

ON THE GENESIS OF IDEOLOGY IN MODERN SOCIETIES

Claude Lefort

Under the circumstances, outlining an analysis of ideology saves one the work that would be necessary for a thorough critique of ideological formations as they can be discerned in determined historical conditions. If such a critique were realized, the outline might not hold to the actual conditions, nor retain its original value. Indeed, its limitations are only too easily perceived. To present a *profile* of bourgeois ideology without reference to dates or places is to neglect many of the traits which should be taken into consideration, for example, the relation which occasionally arises between dominant discourse and the course of class conflict, the political regime, national tradition and a culture's heritage. In re-examinaing these articulations, several forms might come to light where previously only one was discerned, and thus the adopted perspective would not be left intact. The suspicion which hangs over the analysis of totalitarianism is no less serious. This analysis does not dissociate Stalinism from Nazism or fascism, although it does not permit one to be mistaken for another. Furthermore, nothing is said about the ideological transformations which have occurred in the USSR and eastern Europe over a period of nearly twenty years, nor is there any comment about China's very singular variant of totalitarianism. As for ideology, which for lack of a better term we describe as "invisible" (not because it actually is, but because it seems to be organized in such a way as to blur the characteristic oppositions of the previous ideology), the one which currently prevails in Western democracies is indicated rather than described. No doubt much laborious research would be necessary to uncover the discursive connections suggested here: from the center of organization to that of education, from the center of the media to social psychology, or to that of literary, philosophical and artistic expression. This latter shortcoming is all the more perceptible in that we believe it possible through this third form to discover the general properties of ideology and the principles of its transformation. Nonetheless, it can be explained, if not justified, like the outline format, by the concern to hastily revive a critique whose foundation is, at the present time, buried under the rubble of Marxism.

Indeed, it is impossible not to bring up the decay of the concept of ideology, given the way it is employed by sociologists or historians invoking scientific authority, as well as by revolutionary militants. Some have proclaimed "the end of ideology" (a formula which was immensely popular at the beginning of the

*From Claude Lefort *Les Formes de l'histoire: Essais d'anthropologie politique*, Gallimard, Paris, 1978 pp. 278-329. Appeared originally in *Textures* 8-9, 1974. An abbreviated version was published in the *Encyclopedia Universalis* (vol. XVII, Organum). Translated by Kathy Sabo in collaboration with Greg Nielsen, Université de Montréal for the CJPST.

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

sixties and which has recently been revived), convinced that the demands of industrial society gradually compel adaptation to reality and that the great doctrines no longer mobilize the masses. Others are content to denounce the decay of bourgeois ideology by invoking the powerlessness of the dominant to defend a value system which, from business to family, formerly governed the functioning of institutions to their own benefit. Still others, from a different perspective, see all thought as ideology; faced with their adversaries, they do not hesitate to lay claim to a proletarian ideology, as if each class interest, in itself determined, found direct and coherent expression in language.

In the first case, ideology is reduced to the *manifestation* of a global project of societal transformation; that is to say, actually to the explicit discourse of a party—communist or fascist (or one of their variants), whereas the question as to how it arose from the crisis of bourgeois ideology and why the latter is able to profit from a general thesis on the organisation of society disappears. In the second case, the present dominant ideology is identified with bourgeois ideology, defined by traits which were formerly attributed to it by the Marxist movement. In this way, with regard to the decay of bourgeois ideology, it is not possible, in principle, to perceive the signs of a transformation. Thus, one yields either to the myth of a revolution in progress, at the point of bursting out, or to the myth of an "unofficial" domination and exploitation, unable from that point to recognize their legitimacy or to be recognized as legitimate. Finally, in the third case the concept of ideology retains no trace of the initial meaning which supplied its critical force: ideology is reduced to ideas which are defended to assure the victory of a class, to a good or bad cause whose nature one knows or could know, and whose agent one knows or could know oneself to be.

In one way or another, the split between an order of practice and one of representation, which Marx's work leads us to examine, is ignored; or perhaps "concealed" would be a better choice to emphasize that it is not a question of the distortion of a concept. Rather, in a misappreciation of the problem of ideology, an ideological blindspot shows itself; just as the lack of comprehension of the problem of the subconscious would not stem from an error in the reading of Freud, but from a new resistance to discovery which would threaten the subject's certitudes.

Thus, by means of remarkable ruse, ideology has come to designate almost the contrary of its original meaning. Formerly referring to a logic of dominant ideas, concealed from the knowledge of social actors and only revealing itself through interpretation and in the critique of utterances and their manifest sequences, it has today been reduced to a corpus of arguments, to the apparatus of beliefs which provides the visible framework of a collective practice, identified with democratic liberal discourse for some, or with Leninist or Stalinist discourse (indeed, Maoist or Trotskyist) for others, or even with fascist discourse just as they are presented.

To reopen the path to a critique of ideology, to the examination of the present, is not to return to the original purity of Marx's theory. Such a step would be doubly illusionary, first of all, because strictly speaking, there is no theory of

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

ideologies in Marx's work; his analyses are ambiguous and to make use of his work, one must interpret it. Secondly, the present can only be decoded if one questions the principles which control its intelligibility. In addition, returning to Marx's undertaking can retrace his procedure only *at a distance* and include the examination of the thought about ideology in the examination of ideology itself. The distance proves to be considerable, given that Marx only conceived of ideology as "bourgeois ideology", and that we are led to recognize it in other forms, and moreover, to understand the principle of its transformation. Nonetheless, we must stress the fact that Marx did not make bourgeois ideology into a product of the bourgeoisie. Rather, he leads us to relate it to social division and to link its origin to that of a historical formation—as he terms it, "the capitalist mode of production"—which he concluded to be different from all previous formations grouped together in the category of "pre-capitalism".

Our outline takes the following conception as its starting point: it confines ideology to one type of society, and thus formally challenges the application of the term to a feudal, despotic, or stateless structure in which the dominant discourse draws its legitimacy from reference to a transcendent order, and does not admit the notion of social reality intelligible in itself, nor, at the same time, the notion of a history or nature intelligible in itself. On the other hand, we clearly break with Marx's conception from the moment that we no longer deal with ideology as a reflection, when we attempt to uncover its work and think of formation and transformation together, that is to say, we attribute to it the ability to articulate and rearticulate itself, not only in response to the supposed "reality", but in face of the effects of its own masking of reality. It must be emphasized then, that this break concerns not only the conception of ideology, but the conception of mode of production, or the Marxist definition of the locus of reality.

The society whose specificity Marx conceives by contrast to all previous formations comes into being with the schism of capital and labour. Class oppositions are condensed in the antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat; the separation of the State and civil society responds to the necessity for a power which represents the law in everyone's eyes, and which has the means of generalized restraint. Detached from the dominant class, the State tends to put its general interests ahead of the particular interests of one or the other of its parts and to maintain the obedience of the dominated. Simultaneously, the fragmentation in sectors of activity (each tending to develop according to the image of its autonomy) is created as a consequence of the growing division of labour and from the necessity of specialists taking charge of the social needs of bourgeois domination (the political splits from the economic at the same time as the judicial, scientific, pedagogic, aesthetic sectors, etc., define themselves). In this society, the conditions for the unity of the socialisation process are already set out. Capital, without men's knowledge, already embodies materialized social power, whereas with the increasing abstraction of labour, a class arises which is more and more homogeneous and which tends to absorb all the exploited strata. However, this latent unity can only be realized by the negation of the division, a

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

negation whose driving force rests in the revolutionary class, in a praxis where its productive force and its struggle against exploitation are articulated. The contradictions which derive from the accumulation of capital and from the separation of the various sectors of activity within the overall structure, the gap between them, their unequal development, social struggles (above all class struggles, but also those between groups linked to specific interests and practices), all these make capitalist society an essentially *historical* one, that is to say, destined to a continual upheaval of its institutions, to give birth to new things and to undergo the explicit experience of the real as history.

In terms of such a description, ideology becomes in turn a separate domain; it constitutes a world of ideas in which an essence of social reality is represented; oppositions of all orders are changed into determinations of the universal, domination is changed into an expression of the law. The affinity between the political and the ideological is evident: just as power splits from a totally divided society to embody the law's generality and to exercise physical restraint, and as it simultaneously transposes and misrepresents a class's domination, so does ideological discourse separate itself from all the forms of social practice, to embody the generality of knowledge and to exercise the force of persuasion; it transposes and misrepresents at the same time as an idea, the reality of domination. Indeed, the political and the ideological, when all is said and done, are not intelligible unless one recognizes both the incompleteness of the socialization process and the possibility inscribed *in reality* of this completion, to which communism gives real expression. But whereas the political is still determined within the limits of the socialisation process, ideology achieves in the imagination that unity which only real action, the negativity of labour and of proletarian praxis, will bring about.

As fruitful as it may be, this analysis (which certainly does not summarize all of Marx's thought) misrepresents the symbolic dimension of the social domain. It is impossible, in our view, to deduce the order of law, of power or of knowledge from relations of production; impossible also to reduce the language in which social practice is articulated to the effects of the labour-capital division. These relations and effects are only constructed, only developed according to *conditions* which we cannot possibly place on the plane of reality. Instead, that which is labelled as such opens up to humanity, becoming organized and comprehensible only once the signs of a new experience of law, power and knowledge are put in place, once a mode of discourse is installed in which certain oppositions, certain practices, actually *manifest*, that is to say, link with each other and potentially contain a universal meaning, in allowing a regulated exchange between thought and action.

