried out. Among the instances of domination which are of particular importance are those which are structured by the conditions which limit institutional variation. In capitalist societies the fundamental limiting conditions are specified by the capital/wage-labour relation, which secures systematically asymmetrical relations between classes at the level of the enterprise. It would be a serious mistake to assume, however, that the relation between the classes is the only important instance of domination in capitalist societies. As many authors have rightly emphasised, relations of domination subsist between nation-states, between ethnic groups and between the sexes which cannot be reduced to class domination.[47] A satisfactory analysis of domination and exploitation in contemporary societies would — without minimising the importance of class — have to give considerable attention to the interrelated phenomena of racism, sexism and the system of nation-states.

The analysis of power and domination, situated within the context of an account of the relation between action and structure, provides the backcloth against which I want to reconsider the problem of ideology. Throughout the first part of this essay I emphasised the way in which contemporary theorists conceive of ideology in a *neutral* sense, regarding it as a system of symbols or beliefs which pertain, in some way, to social action or political practice. Whether Seliger's 'inclusive conception' of ideology as action-oriented sets of beliefs, or Gouldner's formulation of ideology in terms of public projects advocated by rational discourse, or Hirst's view of ideology as a system of ideas which can be employed in political calculation: in each case ideology bears no intrinsic connection to the problem of domination and the critique of domination. It is this aspect of many contemporary theories of ideology which I wish to reject. I wish to maintain, on the contrary, that *to study ideology is to study the ways in which meaning (signification) serves to sustain relations of domination.* Among the many ways in which ideology operates, three may be cited as central. In the first place, relations of domination may be sustained by being represented as *legitimate*. Every system of domination, observed Weber, seeks to cultivate a belief in its legitimacy, by appealing either to rational, traditional or charismatic grounds;[48] and such an appeal, it should be noted, is generally expressed in *language*. A second way in which ideology operates is by means of *dissimulation*. Relations of domination which serve the interests of some at the expense of others may be concealed, denied or 'blocked' in various ways; and these ways — often overlapping, seldom intentional — may conceal themselves by their very efficacy, presenting themselves as something other than what they are.[49] A third way in which ideology operates is by means of *reification*, that is, by representing a transitory, historical state of affairs as if it were permanent, natural, outside of time. 'To re-establish the dimension of society "without history" at the heart of historical society': that, argues Lefort in a remarkable essay, is the role of ideology.[50] These three modes by which ideology operates — legitimation, dissimulation and reification — should not be regarded as either exhaustive or mutually exclusive. There may be other *modus operandi* which are vitally important in certain circumstances and which would have to be elucidated through theoretical and empirical analysis; and in many cases the various modes intersect and overlap, such that reification legitimates and legitimation dissimulates. These qualifications do not, however, vitiate the importance of formulating a clear conception of ideology and of distinguishing the principal modalities through which it operates.

The analysis of ideology is fundamentally concerned with *language*, for language is the principal medium of the meaning (signification) which serves to sustain relations of domination. Speaking a language is a way of acting, emphasised Austin and others; what they forgot to add is that ways of acting are infused with forms of power. The utterance of the simplest expression is an intervention in the world, more or less effective, more or less endowed with institutional authority. 'Language is not only an instrument of communication or even of knowledge', writes Bourdieu, 'but also an instrument of power. One

seeks not only to be understood but also to be believed, obeyed, respected, distinguished.' [51] It is important to stress, moreover, that forms of power infuse *the meaning of what is said* as well as the saying of it. 'The meaning of what is said', this cryptic, complex notion which seems everywhere to elude a satisfactory analysis: no claim can be made to offer such an analysis here. Suffice it to observe that the meaning of an expression is an essentially open, shifting, indeterminate phenomenon, often framed in rhetorical figures and always susceptible to change. Even a simple declarative sentence like 'The book is blue' is a metonymic construction, since it is not the book but its surface which is blue. As Castoriadis crisply remarks, *'tout langage est abus de langage'*[52] Of course, expressions do have a use in everyday life, they function more or less univocally, that is, as univocal *suffisamment quant à l'usage*. But the univocity secured by this *quant à* is limited and problematic; the closure is transitory and provisional, always open to disruption, contestation and change. Let me express this point in Wittgensteinian terms: if it is supposed that the meaning of an expression may be analysed, at least partially, in terms of the criteria of justified assertion, then it must be added that such criteria are subject to systematic differentiation and manipulation, so that what counts as 'justified assertion' is essentially open to dispute. What may have seemed like a sphere of effective *consensus* must in many cases be seen as a realm of actual or potential *conflict*. Hence the meaning of what is said — what is *asserted* in spoken or written discourse as well as that *about which* one speaks or writes — is infused with forms of power; different individuals or groups have a differential capacity *to make a meaning stick*. It is the infusion of meaning with power that lends language so freely to the operations of ideology. Relations of domination are sustained by a *mobilisation of meaning* which legitimates, dissimulates or reifies an existing state of affairs; and meaning can be mobilised because it is an essentially open, shifting, indeterminate phenomenon. When we are told by Menachem Begin that the movement of thousands of troops and hundreds of tanks into Lebanon is not an 'invasion' because Israel has no plan to annex Lebanese territory,[53] or when the *Sun* reminds us that a proposed strike by the train drivers' union ASLEF may smash their own industry but will 'never break us', since, 'as the battle for the Falklands demonstrated so clearly, NOBODY can break this nation',[54] then it is not difficult to appreciate the ease which which, and the extent to which, meaning may be mobilised in the service of power and domination.