According to Marx, the progress of exchange and the progressive instituting of the market go back to the origins of capitalism; however, the market practice confronted limits which prohibited its generalisation, despite its considerable expansion and the maturity of its techniques in other social formations (in China for example). These obstacles formed part of the symbolic system, a configuration of signs of law, power and knowledge which did not allow the disassociation of social relations and personal dependence. Also noticeable at the origins of the

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

accumulation of capital was the naked violence of the dominant who tore their means of production from the peasants' hands and reduced them to the status of a pure labour force. However, what Marx calls the original sin of capitalism also applies to his own theory, because the violence born of the new mode of production was not mute; it was supported by a representation of cause and effect, whose articulation was deprived of meaning under other social conditions; it became part of a discourse capable of finding the criterion for its coherence within its limits, and which could become the pivot of an articulation of the law and reality.

No description of the changes which have occurred in production, exchange and ownership can explain what is brought into play with the formation of the modern State. The *stage* of social reality *appears* where political power is confined within society, as the instrument which unifies it, where this power is supposed to originate through its action. Represented on this stage is the institution of social reality; in the events which are acted out there, in the relations which are created between individuals and groups, the framework of reality can be located.

Although power is brought within the boundaries of space and time where social relations are articulated and is thereby disaligned with regard to the law which it represents, this does not mean that it becomes actual power. If it were to appear as such, the indications of social identity would be abolished. However, it is true that the power is exposed to this threat as soon as its representation is involved in the institution of social reality; not only appearing as if generated in the society, but in appearing as a founder, since it is henceforth deprived of any indication of its own foundation, removed from the order of the world from which it drew the assurance of its function. Thus, it can only be established under the sign of the law if it always re-establishes itself, that is to say, by employing a *discourse*—where the difference between the one and the other, and the difference between "saying" and what is said arise from the identity of the social subject. This discourse is itself ambiguous, unable to be determined as the product of power without, in turn, falling to the realm of fact, unable as well to relate to a transcendent guarantee without losing its properties. In its exercise, it is thus concerned with producing its "truth", with affirming its *power of discourse*, in order to deny its determination as discourse of power. This ambiguity is such that the power is for the first time shown to be simultaneously localized and non-localizable. It is non-localizable in that it arises at the intersection of two actions which refer to each other, which are generated by the society that power generates. However, it is necessarily localized insofar as it is tied down to the domain of social reality.

The disentangling of the social and world orders goes together with the disentangling of the political and the mythical-religions; but, by the same token, it also goes with that of the political and the non-political *within* the social order. The differentiation of economic, judicial, pedagogical, scientific, aesthetic practices, etc., which are developed, not as actual practices (in the pores of society according to the Marxist metaphor), but as practices which put social reality as

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

such into play, is only clarified under these conditions. Simultaneously, this differentiation is that of social discourses, "particular" discourses, but ones which are concerned with claiming a universal truth. The oscillation which is indicated between the discourse of power and the power of discourse includes the possibility of a disjunction between power and discourse. In other words, each particular discourse reveals its power, not only at a distance from institutionalised political power, but in contradiction to the determination of power represented in itself, insofar as it is joined to a singular practice where social division is found. Thus each discourse tends to set off in search of its own foundation; in the discourse's exercise itself, a relation is formed with knowledge, whose limits are not actually determined, in the sense that a general knowledge of the social order and the order of the world in conjunction with the power of the State is lacking. That the diverse discourses are interrelated in no way means that they can be condensed into one, because the truth is that they are not only contemporarily instituted in function of one experience; they participate in the institution of social reality and decode it through the effect of the disarticulation of power and the law and their own differentiation, each referring back to itself in elaborating its differences.

With such a process, the question is not to attribute the *cause* to the *fact* of the modern State. In doing this, we would be victims of the same illusion that we denounced in Marx's work; we would only be transferring to another level the determinism which Marx was tempted to place at the level of the relations of production. As well, we could say that the characteristics of the modern State are only determined in a system where knowledge reveals its differentiation, where discourse reveals its alterity (instead of speech being organized through the exterior pole of the Other), events whose origins were put forward by the humanism of the Renaissance. If, however, we label as political the "form" in which the symbolic dimension of social reality is uncovered, it is not in order to give greater importance to relations of power, among others, but rather to make it understood that power is not "a thing", empirically determined, but indissociable from its representation, and that the experience made of this, simultaneously experience of knowledge and the mode of articulation of social discourse, is constitutive of social identity.

In this perspective, the break with Marx goes so far as to touch upon what is for him the final question: the future unity of the process of socialisation *in reality*. The question of unity overshadows that of social identity which could not arise in reality; it implies its defection and marks the insertion of the practice in the order of language.

From the moment we refuse to define ideology with regard to a supposed reality, it demands a new interpretation. We can only define it by recognizing the attempt belonging solely to modern society to conceal the enigma of its political form, to cancel the effects of social and temporal division which are generated to restore the "real". In this sense, we do not grasp it as a reflection, nor through the practice which it would reflect. It is exposed by its own workings: in response to the "institution" whose finality is to bring the indetermination of social reality back to its determination.

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

The transformation of ideology allows us to better understand its formation because the contradiction which is present is revealed there: it cannot realize itself without losing its function, nor can it go to the limit of the affirmation of reality without the threat of appearing in its externality to the practice and instituting discourse from which it arises to defuse the conflicts.

It is true that in attempting to present here the logic of the transformation of ideology, the outline suffers from being an outline rather than a first draft of a full analysis, from its rigid construction rather than from a lack of precision. The role which we give to the contradiction leaves us open to the accusation of Hegelianism. Nonetheless, it should be noted that this contradiction is not concerned with history, with the future of "Spirit", but only brings to light the genesis of the social representations of concealment. The principles of this genesis can be deciphered because in accordance with the same task, through repetition, the movements of discourse are carried out in the historical process.

The Problem with Marx

Marx's procedure was entirely different from that of contemporary Marxists. He did not possess an inherent sense of the distinction between the ideological and the real; rather, he developed it. We cannot forget that the critique of German philosophy, and most importantly that of Hegel, controls his initial interpretations of social structure, and that in *Capital*, moreover, the critique of the illusions of the bourgeois economy and the market forms the basis for the discovery of the unity of social labour and the process of value formation. Being only too familiar with his method, neither can we underestimate the audacity of an attempt to pinpoint the signs of a logic of deception in all the dominant modes of representation, and notably in philosophical discourses where a radical critique of established ideas is demanded. Finally, we cannot fail to observe that in his work, the distinction between reality and ideology is articulated with the implicit distinction between knowledge and ideology—and that this latter distinction prohibits attaching the terms of the former to the plane of objective knowledge. It is actually when he demonstrates, in his *Critique de la philosophie de l'Etat de Hegel*, the extravagant mechanics of Hegel's philosophical system, that Marx acquires for the first time an understanding of ideological phenomena. There, he reveals the attempt to substitute an ideal origin of the State for its real origin. This becomes a process of inverting reality, the transposition in space of the theory of contingent socio-historical determinations, and the imaginary solution to existing contradictions—in effect, a process of idealisation. But more importantly, he reveals the action of the fulfillment of knowledge which turns in on itself, simulating the conquest of totality, and which conceals from itself the fact of its own creation, thereby effacing the division between thought and being. We must recognize that in ideology (it is of little importance that the concept has

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

not yet been clarified, the outline of its constituent elements has been brought to light), a triple denial is effected: the division of class, linked to the division of social labour; the temporal division, the destruction-production of forms of social relations; and finally, the division of knowledge and the practice which it reflects, and from which it is instituted as such. In addition, when Marx analyses the State and the bureaucracy and no longer their Hegelian representation, and when later, forgetting the *folie* of the philosophical system, he only concerns himself with understanding that of the capitalist system, it is in order to bring to light the same process. The discourse within the institution supports the illusion of an essence of society; it wards off a double threat to the established order, arising from a society which is at once divided and historical. This discourse must be recognized as rational in itself, a closed discourse which, while masking the conditions of its own production, claims to reveal that of empirical social reality.

Our aim is not to analyse Marx's thought. If this were the case, it would then have to be agreed that his distinction between knowledge and ideology only carries the seeds of the critique of any discourse claiming to define the real in a refusal to recognize the conditions which assure its externality. It would also have to be agreed that he himself yielded to the temptation of this position by investing the positive sciences with the certitude of which he had divested philosophy. Yet, it is important to briefly reformulate Marx's problem, to unearth it from the dogmatic commentaries which have covered it, in order to assess the theoretical conditions which he has imposed upon us as well as the limits beyond which we must go if we wish to take up his interpretation again in examining contemporary societies.

This problem is posed in terms which preclude the reduction of ideology to bourgeois discourse, and thus prohibit exclusively retaining its function of mystification, justification and conservation in the service of class interests. Marx has amply emphasized this function, notably in *The German Ideology*, but it is only intelligible if ideology is first considered in relation to its focus: social division. Marx implies that a society cannot continue to exist as a human society unless it creates a representation of its unity—unity which, in reality, is witnessed in the relation of reciprocal dependence of social agents and at the same time is belied by the separation of their activities. Thus, even though social division is not determined in the universal division of class (that of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat), the existence of "limited social relations" implies the projection of an imaginary community under cover of which "real" distinctions are determined as "natural", the particular is disguised under the traits of the universal, the historical erased under the atemporality of the essence. The representation in which social relations are embedded indicates in itself a position of power, since the imaginary community governs over the individuals or separate groups and imposes behavioural norms upon them. In this sense, the overlying universal inserts the dominated into his condition and assures the position of the dominator. Nonetheless, the point of view of class domination and that of the "representation", however related they may be, do not coincide. Analysing Asiatic despotism, Marx observes that the prince embodies the imagin-

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

ary community above the dispersed rural communities. The "real" power—which can be located, in practice, by the signs of command (control of bureaucratic apparatus), constraint (recruiting of peasant labour for war or state objectives), and exploitation (imposing a surplus value on agricultural production)—this empirically determinable power is held in a representation which reflects and conceals social division (the absolute distance between master and enslaved people symbolically transposes the untransformed separation of rural communities). Still, it is true that this is an extreme case, since the bureaucracy only exists as a class through the mediation of the despot. It is also true that his discourse (be he god, demi-god, or divine representative) tends to become confused with the discourse of the universal. The indications which Marx gives pertaining to class formation in *The German Ideology* are even more suggestive. He brings to light a division between individuals such as they are determined in a collective relation, in function of their common interests with regard to a third person, and these same individuals defined as members of a class, receiving their identity as "average individuals", find themselves belonging to a "community". Detached from the real activity of the division of labour, and hovering above the individuals, this "community" effaces the third person, and thus becomes the essence of social reality. In this perspective, the class itself, unlike the economic category to which it is attached, shows itself to be held in the ideological process. Furthermore, the analysis of *The 18th Brumaire* discloses that its formation as the dominant political class implies a denial of the temporal difference, a refusal to recognize the present; camouflaging it under the characteristics of Ancient Rome proves to be a necessary condition for bourgeois revolutionary action.

Social Division is not in Society

If this is the path which Marx seems to open up, there can be no doubt that he also closes it off. In effect, it would be impossible for him to follow such a course unless he claimed to determine the nature of social reality through the positive sciences, yielding to the illusion of an intrinsic development attributed to the observer, and unless he argued in accordance with a superficial opposition between production and representation. Admittedly, it must be recognized that the concept of production is considerably expanded in Marx's writings. He notes that men do not produce only the tools necessary to meet their needs, and these being met, do not only produce new needs; they also produce their social relations. It can indeed be said that even language results from production, since Marx admits that it appears with the necessity for commerce between men, and that in short, he envisages its development by relating it to the communication model—individual to individual or group to group—which is one aspect of social relations. Nonetheless, the use of this concept, however widespread, constantly

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

guarantees a natural evolution of humanity. It is true that man produces the instruments of his production and his social relations at the same time; what is produced is, in turn, a productive force. In this way, he is also a product of what he produces, but the idea of production being self-production does not free him from a mechanism. In the last analysis, the social state proves to be a combination of terms, of which the identity (be it a necessity, an instrument, a linguistic sign, labour, its individual or collective agent) is unquestionable. From such a perspective, the concept of the division of labour itself refers to a basic fact, certainly in Marx's eyes, to a fact of evolution, but one which lies within a field already covertly developed in such a way as to give the impression that the elements are naturally determined. Nothing could be more significant in this respect than Marx's effort, in *The German Ideology*, to trace the origins of the division of labour, and his assertion that primitively it was none other than the division of labour in the sex act. There, without doubt, Marx's positivism shows itself. The argument assumes precisely that which escapes explanation: a division of the sexes such that the partners would naturally identify each other as being different, so coming to reflect upon this difference, and be represented as man and woman. It becomes clear that this is not a simple deviation of interpretation when, in the same section of *The German Ideology*, as Marx enumerated the three fundamental conclusions of the history of humanity, procreation is presented as the act of production of the family, of the double relation man-woman and parents-child. In the same way that copulation is seen to be the primitive model of cooperation and social division, procreation is considered to be the model of the historical production of humanity. In both cases, there is a negation of the articulation of the division—between sexes or generations—with the actual "thought" of the division, which cannot possibly be deduced from the former since it is implicit in the definition of the terms. It is the symbolic order which is negated, the idea of a system of oppositions by virtue of which social "figures" can be identified and articulated in relation to each other, that is, the relation between the division of social agents and the representation. In other words, Marx refuses to recognize that social division is also originally the division of the socialisation process and the discourse which articulates it.

Criticizing Marx in no way leads us to assert the primacy of the representation nor to fall back into the illusion which he denounced of an independent logic of ideas. Neither does it distract us from the task of discovering the mechanisms which tend to assure the representation of an imaginary essence of the community. On the contrary, we are striving to understand them, but without yielding to the naturalist illusion. Such an attempt presupposes that we no longer confuse social division with the empirical division of men in the operation of production. We cannot determine it any more than the division of the sexes in an objective space which would have pre-dated it; we cannot relate it to positive terms inasmuch as they arise as such, even in its activity. Social space is established, we must assume, with the division, and this only insofar as it is visible to itself. Its differentiation through relations of kinship or class, through the relation between state and civil society, is indissociable from the action of discourse at a

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

distance from the supposed reality, a discourse which states the order of the world. It is therefore impossible to take up a position which would comprehend the totality of social relations and the workings of their articulations. Similarly, it would be impossible to include the totality of historical development, to establish a beginning and an end to social division, as that would then be concealing from ourselves our own involvement at the level of discourse already brought into play in the division. This blindspot would prompt us to take our representation as being real in itself.

At this point, the limits of Marx's thought seem to be indicated by his treatment of the process of representation as if it were a result of the ventures of cooperation and division, as if this reality were determined on the natural level of labour. Thus, he could not avoid confusing the ideological and symbolic orders, reducing discourses such as the mythological, religious, political, judicial, etc., to the projection of "real" conflicts into the imaginary, and lastly, lowering the signs of law and power to the empirical plane, thereby transforming them into social "products".

The Imaginary and the "Historical Society"

This critique must be even further developed. To state that the institution of social reality is simultaneously the appearance to itself of the social reality gives rise to a certain ambiguity because one is then tempted to picture the emergence of discourse on social reality as emerging from the social space, thus simply reconstituting a more sophisticated version of sociologism. In actual fact, the ambiguity is already present when we speak of the "discourse on social reality" as if it were possible to perceive it as such, to include the discourse which declares the order of the world as well as the one which declares the physical order in it, as if the question of social division, even freed from empiricism, included in itself that of the division of man and the world and also that of the division of the sexes and generations; especially as if it were possible to reduce the question of the origins of man and the question of birth to a question of origin as it appears in society through myth or religion. In each epoch, men's discourse is ruled by a metasociological and metapsychological question. We misunderstand it first of all by believing it possible to enclose it within certain limits; but still more seriously when, in consequence, we forget that the discourse on social reality does not coincide with itself in the social space where it acts and where, at the same time, it is instituted. Finally, we misunderstand it in forgetting that what it articulates assumes the fact of its own articulation, or, in other words, that the labour of division and institution is "older" than that of the social division and institution. Thus Marx's limit is sharply brought out in attempting to envisage social reality from within the boundaries of social reality, history from within the borders of history, man from man and with a view to man. It is thus brought out

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

in attempting to evade, not the relations between man and "nature" (because he speaks of it continuously in order to assure himself of an objective determination of man in a naturalist perspective), but rather the relation of man, the social, history, to what is in principle beyond reach, from which he is generated and which remains implicit in him.

Through becoming aware of this limit, we are encouraged to reformulate the conditions of ideological analysis. As we have already stated, it is not possible to determine ideology with regard to a "reality", whose traits would be taken from positive knowledge, without losing the notion of the operation of the constitution of reality, and without placing ourselves in the illusionary position of overlooking Being. On the other hand, we can attempt to understand how, in a given epoch, the dominant discourse acts in such a way as to conceal the process of social division, or that which at present we also call the process of generating social space, or still, the *historical*, in order to make it understood that social division and temporality are two aspects of the same institution. Undoubtedly, it will have to be admitted that such a discourse, inasmuch as it is placed in social division, in its action of describing the social space can only be opaque to itself. But it is an altogether different matter to state that it bears a knowledge whose principle is hidden from it, and that it acts according to the demands of concealing the traces of social division, that is to say, according to the demands of the representation of an order which would assure it of the natural determination of its articulation, and with it, of the articulation of social relations *here and now*. As the institutor, the discourse is without knowledge of the institution, but insofar as it is concerned with averting the threat that the manifestation of a gap between being and discourse hangs over it, that of the backlash from this experience, it actively becomes the negator of the institution of social reality; it is a discourse of occultation, in which symbolic indicators are converted into natural determinations in which the statement of social law, the statement of world law and that of physical law come to mask the inconceivable link between the law and the statement, the dependence of the law on the person who utters it and the dependence of the utterance on the law.

Nonetheless, we must immediately become aware of the conditions under which it is possible to grasp this distinction. In effect, it assumes that the institution of social space has become perceptible to itself, in such a way that the instituting discourse cannot efface its tracks through the imaginary. In other words, it assumes that social division and historicity in themselves have come to question this in such a way that the occultation's work remains subject to their effects, that in its failures, in the continual attempt to correct them, through its conflicts, it allows that which we can now call *reality* to appear, *reality*, to indicate that it is a question of that which indeed exposed the impossibility of concealment. In this sense, examining ideology confronts us with the determination of a type of society in which a specific imaginary realm can be located.