Methodology of interpretation

The link between language and ideology provides the touchstone for the elaboration of a systematic methodology of interpretation. In characterising this methodology as one of 'interpretation', I wish to call attention to two fundamental considerations. The first consideration has to do with the inescapable situation of that which forms the object of interpretation: *discourse* — that is, language realised in speech or in writing — *is already an interpretation*. Events, actions and expressions are constantly interpreted and understood by

lay actors in everyday life, who routinely employ interpretative procedures in making sense of themselves and others. To undertake an analysis of discourse is to produce an interpretation of an interpretation, to re-interpret a pre-interpreted domain. This peculiar situation of the object of interpretation — a situation which reappears in all forms of social analysis — is a manifestation of what has been called the 'hermeneutical circle'; and here we may agree with Heidegger that 'what is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it in the right way'.[55] The second consideration to which I want to call attention concerns *the creative character of the interpretative process*. The analysis of discourse can never be merely an analysis: it must also be a synthetic construction, a creative projection, of a possible meaning. This constructive, creative aspect of interpretation is often neglected or suppressed by those who practice some form of 'discourse analysis', as can be shown, I believe, through a careful examination of their work.[56] Without wishing to deny the importance of formal methods of analysis in the study of social phenomena, it is my view that such methods could never be more than a limited and preliminary stage of a more comprehensive interpretative theory.

I should like to propose an interpretative methodology which is both tailored to the task of analysing ideology and capable of incorporating formal or 'explanatory' methods. To study ideology, I suggested above, is to study the ways in which meaning (signification) serves to sustain relations of domination. Meaning, domination: two concepts from different domains, from different orders of inquiry. How can the interrelation of meaning and domination be studied in a systematic way, without committing some sort of category mistake or falling into a facile eclecticism? I shall take as my model the provocative idea of a 'depth hermeneutics' elaborated by, among others, Paul Ricoeur.[57] While critical of the exhaustive claims of some forms of 'structuralist analysis', Ricoeur is not blind to their achievements. When dealing with a domain which is constituted as much by force as by meaning, or when analysing an artifact which displays a distinctive pattern through which something is said, it is both possible and advisable to mediate the process of interpretation by employing 'objectifying techniques'. 'Interpretation' and 'explanation' are not necessarily exclusive terms, but rather may be treated as complementary moments in a comprehensive interpretative theory, as mutually supportive steps along 'a unique *hermeneutical arc*'.[58] While concurring with the overall emphasis of Ricoeur's work, my specific proposals will diverge significantly from his account. For in his reaction against the excesses of 'historicism', Ricoeur tends to underplay the importance of social and historical circumstances in the interpretation of a work. The text and its analogues are autonomous, insists Ricoeur; but it seems to me that this autonomy is limited in important ways and that our interpretation of a work may be profoundly affected by an inquiry into the social-historical conditions of its production. Nowhere is this counter-emphasis more important than in the attempt to elaborate a methodology for the analysis of ideology. To suppose that the study of the discursive forms in which ideology is expressed could be detached from the social-historical conditions of

discursive production would be to lose sight of the relations of domination in virtue of which discourse is *ideological*.