Although Marx, as we have just pointed out, was tempted to convert social division into the empirical division of classes, and yielded to the illusion of a determinism which would govern the series of modes of production, it is still to

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

him that we owe the idea of modifying the imaginary realm. In effect, by opposing the capitalist mode of production to all previous ones, he glimpsed the peculiarity of a mode of institution of social reality in which the effects of the division and historicity can no longer be neutralized through the representation. In seeking to define Asiatic despotism (to which we have already referred), he actually weakens its construction, since he asserts that this social formation tends to reproduce itself as such, independent of all events such as wars, migrations, changes in dynasties; that the economic and social organization is as if paralysed due to the absolute separation of the imaginary community and the rural ones. In so doing, he prompts us, first of all, to doubt the respective functions of production and representation, by leaving it to be assumed that the first is subordinate to the second. Even though he persists in presenting despotism as an imaginary function which grafts itself onto the reality of the division of labour, he cannot, at the same time, avoid admitting that it has a symbolic effectiveness (which is attested to by designating the mode of production in non-economic terms); but especially, through an extreme case he clarifies a distinctive trait of all the pre-capitalist formations. The assertion that their mode of production remains essentially conservative in spite of all the historical differences, that the division of labour and social relations always tend to crystallize there and to resist the change factors, is in fact only intelligible if one recognizes the full effectiveness of the symbolic device which, owing to the separation of two positions—that of law, discourse on social reality, the power which is at once bearer and guarantor of this discourse and the place of actual social relations—makes possible the placement of the established order between social groups and agents in the world order, and thus diffuses the effects of social division. This is a device whose particular task is to assure the conditions of occultation without allowing the question of an opposition between imaginary and real to arise. Actually, reality only shows itself to be determinable insofar as it is assumed to be already determined, in accordance with an utterance which, mythical or religious, attests to a knowledge whose actual activity of knowledge, technical invention, interpretation of the *visible*, cannot bring the foundation into play. The discourse is indeed instituting; it orders the possibility of an articulation of social reality. However, it defines the oppositions as "natural", and thus defines the status of the dominant and dominated in kinship and class relations owing to the concealment of social division behind the representation of a massively asserted division, of another world, of a materialized invisibility. We can only grasp the extent of this operation if we understand that in one sense it realizes a possibility which forms part of the institution of social reality, by making it appear that this institution is not a social fact in itself, that the question of social space is, from the beginning, a question of its boundaries or its "outside" (just as the question of the body is that of its origin and its death), that the discourse is not only the product of men, but that they are articulated in it. We are definitely transgressing the borders of Marxism again in rejecting the idea that myths and religions are simple human inventions, but only in order to follow in its wake, to attempt to picture a model in which the symbolic device is such that the concealment of

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

social division coincides with the actual power of blocking its effects and the concealment of the historical coincides with the actual power of barring the path to change, or of containing its development.

If we venture to conceive of the genesis of the different types of social formations, we must make certain corrections in these propositions. The differences between the structures of a primitive society, those of Asiatic despotism, the ancient city-state, and European feudalism are so great that treating them as variants of one model might appear to be an arbitrary decision. From our perspective, we are in particular constrained to neglect an essential articulation: that between power and discourse on social reality—an articulation, however, which can only become visible through the activity in which the pole of the law is disassociated from the pole of the utterance, and where the contingency of the utterance and its function of occultation venture to appear. It must be admitted that there is no criterion which could distinguish the imaginary from the real where the place of power is held "empty" and where relations are organized according to its neutralization, whereas when the power is linked to men's actions and shifted out of position with regard to the law, the possibility of this distinction is already opened up. In spite of this, in all cases, the origin of discourse on the order of the world, on the order of social reality, proves to have been conceived *elsewhere*.

Marx himself only conceives of this model (whatever his claims to developing a theory of the evolution of humanity) from the starting point of his analysis of the capitalist mode of production. In discovering that the latter is essentially "revolutionary", that is to say, not subject to chance, but in itself a generator of events which continually modify established relations, Marx is led to generally oppose two types of social formations.

Let us briefly recall the two traits which, in Marx's eyes, characterize modern society: on the one hand, the unification of the social domain through the generalization of exchange and of the reduction of all concrete labour to abstract labour; on the other hand, the division of labour and capital, the concentration of the means of production and the formation of an ever-increasing mass of social agents, reduced to the simple possession of their labour power. Undoubtedly, these two traits are indissociably linked: society tends to refer to itself in all its parts, or in the language of the young Marx, the "reciprocal dependence" of all social agents tends to be achieved insofar as a cleavage is effected for the first time between two antagonistic poles whose relation brings into play the identity of everything. Thus, the social space tends to appear within its own limits (and not with reference to another locus from where it would be visible) as soon as all the divisions become subordinate to a general one, when kinship and territorial relations, and more generally, relations of personal dependence, are all dissolved, and when each of the two terms of the division, by the negation of its contradiction, refers to the unity of social reality. Certainly these operations are not symmetrical, given that although the mass of workers realizes the negation by representing the image of the collective Producer (who is only recognized in the abolition of the division), capital, on the other hand, the embodiment of social

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

power, is only achieved through enlarging the division and by representing the image of a class destined to the fantasy of being a universal class as a *particular* class. The origin of ideology takes its place in this process as an attempt to represent the universal from the particular point of view of the dominant class. The singularity of this attempt stems from the fact that it is entrenched in the social division, that it results directly from it. As we have already stated, this attempt cannot be interpreted in terms of collective psychology, but rather as the sign of a logic which is part of the institution of social reality; from the moment that the division no longer finds its expression in the division of the world of production and the world of representation, but rather is represented within the world of production itself, that is to say, is hidden behind the image of an immanent rationality in reality. In this sense, the singularity of the attempt also lies in the fact that it comes to terms with the activity which frees capital from all the limitations imposed by the limited social relations, and which invests it, as a socialized system of exploitation, with an unlimited power of objectification and rationalization of production. The ideological process differs from the religious process not only in that the former tends to develop within the confines of social space, but also, in so doing, it becomes intricately linked with "scientific" knowledge, knowledge which lays claim to the self-deciphering of reality. On the other hand, the ideological process is just as radically distinguished by the fact that it is subject to the effects of an incessant social upheaval generated by capitalism, in which the institutions, mentalities, and collective behaviours are modified, in which the centers of power shift, in which the bourgeois strata, which drew their income and power from different sources, enter into opposition; by the fact, then, that it must accomplish its task of concealing the division by modifying its own statements or by simultaneously having recourse to a multiplicity of representations in order to seal the cracks opened by the change in the "rationality of reality". Thus, the singular relation between ideology and historical society is exposed. The imaginary is no longer part of the symbolic device which tends to define the institution of social reality in referring the detail of social organization to a discourse which is split from it. Insofar as the question of the genesis of social reality from its own locus arises (the mastery of this genesis, the means of denying and containing it being concealed), a new type of discourse then comes into being, concerned with abating the oppositions and breaks at the dual level of time and space. In other words, ideology is the sequence of representations whose function is to re-establish the dimension of the "ahistorical" society within the historical society.

Once again, taking from Marx's language, the idea of "conservation" fulfills a strategic function in his interpretation; in all pre-capitalist formations, the mode of production is conservative, whereas in capitalism the ideology is conservative and is assigned the task of concealing the revolution which resides in the mode of production. Marx undoubtedly sensed that in this latter case, the imaginary is segregated from the institution of social reality, due to the manifest breakdown of every symbolic system susceptible to mastering this institution. Marx, like Feuerbach, can indeed continue to consider religion as a typical expression of

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

ideology; but, in demonstrating that religion has emigrated into social relations, he partially perceives the specificity of ideology: the tacit recognition of historicity, the division, and even the implication of the representation in that which it represents. He partially realizes that in modern societies, the process of the imaginary goes hand in hand with an unprecedented experience of "reality" as such. In aiming at this distinction resulting from the real and the imaginary, he acquires the ability to return it to social formations within which it would be indecipherable. But this ability is sustained by the illusion which is at the center of modern society, that the institution of social reality can explain itself. Marx grasps the principle of ideology as the specific mode of the imaginary, but he continues to suppose that it can be reduced to the concealment of *something*: class division, division of labour and capital, of the State and civil society, of the historical present and its tasks. He does this without ever going so far as to consider that if it actually insures this concealment, it is ordered and supported by a principle of occultation which has been substituted for the one which governed the symbolic device of all the pre-capitalist formations; the impossibility of a discourse on social reality being generated in a locus other than its own.

We cannot confuse ideology with the refusal to recognize this impossibility which, from a broader perspective, is the same one which is confronted by all discourse in modern societies, in that each discourse is seeking its own foundation. In addition, today we would not say that Marx's thought is ideological any more than we would say the same of any other work to which we attribute the power of institution in modern times. Moreover, social discourse and not only that which relates to theoretical works, cannot be considered as ideological for the simple fact that it is developed in the face of such an impossibility. In addition, we consider the argument which discredits the principles of democratic discourse in reducing them to utterances of bourgeois democracy to be a false creation, although we do point out the impossible attempt to place the institutor in the instituted. With just such confusion, the critique of a fraction of the *intelligentsia* is developing at the present time. All around, it sees the signs of ideology, and multiplies its condemnations of political discourse as such, of economic, judicial, philosophical or pedagogical discourse, without being able to assess what has been brought into play and what still is each time there is an attempt at contact between instituted knowledge and the institutor owing to its inability to succeed; such an attempt turns the discourse into a "workplace", whose effect is to keep open the lines of questioning which are at its roots, in spite of all the arguments which are asserted. In this sense (the paradox being only apparent), this mode of discourse, in the activity which condemns it to a certain blindness, attests to that which is beyond the grasp of action and knowledge, a relation to the enigma of the institution. If we were to take as ideology the discourse which confronts the impossibility of its self-genesis, this would mean that we would be converting this impossibility into a positive fact; we would believe in the possibility of mastering it; we would again be placing ourselves in the illusionary position of overlooking discourse in order to "see" the division from which it emerges, whereas the discourse can only reveal this in

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

itself. On the contrary, we maintain that ideology is organized by a principle of occultation which strays from its task: it indicates a return of social discourse upon itself, suppressing all the indications which would tend to destroy the certainty of the social being: signs of historical creativity, of the unnamed, of what is concealed through the action of power, of what breaks apart through the scattered affairs of socialization; signs which make a society, or humanity as such, estranged from itself.

As we have stated, such is the nature of ideological discourse already discerned by Marx, but deceptively related to a hidden reality (the state of the division of labour determined by that of the productive forces); it is a second discourse, following the track of the instituting discourse which does not know itself, and under the latter's influence, attempts to simulate a general knowledge of reality as such. This discourse, then, develops in the affirmative mode, the mode of determination, generalization, reduction of differences, of externality regarding its object; as such, it always implies the point of view of power which guarantees an actual or possible order and which tends toward anonymity to attest to a truth imprinted in things. This second discourse draws nothing from its own depths; that is how Marx can justify his observation that ideology has no history. But it would be incorrect to consequently assume that the discourse is linked to a determined ensemble of utterances.

We have already noted that this dependence with regard to the instituting discourse has several effects. In the first place, it tends to take hold of the signs again in order to incorporate them into its concealment of the historical. It accomplishes this in such a way that the "modern" representation (we will return to this point) is at its highest point of effectiveness in masking the temporal difference. In the second place, it tends to achieve the homogenization of the domain by taking in hand the questions which arise in accordance with the differentiation of social space and conflicts of a class and group in order to diffuse them. Thus, the demarcation of a political practice, which we are in no way led to describe as ideological as such, gives rise to a particular discourse which actively elaborates the image of political essence (whether this is to maintain its rationality or its final irrationality is not important). This operation repeats itself, starting from the determination of a judicial, aesthetic, or pedagogical practice; its effectiveness lies in the fact that the same schemas given in each discourse, that each one leads to another and constitutes one link of the general discourse on social reality. Yet it is equally true that the different layers, each in accordance with the conditions in which it is placed and its particular aspirations, come to speak a language at the service of "rationality" and "reality", of the concealment of any temporal or spatial break, whose effect is to insure the complementarity of representations in an epoch. Thirdly, the attempt to compensate for the shortcomings of the general discourse, always subject to the impossible mastery of the instituting one, imposes a successive recourse to disparate schemes of explanation, logically incompatible, although one model evidently predominates. Different social agents are not alone in sharing the task of ideological discourse; it is destined to move its references to feed its justification—for example, references

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

to the past and future, to ethics and technical rationality, to individual and community. In this sense, it is forced to make the most of what it has, to adapt itself to heterogenous versions in order to retain the effectiveness of its general response.

Nonetheless, these remarks are not sufficient. Even thus corrected, the proposition that ideology has no history might well be misleading, because it hides the contradiction which ideology confronts, and which orders its transformations. As well, it may conceal from us the logic of the imaginary in historical society. We can find the driving force of ideological changes, not only in a "real" history, as Marx believed; to some extent, the necessity for its reorganization is determined by the failure of the process of concealment of the institution of social reality. Because ideology cannot operate without showing itself, that is to say without being exposed as a discourse, without letting the gap appear between this discourse and its object, it implies an evolution in which the impossibility of erasing its tracks is reflected.

Bourgeois ideology, which Marxists persist in confusing with ideology in general—prisoners that they are of an empiricist schema which reduces it to a determined state of class division—only constitutes one instance of it. Indeed, it is in examining the signs of its failure that the genesis of totalitarian ideology is brought to light. In discovering the boundaries of the latter, we may also obtain some indication as to the mechanisms which govern the imaginary in contemporary western societies and whose effectiveness supposes both the exploitation and the neutralization of the totalitarian attempt.

The So-Called "Bourgeois" Ideology

Everything that we have said concerning the general properties of ideology applies to bourgeois ideology. At its peak, in the nineteenth century, it is possible to discern a social discourse external to social reality, a discourse governed by the illusion of an explanation of reality from within the real, and which tends to present itself as an anonymous discourse in which the universal speaks of itself. Whatever support this discourse finds in certain epochs and for certain strata of the dominant class, it is subject to the ideal of positive knowledge and expressly or implicitly challenges any reference to another locus where knowledge about social reality and world orders would collect. But we must not forget the singularity of the device through which ideological discourse attempts to fulfill its function. Actually, it is organized by means of a split between *ideas* and the supposed *real*. The externality of the other locus, linked to religious or mythical knowledge, is erased, but the discourse only refers back to itself through the detour of the transcendence of ideas. The text of ideology is written in capital letters, whether it is a question of Humanity, Progress, Nature, Life or key concepts of bourgeois democracy inscribed on the pediment of the Republic, or

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

even of Science, Art, as well as Property, Family, Order, Society or Country; it can be a conservative or progressivist version of bourgeois discourse, or a socialist or anarchist version of antibourgeois discourse. This text carries the constant signs of a truth which determines the origins of facts, which encloses them in a representation and directs the argumentation. The determination of an order of appearances is asserted or maintained through the transcendence of the idea; or more generally, the possibility of an objectification of social reality opens up, no matter what point of view is adopted.

The double nature of the idea as representation and norm, however, cannot be overemphasized; neither can the double character of the argumentation, which attests to a truth in reality and to the conditions of action in conformity with the nature of things. Moreover, an essential articulation of ideological discourse stands out in the function expressly attributed to the rule. Once again, the same model remains from conservatism to anarchism: a body of dictates is constructed, whose application is conditioned by knowledge and action. The strength of the rule, which provides the assurance of reality and intelligibility wherever and however it is interpreted, is ascertained from political or economic discourse to pedagogical discourse. In this sense, discourse on social reality can only maintain its external position with regard to its object by presenting the image of the rule's guarantor, who, through his existence, confirms the idea's incarnation in the social relation. The guarantor's position is itself explicit. He is part of the representation; a whole ensemble of images is employed where traits of the bourgeois, the boss, the minister, the family man, the educator, the militant, etc., appear. Undoubtedly, at one extreme of ideological discourse, authority tends to be hidden behind the power of the idea; however it is true, then, that this power becomes inordinate, that science is claimed through this power with greatly increased vigor and that if the particular determinations of social agents are sometimes engulfed by it, the image of man as universal man effectively comes to support the truth of the rule in socialism and anarchism.

Let us take note of the fact that the representations of the idea, of the intelligible sequence of facts, of the rule, of the master holding the principle of action, and of knowledge, presume a singular type of discourse destined to display itself as such. The discourse on social reality asserts itself as discourse; it is very significantly modelled on pedagogy. This characteristic brings to light the distance, which too is represented, between the speaker, wherever he may be situated, and the *other*. We do not mean to say that discourse emanates from an agent or a series of agents who would only be representatives of the dominant class. Insofar as it is presented as discourse on social reality, extracting itself from the social, ideological discourse develops impersonally; it conveys knowledge which is supposed to arise from the order of things. But it is essential for it to clarify at all levels the distinction between the subject, who is established by his articulation with the rule, who expresses himself in stating the rule, and the *other*, who, not having access to the rule, does not have the status of subject. The representation of the rule goes hand in hand with that of nature, and this opposition converts itself into a series of manifest terms: for example, the

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

"worker" is represented opposite the bourgeois, the uneducated man opposite the cultured one, the uncivilized man opposite the civilized, the madman opposite the sane one, the child opposite the adult. Thus through all the substitutions, there is a natural being whose image supports the assertion of society as a world above nature. This is the device by which social division is concealed: the position of indicators which allow the determination of the difference between social and sub-social, order and disorder, world and "underworld" (a difference which is of no importance in "pre-capitalism" when the social is perceived from another locus, from an order beyond it) in such a way as to permit the identification and mastery of that which reality conceals from discourse. Thus the latter is able to cover up the question of its genesis, or that of the institution of social reality (which amounts to the same thing) by laying out the boundaries of that which is foreign to any creation this side of the institution, by taking into account an overgrowth of irrational facts whose thrust must be checked. Indeed, it must be repeated that this representation is contested in antibourgeois discourse, but the latter shares, and even broadens, pedagogical aims. It tends to confine itself to a counter-discourse which determines the present irrationality's image and reduces the *other* to the malevolent figure of the dominator—he is no less haunted by the illusion of a transparency of the society's right for itself.

As we have already suggested in calling to mind Marx's analyses, the strength of ideology, in the model which we are broadly sketching, stems from the fact that the discourses, whose homology we have pointed out, remain disjointed. Let us repeat that ideology follows the lines of the institution of social reality; if it provides a general "response", the latter does not arise uniquely in one place. It is multiplied according to a differentiation whose principle Marx vainly imputed to the division of labour which cannot in itself be considered as the driving force of change, and which undoubtedly would rather have to be linked to the division of political power and the law, and as its result, to the activity of segregating the institutions and social discourses which underlie them. Thus an ideological discourse cuts across the situation constituted by the determination of the state, business, the school, the asylum, of modern institutions in general; it cuts across the tracks of determined spaces in which measurable relations between given agents are organized. Thus taking as a point of departure a historical articulation, ideological discourse occasionally presents the image of a necessity of essence. Doubtless each attempt is only possible because it draws on all the others. There is a constant give and take between the processes of legitimation and dissimulation implemented: however, "knowledge" is not concentrated at one sole extreme, and in this sense a gap between power and discourse is preserved everywhere and always. The task of homogenizing and unifying social reality remains implicit. For this reason, the possibility of a shift or even an inversion of utterances is always open, or in other words, of contradictory versions which, in spite of conflict, insure an identity of reference for social agents.

However the conditions which assure bourgeois ideology's effectiveness also hold the possibility of its failure. Assuredly, to explain its decay, it would be necessary to go beyond its limits, to examine history, but we only propose to

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

highlight the internal contradictions of ideology which compel it to modify itself in order to continue fulfilling its function in historical society.

Judging by a widespread Marxist argument, the decay supposedly results from the fundamental contradiction of ideological discourse and *real* practice which becomes more and more perceptible to the eyes of the dominated. The argument is too well known to require summarizing, and it is known to have found strong support in Leninist criticism of "formal democracy" whose mystification is gradually discovered by the masses through oppression. While a certain amount of truth must be attributed to it, one is led to wonder how reality comes to appear, if it is sufficient to look at the lived experience of a class in order to conceive of the formation of a social discourse which would gradually weaken ideology's hold. This question is all the more important if we consider the societies in which formal democracy has collapsed: we must agree that it yields its place not to a *real* democracy, but to totalitarianism.