The depth-interpretative procedure which I want to propose may be divided into three principal phases. It must be emphasised that this division is an analytic one; I am not suggesting that the phases must be regarded as discrete stages of a sequential method, but merely that they can be seen as thematically distinct dimensions of a complex interpretative process. The first phase of the process may be described as the dimension of *social analysis*. It is to the credit of theorists like Gouldner to have stressed the importance of situating ideology within a social-historical context, even if the details of this author's account are questionable in many respects. *The study of ideology is inseparable from the social-historical analysis of the forms of domination which meaning serves to sustain.* In accordance with my earlier discussion of the relation between action and structure, I should like to specify three levels at which such a social-historical analysis might proceed. First, at the level of action, an attempt must be made to identify the contexts of action and interaction within which agents pursue their aims. The realisation of discourse is situationally specific: expressions are uttered or inscribed by particular agents at a certain time in determinate settings. As authors such as Goffman and Bourdieu have brought out so well, the spatio-temporal *location* of action and interaction is a vital part of social analysis.[59] A second level of social analysis is concerned with institutions. As constellations of social relations and reservoirs of material resources, specific institutions form a relatively stable framework for action and inter-action; they do not determine action but *generate* it in the sense of establishing, loosely and tentatively, the parameters of permissible conduct. Institutions are the loci of power and the crystallisation of relations of domination. A reconstruction of institutions — both in their specific and sedimented forms, both in their organisational aspects and their spatio-temporal features — is therefore an essential contribution to the analysis of ideology. Of particular interest in this regard is the reconstruction of the institutional *media* by which discourse is transmitted, a reconstruction for which Gouldner, among many others, has offered some insightful remarks.[60] At a third level of social analysis, one would be concerned, not with institutions as such, but with the structural elements which condition or *structurate* institutions. The relation between wage-labour and capital 'structurates' the institution of General Motors, for example, in the sense that it specifies certain conditions for the persistence of the institution, conditions which the institution cannot exceed without a change of structural type. The reconstruction of structural elements is an essential aspect of social analysis, for it is these elements which underpin some of the most important relations of domination at the institutional level.

The second phase of the depth-interpretative procedure may be described as the dimension of *discursive analysis*. The forms of discourse which express ideology must be viewed, not only as socially and historically situated practices, but also as *linguistic constructions which display an articulated structure*. Forms of discourse are situated practices *and* something more, precisely because they are

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linguistic constructions which claim to say something. To undertake a discursive analysis (in the sense here defined) is to study these linguistic constructions with a view towards explicating their role in the operation of ideology. I shall make no pretension to lay out in detail the appropriate method for such a study, as if methodological precepts could be specified *a priori* and in isolation from actual research. I shall limit myself to a series of suggestions which draw heavily upon the ongoing investigations of others. Let me distinguish, once again, three levels at which forms of discourse may be studied *qua* linguistic constructions and with a view towards explicating their ideological features. First, forms of discourse may be studied as *narratives* which display a certain logic or 'actantial structure'. The term 'actantial structure' is borrowed from Greimas, whose methods of structural analysis — so far largely unknown in the English-speaking world — have been applied in an imaginative way to political discourse.[61] Such an analysis may facilitate the explication of ideological features because ideology, insofar as it seeks to sustain relations of domination by representing them as legitimate, tends to assume a narrative form. Stories are told which glorify those in power and seek to justify the *status quo*: there is, as Barthes observed, a profound connection between ideology and myth.[62] A second level of discursive analysis may be concerned with the *argumentative structure* of discourse. Forms of discourse, as supra-sentential linguistic constructions, comprise explanations and chains of reasoning which may be reconstructed and made explicit in various ways.[63] Such reconstructions may help to illuminate the ideological features of discourse by bringing out, not only their procedures of legitimation, but also their strategies of dissimulation. To conceal relations of domination and simultaneously to conceal the process of concealment is a risky, conflict-laden undertaking, prone to contradiction and contortion. The analysis of argumentative structure may highlight the dissimulating function of ideology by mapping out the contradictions and inconsistencies, the silences and *lapsus*, which characterise the texture of a discourse. At a third level, discursive analysis may focus on *syntactic structure*. Authors such as Roger Fowler, Robert Hodge, Gunther Kress and Tony Trew have rightly called attention to a series of syntactic devices which play a vital role in discourse.[64] In particular, the study of nominalisation, passivisation, the use of pronouns and the structure of tense may provide an initial access to processes of reification within language. Representing processes as things, deleting agency and constituting time as an eternal extension of the present tense: all of these are so many syntactic ways to re-establish the dimension of society 'without history' at the heart of historical society.