The Marxist interpretation seems to be more fruitful when it emphasizes the internal contradictions of ideological discourse. The necessity to state propositions of universal value and, at the same time, to provide a representation of the established order justifying class domination would have the effect of destroying its apparent rationality, and would prohibit it from ever going to the limits of its assertion. Hence, it would give rise to criticism even in its practice, and to a counter-discourse on each of its levels. Marx, as we recall, suggests in *The 18th Brumaire* that bourgeois discourse responds in its own way to the division of labour. The intelligentsia specializes in the worship of abstract truths; it maintains the illusion of an essence of humanity which does not admit the image of particular interests; it speaks the language of poetry, while the political representatives of the bourgeoisie speak in prose. According to this, as soon as the order is threatened, the latter remain alone on the stage. Although he sees them as the realistic spokesmen of the dominant class, placing their discourse in ideology does not exceed the limits of his analysis. Though they take measures which unequivocally manifest the defense of class interests, they still make use of a language which claims to explain things, to state the law of reality and the reality of the law. The concept of ownership, of the State, or labour or the family is no less ideological than those of a humanist intelligentsia. Moreover, if one or another of the intelligentsia's concepts, such as "equality", finds itself relegated to certain circumstances because it might give a foothold to revolutionary demands, the "prose" could never completely break with the "poetry"; discourse on liberty always comes to back up discourse on ownership just as discourse on justice always comes to support discourse on order. As well, without touching the conflicts which tear the agents from ideological discourse, one could deal with this discourse generally to analyse its oppositions and to demonstrate that there is not one idea which could be formulated, not one argument developed in its service, whose assertion does not require an idea or an argument contradicting them. The discourse covers up incompatible representations; it lives on the "horrible mélange" of the image of an unconditional individual beside that of an unconditional society, on the alliance of an artificialist and mechanistic thought

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

with one that is substantialist and organicist. Furthermore, since it is essential for it to explain itself as discourse on social reality, and as it continually names things, through the effect of its internal conflicts, it unknowingly generates the divergence of social reality and discourse.

Yet if we want to determine the extent of the contradiction without forgetting that it stems from the impossible project of a discourse which claims to present the transparency of social reality, and as social discourse, to be discourse on social reality, we must examine precisely that singular property of bourgeois ideology of realizing itself by procedures such as the utterance being nearly perceptible to itself, the statement being almost defined, the image of the speaker being nearly visible, whereas at the same time, everything is supposed to dissolve into social reality's quasi-appearance to itself, because in itself, the internal contradiction does not destroy the discourse. As we have pointed out, it gives the discourse its strength; it develops an articulation between opposing terms, assuring the possibility of saying everything, or, to employ a more contemporary vocabulary, of "rehabilitating" everything, even the most subversive. On the other hand, ideology is undermined by its necessity to produce ideas, which are presented as transcendent with regard to reality at the same moment as they determine it or only seem to express it. Nothing is more remarkable than this process: the idea of ownership or of the family cuts across the fact of ownership or of the family. The latter is not silent; there is no institution which does not organize itself in a language activity. But we have to deal with a language of the second power, which seeks to distance itself with regard to the first and which attempts to avert the danger within it, resulting from the fact that speech circulates in the latter, differentiating the agents from each other at the same time as it relates them, and only settling in accordance with an activity in which the possibility and the limits of exchange are brought into play, a venture whose conditions *and* effects escape the institution. The idea of the family encloses the fact of the institution and implies the belief that its conditions of possibility and its limits are conceivable from within it. The question of the family then, arises through the effect of the representation. It does not arise from the simple fact that there is a limited kinship network; as Lévi-Strauss justly observes, this supposes speech, knowledge, sometimes highly developed reflection of its principles of organization, but not a *view* over the institution which circumscribes it as such, within the social domain, at a distance from others. The differentiation of functions, of roles, the hierarchy of rights, in no way supposes that there is a *view* over the father, mother, child, or, as we would suggest, an intensification of the representation, owing to which an essence emerges, or in this case, an imaginary social relation which amounts to the same thing.

Without doubt, it would be a commonplace to say that the idea of the family is formed through opposition to the contingency of the institution which has become almost perceptible; however, it is already less trite to remark that this contingency is not abolished, but displaced through the effect of the idea, that the latter, whose function is to conceal it, is immediately marked by it, and that finally, a limitless activity is set in motion, an activity attributable to a sequence of

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

ideas to remove the contingency's effects from the utterance. This is a task of argumentation, of justification, which, as we have already observed, is itself represented in ideology; it presents the image of rationality extricating itself from reality (it is of little importance, it must be made clear, that it ends up concluding on the irrationality of human nature). This task's only check is its sudden abolition in returning to the basic utterance of the idea, that is to say, to the assertion that the institution is sacred: the family, the social unit, at the foundation of society. The idea, then, is realized as pure transcendence, and it is known that this realization is in response to a potentiality of ideological discourse wherever it acts. The latter tends to retreat towards a point of certainty where the necessity for speaking is annulled. It is haunted by tautology. The words "family", "ownership", "society", as well as "liberty", "equality", "progress" or "science" condense a knowledge that does without any justification. But the point of certainty is untenable—the transcendence of the abstract idea—because what is sought cannot be attained. It is beyond social reality, a certainty about social reality as such, a referent whose loss is precisely at the origin of ideology. This referent, then, could not be adapted to the utterance of ideas, according to which it could not develop a discourse on social reality, envisaged as determined space. The idea could not therefore fall back on itself without a reappearance of the necessity to produce its foundation by taking hold of signs which, in the supposed reality, attest to it. We would note that this operation implies a recognition of the difference between what is and what is said. In this sense, then, the discourse knows itself as discourse and chooses to represent itself as such because in so doing, it maintains the illusion of a mastery of its origin and of its own space. Paradoxically, it is the ostentation of the language which allows the concealment of the enigma of its genesis, or that which we have called the question of social division. Yet the consequence of this phenomenon is no less noteworthy: if fascination answers to ostentation, it is equally true that the discourse shows itself, finds itself threatened with being perceived as actual discourse.

An analogous contradiction can be pointed out in the status conferred upon the rule and the authority which is supposed to support it. The social universe, it must be remembered, is a universe of rules, and there are no rules which, even in the absence of repressive apparatus designed to make them respected, do not imply a knowledge of the prohibited and the dictated. Yet, in ideology, the representation of the rule is divided from the actual operation of it. Assuredly, this split is accompanied by profound modifications in the relations actually maintained between social agents, but let us set aside this difficult problem in order to consider only the phenomenon of the representation. Perhaps this problem is best observed, as we have already suggested, within the context of pedagogy, and particularly in the learning of a language. Actually, the dominant myth is that language can be mastered by going back to the principles of its construction, defined by grammar. The rule is thus extracted from an experience of the language, determined, made fully visible, and is supposed to control the conditions of the possibility of this experience. The enigma of the language,

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

whether it is internal and external to the speaker, whether there is an articulation which he does not control from himself to others, marking a return to himself, is concealed by the representation of something "external" to the language, from where it would be generated. We know that in its original state, this illusion has reached its highest point when Jesuit education prohibits the use of one's first language at school and imposes an artificial Latin in order to promote a means of persuading one that speech is generated from the rule. Even though this illusion cannot stand up to the demands of a child's socialization in historical society, it brings to light the whole logic behind a representation of pedagogy which claims to overcome the insurmountable difference between the institution of knowledge and the knowledge of the institution. Once again, we uncover the ambiguity of the representation, as soon as the rule is stated, because exhibiting it undermines the power which the rule takes upon itself to introduce into practice. This inordinate power must, in fact, be shown, and at the same time, must owe nothing to the activity which makes it appear. To be true to its image, the rule must be abstracted from any question concerning its origin; thus, it exceeds the operations which it controls. Its power is to confer upon the subject a right to speak, to know, to control his action; whereas lacking the rule, the subject is not only deprived of the means of expression or knowledge, but literally dismissed, that is to say, thrown outside the network of the institution. But to be true to its image, the rule must also prove its validity through usage; it is constantly subject to the demonstration of its effectiveness and is thus contradictorily represented as a convention. Only the master's authority allows the contradiction's concealment, but he himself is an object of representation; presented as a defender of the rule, he lets the contradiction appear through himself. On the one hand, he embodies an authority which does not have to explain itself, or as we say, by divine right, while on the other, he expresses signs of his competence.

We can now point out in all sectors of the social domain the configuration which is made particularly visible by education. Not only the representation of education, but also the representation of literature, of painting or of philosophy implies the same set of contradictions. To avoid the ambiguity which is so widespread today (and which takes its place in a new form of ideology), in passing, let us repeat: we cannot hold a *view* of the historicity of education, of philosophy, of literature, or of painting, etc., which would save us from the question brought into play in their institution; we can only speak of the representation which comes to overshadow the latter each time, to attempt to cancel its effects and to simulate a domination of the socialization process, owing to a determining of the instance of the rule and the instance of the master. Yet, let us not hesitate to expand this analysis. In the context of production enterprises, one must point out the dissociation of the institution and representation, of social discourse implied in the practice and the discourse on social reality which claims to determine its principles in presenting the image of the director, who, on the one hand, holds an authority of divine right, while on the other, retains a certain degree of competence, and in exhibiting the image of the rules, retains a body of dictates in which are expressed an unconditional knowledge of industrial organi-

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

zation and the mundane conditions of human labour's productivity.

The ideological discourse which we are examining has no safety catch: it becomes vulnerable when attempting to make visible the place from where social relations would be conceivable—both thinkable and creatable; it is vulnerable in its powerlessness to define this place without letting its contingency appear, without being condemned to slip from one position to another, without thereby making perceptible the instability of an order which ideological discourse must raise to the status of the essence. In observing it, we are perhaps in a better position to understand why this discourse, in its project to extract itself from social reality and to affirm itself as discourse, can only remain scattered, and why its task of implicit generalization of knowledge and implicit homogenization of experience could disintegrate, faced with the unbearable burden of the ruin of certainty, of a wavering of the representations of discourse, and consequently, of a division of the subject. Claiming its discursive power, it never coincides with the discourse of power; it manifests in itself the position of power. However, whether the latter is the power of the actual or potential government, or one of its countless substitutes, this discourse represents it, exposes it to the *other's* eye, but is not structured or unified under the principle which would condense the multiplicity of statements into the same assertion and would relate them to the same guarantor. We have already noted that ideological discourse has no safety catch; that is to say that it finds itself constructed in such a way that it is marked by the absence of a guarantor of its origin. In responding to the question of its origin, ideological discourse is ordered; however, it changes itself, shifts within its limits. This is the cost at which power operates in the effectiveness of social relations.

Totalitarianism and the Crisis of Bourgeois Ideology

Through the phenomenon of totalitarianism, we can distinguish the specific traits of bourgeois ideology, since the latter's contradiction is reflected in it. To some, it may appear outrageous to treat as variants of the same model fascism and Nazism, on the one hand, and on the other, that which is called communism, but which, in fact, only constitutes a bureaucratic society's discourse. Nonetheless, we speak of totalitarianism without taking into consideration the differences of regime, which in other respects are highly significant, because our sole concern is to clarify a general aspect of the genesis of ideology.

In totalitarianism, the process of occultation of the institution of social reality seeks to complete itself. In Nazism, it is not essentially a matter of the resurrection of a system of values coming from pre-capitalism, and challenged by bourgeois society, even though evidently there is an attempt to return to the representation of a communal order, based on a relation to the earth, blood ties, and personal dependence, a representation which has continued to survive at the

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

edge of bourgeois ideology in all the forms of conservatism. With communism, it is not essentially a matter of attempting to insert universalist values of bourgeois society into reality, by destroying the form of particular interests at all levels of social activity. However, this project evidently is part of its enterprise, and is rooted in the history of the proletariat's revolutionary struggles within the capitalist world. The formation of totalitarianism is only intelligible if one recognizes the "response" which is brought to the problem of the division of ideological discourse and the process of socialization, or that which we readily call the historicity of social reality. The illusion stems from a social discourse which, implicated as it is in practice, invests it with a general knowledge. This knowledge is always maintained in an external dimension by bourgeois ideology, and wherever it operates, it emits signs of its unity, and thus signs of the homogeneity of the objective domain. Thus the limits of sectors which were formerly expressly recognized, such as the economic, political, judicial, pedagogical, aesthetic and even scientific, are obliterated. The assertion of the identity of reality, as it appears, seeks to turn back on itself from any particular statement; it feeds a passion for tautology and simultaneously, the quest for a totalization in the explicit is substituted for the labour of occultation of bourgeois discourse, whose particular quality was to leave the generalization in the latent. Whereas the latter tends to make the essence of its discourse perceptible to itself, and as such remains out of alignment with respect to power, totalitarian discourse acts with the conviction of being imprinted on reality, and of embodying the potentiality of a continued and general mastery of its articulations. In this sense, it is entirely political discourse, but it denies the particular fact of the political and attempts to achieve the dissolution of the political in the element of the pure generality of social reality.

More precisely, totalitarian discourse denies all the oppositions taken in hand by bourgeois ideology in a representation which each time was made to diffuse their effects, and which threatened the foundation of each term in exposing it to the necessity of explanation. Before anything else, totalitarian discourse effaces the opposition between the State and civil society; it is dedicated to bringing to light the presence of the State throughout social space, that is to say, to transporting, through a series of representatives, the principle of power which informs the diversity of activities, and which includes them in the model of a common allegiance. Yet we must not lose sight of the fact that the discourse does not carry out this operation within the limits of a commentary which exploits its distance with regard to the real in order to point it out in its entirety. Rather, it diffuses itself in the network of socialization; it develops systems of signs whose *representative* function is no longer discernable; it takes hold of actors and places them within these systems in such a way that the discourse (almost) speaks through them and (almost) abolishes the space which is indeed indeterminate, but always preserved between the articulation and the utterance in bourgeois ideology.

The masses are the instrument *par excellence* of totalitarianism, through which the consubstantiality of the State and civil society is manifested. At all levels, they embody the principle of power; they spread the general norm which

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

provides the assurance of a sort of reflection by the society of itself, and, simultaneously, the assurance of its polarization towards a goal, delivering it from the silent threat of the inertia of the instituted, making its identity perceptible through the imperative of activism. But the practice and structure of the Party cannot be distinguished from the discourse whose center it would be (other than by showing the contradictions within which it operates and which it conceals at all levels). Just as all those who fulfill the same function at a more specific level—unions, associations for young people, women, intellectuals, etc.—this representative acts in practice precisely in accordance with the demand of the representation; it figures in the relations which arrange the unity within it that it guarantees before the ensemble of society. In itself, it is a system of signs which allows the formation of a hierarchy, the production of a cleavage between the apparatus and the base, the directors and the executors, the partitioning of activity sectors, in the simulation of transparency to itself of the institution, of a reciprocity of decisions, of a homogeneity of the political body.

In this sense, ideological discourse tends to become discourse of the Party—the discourse on the Party being only a detachment of the latter, although it is absolutely essential to it and marks the limit of the enterprise to which we will return. Nothing brings this phenomenon into focus better than the forming of a new type of social agent, the militant, an image through which can be seen the subject's position within the discourse that he is supposed to speak. The militant is not in the party as if in a determined milieu with visible borders; he is in himself a representative of it; he draws from its source the possibility of freeing himself from conflicts to which he is exposed by his participation in different institutions governed by specific imperatives of socialization, the possibility of embodying the generality of social reality. As a bearer of the representation, the militant accomplishes his function by constantly reflecting that which is organized independently of him in the supposed system of social reality. At the same time, he establishes himself as possessing power and knowledge; he controls the worker, the peasant, the engineer, the pedagogue, the writer; he profers the norm, concentrates the powers of *activism* and finds the vocabulary and syntax of his discourse imprinted in himself in such a way that he forms himself in the operation of ideology.

To the necessity of collecting social discourse in itself beyond all division, of welding together the scattered images of man in bourgeois society, of grasping the key to open all the doors of social structure, and to focus attention on all the forms of economic, political and aesthetic activity, of entering into possession of a general knowledge, of joining all these experiences to one pole of truth, the necessity is added of effacing itself, faced with the anonymity of the idea, of the argumentation, of the rule, of the supreme authority, all of which appear welded to each other. The militant type only completes the full expression of the attempt to efface the difference between individual and society, between the particular and the general, between the private and the public. The principle image is that of the indeterminate man, who finds his definition as fascist or communist: a pure social agent whose adherence to a class only provides a Western modality of

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

his insertion into the total society or is even expressly challenged in a pure denial of an internal schism of this society. There can be no doubt that in this respect, "communist" totalitarianism succeeds most effectively in exploiting the mechanisms of ideology. It is not enough to reject class determination; this totalitarianism goes so far as to give form to social relations in which traits of the dominant class become less and less distinguishable until they dissolve into the image of a purely functional hierarchy, whose members would each be linked, step by step, to the central focus of socialization, the edges of the division between dominator and dominated.

Yet whether it is a matter of fascism or communism, one can see at work a logic of the identification whose motivating force is the cancellation of conflicts which develop in accordance with oppositions peculiar to bourgeois society. Whereas in the latter, the power of the representations is maintained by a constant shifting of the "solution", of a putting off of the contradiction due to a gap between the instances of discourse, in totalitarianism, there is a basic assertion of the identity of the representation and reality, a condensing of the terms of the contradiction into images which reflect each other. In the first, the discourse acts according to constant compromises between the principle antagonists, whereas in the second, it seeks its effectiveness in a general response which would exclude the traces of the question. But the success of the latter would be unintelligible if it could not bring to light the signs of the totality in the detail of social life. Indeed, the mechanism of identification acts in a modern society which reveals differentiation, internal opposition, change, at each of its levels of activity; not only the effects of the division of labour must be taken in hand, but also those of the segregation of socio-cultural spaces. The attempt itself to efface the opposition between the State and civil society, and to render the indivision of the political and non-political visible supposes that the logic of the norm appears in the form of social relations here and now, that is to say, that a system of articulations is put into practice in accordance with which the power is able to reduce itself without running the risk of being divided.

In subjecting all spheres of society to the imperative of the organization, ideological discourse, be it fascist or communist, is assured of mastering oppositions which develop from and within each other, and it is able to reduce the distance to its object. Indeed, the representation of the organization allows the difference between the subject and the law to be concealed, a difference which is open in the activity itself of the institution, and which implies the possibility of linking the latter either to a human action (whether the focus is situated in the individual or in the group) or to a transcendent principle. In one sense, the organization obliterates the traces of the social subject, whatever the modality of its appearance; it does not efface the positivism of an empirically determined subject, whether it is the dominant class, the dominated class, or the producing individual, but it does conceal the question of the subject as such, a question in which a relation between oneself and the other is always brought into play at the same time as a relation to the law. Thus the organization, in representing a system of operations which would assign their definitions to the agents and their

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

relations, makes the general antagonism between the dominator and the dominated invisible, an antagonism which arose with bourgeois society in the context of production. But simultaneously, this system appears as a pure construction, as a global operation sustained by itself, and in this sense, as a pure manifestation of human Logos, as a pure manifestation of the socialization put into practice, of an institution in action, only dealing with itself, polarized towards the totality. The representation of the organization tends to be achieved in the process of the organization itself because the latter is organized on the illusion of knowledge of social reality, which is manifested in the network of operations where the agent belongs.