I now want to turn to the third and final phase of the depth-interpretative procedure, a phase that may properly be called *interpretation*. However rigorous and systematic the methods of discursive analysis may be, they can never abolish the need for a creative construction of meaning, that is, for an interpretative explication of what is said. An interpretative explication may be mediated by the analytical methods, which may efface the superficial form of a discourse; but interpretative explication always goes beyond the methods of

formal analysis, projecting a possible meaning which is always risky and open to dispute. In explicating what is said, the process of interpretation transcends the closure of discourse treated as a construction displaying an articulated structure. *Discourse says something about something*, and it is this transcending character which must be grasped. At this point it may be helpful to introduce the idea of *split reference*, employed with great imagination by Ricoeur.[65] The inscription of discourse in writing, observes Ricoeur, involves a suspension of ostensive denotation and the realisation of a second order reference, that is, a reference to other aspects of experience or being which cannot be disclosed in a directly ostensive way. Let me adapt this intriguing idea to the specific task of studying ideology through an analysis of the forms of discourse in which it is expressed. The mobilisation of meaning in order to sustain relations of domination commonly involves, I want to suggest, a splitting of the referential domain. The terms of a discourse carry out their ideological role by explicitly referring to one thing and implicitly referring to another, by entangling these multiple referents in a way which serves to sustain relations of domination. Recall the vivid image described by Barthes of a saluting Negro in uniform on the cover of *Paris-Match*, an image which signifies not merely a particular individual but also the general context of French imperialism.[66] To interpret discourse *qua* ideology is to *construct* a meaning which unfolds the referential dimension of discourse, which specifies the multiple referents and shows how their entanglement serves to sustain relations of domination. Reconnecting discourse to the relations of domination which it serves to sustain: such is the task of interpretation. Mediated by the discursive analysis of linguistic constructions and the social analysis of the conditions of discursive production, the interpretation of ideology is necessarily a form of depth hermeneutics. How such a form of depth hermeneutics may be linked to a moment of critique, and how such a critique may facilitate the *self*-understanding of the subjects whose interpretations are the object of interpretation, are questions which I shall broach below.

Before turning to the final cluster of questions, however, I should like to render these abstract methodological remarks more concrete by focusing on a specific example. In an important study conducted during the 1970s, Michel Pêcheux and his associates examined the ambiguities contained in a report by the socialist Sicco Mansholt.[67] The Report, published at a time when French political life was animated by the possibility of radical social change through an alliance between the Socialist and Communist Parties, advocated rigorous economic planning and a reorientation of economic goals in order to overcome the current crises in capitalist societies. Pêcheux et al. propose to study the ambiguous political character of the Mansholt Report by analysing, not the Report itself, but rather two corpora which were generated in the following way. An extract from the Report was presented to two groups of young technicians from similar backgrounds. One group was told that the text was the work of left-wing militants, while the other group was led to believe that the text had been produced by right-wing Giscardians. The members of each group were asked to

read the text and to write a short summary, thus generating a 'right corpus' and a 'left corpus'. Pêcheux et al. then submit the two corpora to a series of analyses which comprise what they call *analyse automatique du discours*. These analyses break up each corpus into a plurality of 'semantic domains' and map out the relations between these domains. In this way the authors seek to uncover some of the contradictions at work in each corpus and the tensions between the two corpora, contradictions and tensions which reflect the ambiguous texture of the Mansholt Report. Here I shall not undertake to criticise the details of the method developed by Pêcheux et al., nor the way in which it was applied in the case concerned. I wish simply to call attention to the specific *limits* within which this method operates, limits which define the method as *one possible phase of a more comprehensive interpretative theory*. The method developed by Pêcheux et al. is one version — a very sophisticated version — of what I previously called 'discursive analysis'. It is a method which does not preclude but rather presupposes the other two phases of the depth-interpretative procedure, the phases of social analysis and of interpretation proper. It presupposes social analysis because it requires an account of the social-historical conditions under which the Mansholt Report was produced, as well as a specification of the circumstances under which the corpora were generated. It presupposes interpretation because, as Pêcheux et al. admit, the results of the method do not 'speak for themselves' but must be 'interpreted'. Thus, in the study of the Mansholt Report, we are told that the presence of terms like 'the government' and 'the state' in the right corpus (R), as contrasted with expressions like 'it is necessary' and 'one must' in the left corpus (L), indicates 'the *domination* of R over L, insofar as the same signifier ("radical reforms") *encompasses two referents which tend to be antagonistic*: on the one hand a bourgeois solution which "manages the crisis", on the other hand the possible beginnings of a revolutionary transformation'.[68] But what is this 'indication', if not an *interpretation* which goes well beyond the construction of patterns of substitution, which seeks to unfold the referential dimension of discourse, which aims to elucidate the ways in which meaning serves to sustain relations of domination? The method developed by Pêcheux et al., so far from demonstrating the irrelevance of hermeneutics as these authors aggressively claim, attests to the centrality and unsurpassability of the hermeneutical process.

Critique and justification

I now want to turn to the third and final cluster of issues which arise in connection with the analysis of ideology. These issues are of an epistemological character: the analysis of ideology raises complex problems of justification and truth. That such problems cannot be adequately stated, let alone resolved, by simply opposing ideology to science is a view which I have expressed above. The concept of ideology may have emerged in conjunction with the idea of a science of society, as Gouldner seeks to show; but ideology cannot be viewed as failed science, as the hapless half of an inseparable pair. For the concept of ideology also emerged in conjunction with the critique of domination, and it is *this* link —

as I have argued throughout this essay — which must be taken as basic. It cannot be assumed, moreover, that there is some stable relation between ideology construed in terms of domination, on the one hand, and the alleged opposition between science and ideology, on the other. Whatever difficulties there may be in the writings of Marcuse and other authors of the Frankfurt School, these thinkers have rightly stressed that under certain historical circumstances *science may become ideological*. Hence the epistemological problems raised by the analysis of ideology cannot be resolved by a presumptuous appeal to science, including the 'science' of historical materialism. It is my view that one can progress with these problems only if one is prepared to engage in a reflection of a genuinely epistemological sort, a reflection which is attuned to the question of critique and guided by the concept of truth.

In undertaking an epistemological reflection on the problems raised by the analysis of ideology, I shall draw heavily upon the work of Jürgen Habermas.[69] While defending a version of historical materialism, Habermas has done more than any other contemporary thinker to free historical materialism from the dogmatism of received tradition and the moral bankruptcy of a doctrine which has been used to justify the most oppressive regimes. 'Both *revolutionary self-confidence* and *theoretical self-certainty* are gone',[70] so that practice must be stripped of false certitude and handed over to the deliberations of responsible subjects. To hand practice over to the deliberations of responsible subjects is not, moreover, an unfortunate option, imposed by the contingencies of historical circumstance. On the contrary, one of the most interesting features of Habermas's recent work is his attempt to demonstrate that the claims to truth and correctness which are implicitly raised in everyday speech demand to be 'made good' or 'redeemed' through argumentation among the subjects concerned under conditions freed from asymmetrical relations of power. Such conditions, counterfactually projected and reconstructible through an analysis of the competencies required for successful communication, define what Habermas calls an 'ideal speech situation'. His view is that *if* a consensus concerning problematic claims to truth or correctness *were* attained through argumentation under the conditions of ideal speech, then such a consensus *would* be rational and *would* resolve the problematic claim. I believe that there is much in this view which is commendable, but I do not want to suggest that it is free from difficulties. Habermas's analyses of truth and correctness, his argument for the presupposition of the ideal speech situation and his characterisation of the latter: all of these aspects leave much to be desired.[71] In the following discussion I shall therefore diverge substantially from the account offered by Habermas, even if it is Habermas's account which provides the *pierre de touche* for my proposals.

Let me begin by returning to the link between ideology and the question of critique. To study ideology, I maintained, is to study the ways in which meaning serves to sustain relations of domination; and I sketched a methodological procedure which combines social analysis and discursive analysis in order to mediate a depth interpretation of ideological discourse. This complex methodo-

logical procedure raises epistemological problems on several levels. Here, for the sake of simplicity, I shall focus on the final phase of the procedure and ask: what is the link between depth interpretation and critique? It is important to distinguish between two forms of critique which are relevant in this regard. First, as a construction of meaning and a formulation of what is said in a discourse, an interpretation raises a claim to truth which calls for recognition. An interpretation is an intervention, risky and conflict-laden; it makes a claim about something which may diverge from other views and which, *if true*, may provide a standpoint for criticising other views, including the views of the subjects whose discourse is the object of interpretation. Critique guided by the truth of an interpretation must be distinguished from a second form of critique, closely related to the first. An interpretation that explicates the ways in which meaning serves to sustain relations of domination may render possible a critique, not only of other views (interpretations), but also of the relations of domination which meaning serves to sustain. It is in this sense that *the analysis of ideology bears an internal connection to the critique of domination.* But this connection, while internal, is not immediate. To analyse a form of discourse as ideological, to explicate the ways in which meaning serves to sustain relations of domination, even to establish that a particular interpretation is true: all of these achievements would greatly facilitate and profoundly affect a critical reflection on relations of domination, but they would not *as such* demonstrate that those relations were *unjust*. However close be the connection between truth and justice — and the connection is, I believe, a close one — it is important to recognise the difference between inquiring into the truth of a statement, on the one hand, and deliberating on the justice of a particular social arrangement, on the other.

To inquire into the truth of a statement presupposes that we have some operative idea of truth. It is a common tendency among philosophers to analyse this idea in terms of a relation of correspondence: simply put, to say that a sentence is true is to say that it corresponds to a fact. It seems to me, however, that this apparently plausible account is less than satisfactory, not only because it has proved exceedingly difficult to say anything interesting either about the relation of correspondence or about the nature of the facts to which true sentences are supposed to correspond, but also because it is hard to see how anything *could* be said about this relation which was itself *true*. In view of these difficulties, it seems to me advisable to set aside the correspondence theory and to search for an alternative analysis which would capture our intuitions about truth. When we say that a statement is true, we lay ourselves on the line; we make a claim which could, we suppose, be defended or *justified* in some way. It is clear that truth cannot be simply equated with justified assertion or 'warranted assertability', as Habermas, following Dewey, once maintained. For it is easy to imagine cases in which the assertion of a statement is justified and yet the statement itself is false. A prospective English holidaymaker may have good grounds for maintaining that it is sunny in Spain, but the truth of this statement is dependent upon what is happening in Spain and not upon the grounds that

the prospective holidaymaker has. What this observation shows, however, is not that truth bears no connection to justification, but rather, first, that the justification for the assertion of a statement is not necessarily identical with the justification for the assertion that a statement is true; and second, that the justification for the assertion that a statement is true must be regarded as a *limiting notion*: that is, it refers to the justification that *could* be obtained under idealised conditions. 'We speak as if there were such things as epistemically ideal conditions', remarks Putnam in a recent book, 'and we call a statement "true" if it would be justified under such conditions.'[72] How are we to characterise these epistemically ideal conditions which seem implicated in our notion of truth? It seems to me that these idealised conditions could be explicated — at least partially although perhaps not perennially — in terms of the suspension of asymmetrical relations of power. Such a suspension would specify some of the *formal conditions* under which the truth of a statement *could* be ascertained. But these formal conditions do not pre-empt the *specific criteria* which may be invoked in seeking to establish the truth of a statement. It is important to recognise that the criteria invoked may be of differing statuses and may vary from one epistemic field to another. While the 'pragmatic criterion' of prediction and control has been filtered out from the history of the natural sciences, it does not follow that the same criterion must be adopted in other disciplines.[73] On the contrary, the thesis that I want to maintain is that the crucial criterion which operates in conjunction with the depth-hermeneutical procedure is provided by a *principle of self-reflection*. For the interpretations generated by this procedure are about an object domain which consists, among other things, of subjects capable of reflection; and for such interpretations to be *true* they would have to be justified — by means of whatever evidence deemed to be necessary under the formal conditions of argumentation — in the eyes of the subjects about whom they are made. Such interpretations would provide subjects with a clarification of their conditions of action and would thus bear, in this specific sense, an internal relation to practice.

An inquiry into the truth of a statement may prepare the way for, but is not identical with, a deliberation on the justice of a particular social arrangement. It may prepare the way for such a deliberation insofar as it clarifies the conditions of action for the actors themselves, who alone can bear the responsibility of deciding whether the social arrangements in which they live, or for which they are prepared to struggle, are just. It is not identical with such a deliberation because the questions which are being pursued, and the considerations which are adduced as relevant, are different in the two cases. When deliberating on the justice of a particular social arrangement we are concerned, not with the adequacy of the evidence that can be adduced to support a claim to truth, but rather with the extent to which that social arrangement is capable of satisfying the legitimate needs and desires of the subjects affected by it. As with truth, so too with justice: it must be conceived in terms of the justification that could be provided under idealised conditions of argumentation; but the object of justification and the terms of argumentation are different

in each case. The distinctiveness of a deliberation on justice is brought out well
by that heuristic device which Habermas calls the 'model of the suppression of
generalisable interests'. A critical theory can inquire into the institutionalised
power relations of a society, he submits, by comparing the existing normative
structures with a hypothetical system of norms that would be formed
discursively. Such a 'counterfactually projected reconstruction' may be guided
by the following question:

> how would the members of a social system, at a given stage in
> the development of productive forces, have collectively and
> bindingly interpreted their needs (and which norms would
> they have accepted as justified) if they could and would have
> decided on organization of social intercourse through
> discursive will-formation, with adequate knowledge of the
> limiting conditions and functional imperatives of their
> society?[74]

There are aspects of this suggestive passage which are problematic and obscure
— *who*, for example, would 'the members' be if they were placed under the
hypothetical conditions of rational discourse, and which needs and norms
could ever be expected to elicit collective recognition and consent?[75] Yet
however intractable these problems may be, it seems to me that Habermas is
right to adopt an approach to the question of justice which endows the subject
with a crucial role, while acknowledging that, given actual circumstances in
which asymmetrical relations of power prevail, this role must be counter-
factually conceived. The development of this idea is one of the most urgent and
important tasks in social theory today.

In drawing this section to a close, I should like to consider an objection that
may be raised against the type of analysis which I have offered. To regard truth
and justice as limiting notions, it may be said, is simply to render them *irrelevant*
to the study of actual societies and forms of discourse. For what is the use of a
notion that depends upon conditions which do not obtain here and now, indeed
which might never obtain so long as human beings are inclined to embroil
themselves in relations of domination? I do not believe, however, that this
attitude of renunciation is well-founded. A limiting notion is not irrelevant for
being a limit: it is a goal which can be approximated and which, in the process of
approximation, can call our attention to certain factors at the expense of others.
Thus, to analyse truth in terms of the evidence that *would* suffice to justify a
particular claim, or to analyse justice in terms of the needs and desires which
would be satisfied by a particular arrangement, underlines the importance of
searching for evidence and seeking to articulate needs and desires, as well as
striving to defend or defeat a claim through argumentation and debate. There
are, in other words, *empirical indicators* that may be employed in argumentation
and it simply will not do to suggest, *à la* Hindess and Hirst, that the only way in
which a theoretical discourse can be assessed is in terms of its own internal

consistency. But it must be stressed that these empirical indicators are *only* indicators and not conclusive grounds; they retain a hypothetical status which could only be confirmed or confuted by a rational argumentation and deliberation among the subjects concerned. And this epistemological gap is not, in my opinion, an undesirable result. For it attests to the deep and ineliminable link between theory and practice in that sphere of social inquiry where *subjects* capable of action and reflection are among the *objects* of investigation.

Conclusion

In this essay I have conducted a critical analysis of some recent work in English on the theory of ideology. I have argued that, while recent theorists offer insights which are worthy of being sustained, nevertheless their contributions suffer from many faults. My principal concern was to show that the conceptions of ideology advocated by Seliger, Gouldner and Hirst are stripped of any critical edge, so that the link between ideology and the critique of domination is attenuated or altogether destroyed. I have also tried to show that such theorists have not paid sufficient attention to the relation between ideology and language. It is important to consider these two themes — ideology and the analysis of language or 'discourse' — in conjunction with one another, precisely because the study of ideology must be seen, at least in part, as the study of language in the social world.

The critical discussion of Seliger, Gouldner and Hirst provided the basis for a series of constructive remarks. These remarks — admittedly sketchy, tentative, incomplete — were offered with the aim of elaborating an alternative approach to the study of ideology which draws together theoretical and methodological considerations. Ideology must be conceptualised, I maintained, within the framework of a general social theory, one which explores the relation between action and structure and gives a central role to the concept of power. To study ideology, within such a framework, is to study the ways in which meaning (signification) serves to sustain relations of domination. An inquiry into the interrelation of meaning and power may be seen, I suggested, as a form of depth hermeneutics. Mediated by the discursive analysis of linguistic constructions and the social analysis of the conditions of discursive production, the depth interpretation of ideology issues in a projection of meaning that unfolds the referential dimension of discourse and connects it with the relations of domination which meaning serves to sustain. As such, the study of ideology bears a close connection to the critique of domination. It raises complex problems of justification which can only be resolved by engaging in an epistemological reflection, a reflection focused on the concepts of truth and justice and sensitive to the peculiar constitution of the social world.

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Notes

43. This approach will be pursued in my forthcoming book, *Language and Ideology*, to be published by Macmillan.

44. See especially Anthony Giddens, *New Rules of Sociological Method: A Positive Critique of Interpretative Sociologies* (London, Hutchinson, 1976); and *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (London, Macmillan, 1979).

45. See, for example, the analyses offered by Giddens in his recent book, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism, vol. 1: Power, Property and the State* (London, Macmillan, 1981). I have developed this criticism of Giddens's theory of structuration in my review of the latter volume; see 'Rethinking history: for and against Marx', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, forthcoming.

46. For a more detailed discussion of this and other issues raised in the second part of this essay, see my *Critical Hermeneutics: A Study in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981).

47. This point is forcefully stated by Anthony Giddens in *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, ch. 10.

48. Cf. Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978), vol. 1, chs. 1 and 3.

49. For an insightful discussion of the ways in which understanding may be 'blocked' or 'limited', see Paul Willis, *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* (Westmead, Hants., Saxon House, 1977).

50. Claude Lefort, 'The genesis of ideology in modern societies' (my translation).

51. Pierre Bourdieu, 'L'économie des échanges linguistiques', *Langue Française*, 34 (mai 1977), p. 20.

52. Cornelius Castoriadis, *L'Institution imaginaire de la société* (Paris, Seuil, 1975), p. 469.

53. Menachem Begin, in an interview on American television which is reported in the *Guardian* (22 June 1982). According to Begin, 'you invade a land when you want to conquer it, or annex it, or at least conquer part of it. We don't covet even one inch.' This convenient account may be compared with the *OED* definition of 'invasion': an entrance or incursion with armed force; a hostile inroad'.

54. Editorial comment in the *Sun* (30 June 1982), p. 6.

55. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1978), p. 195.

56. I defend this claim in my manuscript on 'Theories of ideology and methods of discourse analysis' (forthcoming).

57. See especially Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981); see also Ricoeur's critical essays on structuralism in *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1974); and his brilliant study of psychoanalysis, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1970).

58. Paul Ricoeur, 'What is a text? Explanation and understanding', in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, p. 161.

59. Cf. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin, 1959); and Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977).

60. 'Media studies' is a subject in its own right; among the recent publications of particular interest are the two volumes by the Glasgow University Media Group, *Bad News* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976); and *More Bad News* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).

61. The main elements of Greimas's method are presented in A.J. Greimas, *Sémantique structurale: recherche de méthode* (Paris, Larousse, 1966); and *Du sens: essais sémiotiques (Paris, Seuil, 1970)*. The method has been applied to political discourse by Yves Delahaye in *La Frontière et le texte: pour une sémiotique des relations internationales* (Paris, Payot, 1977); and *L'Europe sous les mots: le texte et la déchirure* (Paris, Payot, 1979). See also the monumental study by Jean-Pierre Faye, *Langages totalitaires: critique de la raison/l'économie narrative* (Paris, Hermann, 1973).

62. Cf. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (St. Albans, Herts., Paladin, 1973).

63. For an example of the analysis of argumentative structure, see Pierre Lascoumes, Ghislaine Moreau-Capdevielle and Georges Vignaux, 'Il y a parmi nous des monstres', *Communications*, 28 (1978), pp. 127-63. For a more theoretical discussion, see Georges Vignaux, *L'Argumentation* (Genève, Droz, 1977).

64. See Roger Fowler, Bob Hodge, Gunther Kress and Tony Trew, *Language and Control* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979); and Gunther Kress and Robert Hodge, *Language as Ideology* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979). I discuss this material in 'Theories of ideology and methods of discourse analysis' (forthcoming).

65. See especially Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), chs. 7 and 8.

66. Cf. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, p. 116.

67. This study, conducted by Michel Pêcheux, Paul Henry, Jean-Pierre Poitou and Claudine Haroche, was published under the title 'Un exemple d'ambiguïté idéologique: le rapport Mansholt', *Technologies, Idéologies et Pratiques*, vol. 1, no. 2 (avril-juin 1979), pp. 3-83. For a detailed discussion of this example and of the method employed, see my essay on the work of Pêcheux, cited in note 5.

68. Michel Pêcheux et al., 'Un exemple d'ambiguïté idéologique', p. 69.

69. See especially Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, trans. J. Viertel (London, Heinemann, 1974); 'Wahrheitstheorien', in *Wirklichkeit und Reflexion: Walter Schulz zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. H. Fahrenbach (Pfüllingen, Neske, 1973), pp. 211-65; and *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (London, Heinemann, 1976).

70. Jürgen Habermas, 'A reply to my critics', in *Habermas: Critical Debates*, ed. John B. Thompson and David Held (London, Macmillan, 1982), p. 222.

71. I have discussed some of these difficulties in my essay on 'Universal pragmatics', in *Habermas: Critical Debates*, pp. 116-33; see also my essay on 'Rationality and social rationalisation: An assessment of Habermas's theory of communicative action', *Sociology* (1983).

72. Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 55.

73. See the important essay by Mary Hesse, 'Theory and value in the social sciences', in *Action and Interpretation: Studies in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, ed. Christopher Hookway and Philip Pettit (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 1-16.

74. Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, p. 113.

75. For an examination of these and other issues, see Steven Lukes, 'Of gods and demons: Habermas and practical reason', in *Habermas: Critical Debates*, pp. 134-48; and my *Critical Hermeneutics*, ch. 5.