The dependence of totalitarian ideology with regard to bourgeois ideology is shown by the fact that it grasps two principles, a radical artificialism and a radical substantialism, which remain juxtaposed in bourgeois ideology. It welds them together in the assertion of a society which would be thoroughly active, concerned with assuring its *functioning*—a human factory, and as such, turned in on itself, in possession of its foundation. Evidently, totalitarianism draws its faith in the organization from capitalism, but while it finds itself thwarted by the necessity of representing the social domain's differences, this faith spills out in response to the threat of the disintegration of this domain and makes the organization the essence of social reality. But it still must be emphasized that the new ideology implies the vision of a *center*, from which social life is arranged; a center which is transferred from one sector of civil society to another, but which holds power and knowledge at the heart of the State apparatus. The organization's discourse, organized so that anonymous knowledge directs the thought and practice of its agents, is only supported by constant reference to the authority in which the decision is concentrated. With this double condition, the contradiction of bourgeois ideology is overcome by the concept of the total State; the organization's network demonstrates that nothing is lost in the activity of socialization which implies the exteriorization of social discourses and practices; the self-identity of power exposes the origin of the norm.

Fascism and communism, let us repeat, stem from a meta-sociological interpretation. Any attempt to analyse them as empirical, socio-historical formations comes up against a limit, however rich the information may be, because it does not take into account the question of social existence, of the historical as such, which is brought into play in totalitarianism. The latter is neither an accident in the development of industrial capitalism, nor an aberration for which psychology can provide the key: it achieves a potential found in social reality from the moment that its institution can no longer be conceived or contained by a discourse which seeks its origins elsewhere. Moreover, the greatest error is to see in it only a variant of despotism, even more so since Stalin's power, as Hitler's, resembles that of a despot, and perhaps even more: both draw on the archaic sources of Germanic culture and the Asiatic world; a singular history is inaugurated with totalitarianism. It is not the resurrection of a political system which comes to make do with industrial society, but an attempt to close the social space from the imaginary center of its institution, to make reality and appearance

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

coincide here and now. The despot and his bureaucracy govern over society, but their strength is the sign of a transcendent strength, a sign of *externality* for man. Totalitarian power, Nazi or Stalinist, is diffused in the representation of the organization, and it exercises the fascination and terror of representing precisely the entire non-divided social reality, inhuman discourse as absolutely human.

Such, at least, is the pole towards which totalitarianism ideology tends, but in going beyond the contradictions of bourgeois ideology, it continues to come up against the impossibility of fulfilling itself. In its turn, it lives under the threat of the effects of social division, as our description has suggested. The bureaucracy's ideal is the anonymity of social discourse, the manifestation of rationality in the organization, the placement of the subject in the logic of fascism, in the logic of communism, such that its language only appears as nonsensical. Yet for it, the representation of the center of the decision is no less essential, a power which asserts itself in full confidence, beyond all dispute. The joining of the two representations is only possible if the oppositions of power within the bureaucracy are ignored, as well as the exclusion of the majority of those without power from the ruling apparatus. The strength, as well as the weakness of bourgeois ideology lies in the fact that discourse on social reality, in its articulation (an articulation which is always perceptible) to a real or potential position of power, does not coincide with social discourse, nor with the discourse of power, that it can thus pass through different centers and can be opposed to itself without being destroyed. On the other hand, totalitarian discourse has no room to maneuver; it does not allow a separation of subject and discourse and it requires its identification with power and with those who hold it at the highest echelons of the State. Doubtless this analysis is extreme; there is no conjuncture, even at the height of totalitarianism, where the removal of the subject in the discourse can be effected, nor is there complete identification with the master. A *parallel* exchange of words carries the signs of the separation and the difference. But the fact remains that the oppositions cannot be transcribed symbolically: they must be absolutely rejected, or failing that, terror is substituted for discourse.

Generally, the contradiction of totalitarianism stems from the fact that on the one hand, power is doubly hidden, as a representative of the undivided society and as an agent of the organization's rationality. On the other hand, power appears in the undivided society, unlike in any other society, as a repressive apparatus harbouring sheer violence. This is not a contradiction between the representation and the fact, hence, even our formula must be corrected: terror is not simply substituted for discourse; it is spoken, it sweeps along a fantastic argumentation whose effect is to close the intolerable gap between subject and discourse. Still, it must be added that this enterprise cannot be interpreted as a simple response to events which would disrupt the established order. As the history of Stalinism evidently shows, the image of power as terrorist power, as an inordinate power, has a necessary function. Through it as well, men reveal their dissolution into the general element of social reality, that is to say, they reveal the contingency of any particular determination regarding the law proffered by the master—the absolute master of the State, but also his representatives at all levels

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

of the hierarchy and in all sectors of activity. However, with slipping from one position of power to another, a principle of instability is introduced, which might make the mechanism of domination visible. If, in bourgeois ideology, the danger is that the power is exposed to derision, in totalitarian ideology, it runs the greater risk of arousing horror. As the effects of the contradiction are developed, it is true that means of defence are put into place to attempt to reinforce the ideological discourse's cohesion.

Thus, after Stalin's death, his example is used to represent and to denounce the excess of power over rationality—this is the function of personality cults—whereas at the same time, the example of the petty bureaucrat is used to represent and denounce an excess of irresponsibility over the just impersonality of decision. But these defences attest to the latent crisis of the system of bureaucratic representations. It is no less instructive to pinpoint the vulnerability of the bureaucracy in the face of all kinds of events, from both the economic and cultural orders, which elude the prediction of the directors and which are likely to manifest a breakdown of the general norm, here and now, that is, a failure in the workings of the organization. In one sense, the elaborations on social reality are inexhaustible faced with the social event. Actually the articulation of the discourse to power and to law is such that "reality" cannot question it; its access is strictly controlled by the representation, however, this representation requires signs of the organization's effectiveness. The power is not mirrored in the hierarchy but in structures where social action and social aims must be attested to, where, more profoundly, men must discover their common existence in the pure dimension of social action oriented towards a social purpose. Thus, the signs of production, for example, feverishly displayed, are supposed to provide the continued proof of the dominant discourse's validity in reality. In short, a double necessity is imposed, to absolutely include and to absolutely exclude the social event, to imprint it onto the organization's logic and to absolutely deny it as a force of disorder. The extent of the contradiction would not be measured if it were forgotten that totalitarian ideology is created in "historical society", that is to say, let us reiterate, in a society which cannot be rooted in a representation of its limits, which is, in principle, open to the question of its future, destined to excessiveness, to conflict, which, in each of its parts, experiences the effects of changes in the others, a society where the internal differentiation, the gaps between practices and between representations go hand in hand with its history. The bureaucratic fantasy is to abolish the historical in History, to restore the logic of a "society without history", to match the institutor and the instituted, to deny the unpredictable, the unknowable, the continual loss of the past through the illusion of a social action, transparent to itself, which would control its effects in advance, and which would maintain continuity with its origin.

However strong the illusion, it is apt to be refuted. Undoubtedly, the refutation is, in turn, concealed; the breakdowns in planning, for example, are attributed to bureaucratism, to the residual inertia of the social body, to the mania for regulations. Again one must be persuaded that the representation of bureaucratism is no less ideological than that of social action; it is an essential component of

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

the system, whose function is to support the power of the rule in its coinciding with the instance of power and to bring its corruption back into the presence of parasitic agents. But apart from the rule standing out excessively wherever rationality is supposed to show itself, the total logic of the organization "can" appear as a logic of the absurd. It is true that ideology has another means of defence more effective than denouncing bureaucratism to resist the backlash from the power's decisions, or more generally, from social reality. The attempt to assure its mastery of the social space is supported by the representation of the enemy: an enemy who could not be presented as an opponent, but whose existence strikes at the integrity of the social body. Moreover, the enemy does much more than personify the adversity, or, as it is often observed, serve as a scapegoat.

In a society which does not tolerate the image of an internal social division, which claims its homogeneity beyond any actual differences, it is the other as such who acquires the fantastic traits of the destroyer; the other, however he is defined, to whatever group he belongs, is the representative of the *outside*. Although in bourgeois ideology, men's essence is affirmed with regard to a sub-humanity (even though the latter is relegated to the depths of society and is never so far down into "nature" that it does not pose the problem of its management, because it is perceived *in* society), totalitarian ideology is maintained by the exclusion of an evil agent, the exclusion of a representative of the anti-social. The effectiveness of the representation could not make one forget that it does not have the supreme disposal of its effects. It tends to circumscribe the other's place, but does not achieve this due to a generalized denial (which we have amply emphasized) of the difference between the subject and social discourse. Any sign of this difference risks denouncing the subject as the enemy. The alterity cannot be encircled; the image of the concentration camp is not enough to disarm it. The individual, wherever he must enter into the discourse of power, reveals the possibility of his exclusion. Insofar as he shows himself able to speak, he is exposed as potentially guilty. In this sense, the bureaucratic world continues to be haunted by insecurity, even though it is wholly organized to represent a bastion of security, to maintain a community in the certainty of its cohesion. The assertion of total social reality does not get rid of the fantasy of self-devouring; totalitarian discourse effaces the externality of the idea; discourse on social reality tends to be absorbed into social discourse; it effaces the externality of power; the State tends to carry out its fusion with civil society; it effaces the externality of the rule; the organization tends to be sufficient to transmit rationality; it effaces the externality of the other, social division is concealed. However, the externality returns; discourse on social reality is threatened with appearing as generalized illusion, as discourse in the service of power, simply masking oppression.

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

The Invisible Ideology

Totalitarian ideology prevails in a large part of the world; thus, a rigorous analysis should take into consideration the specific traits it assumes in certain countries, and particularly in China. As well, it should consider the modifications which have come about in the USSR and in Eastern Europe during the last fifteen years. In our eyes, the observable differences in time and space do not call into question the coherence of the system. An understanding of this system, we noticed, allowed us afterwards to distinguish that which constitutes the specificity of bourgeois ideology. At present, it must be added that it equally clarifies the formation of the new ideological discourse in Western democracies of our time.

Our conviction is that this discourse continues to exploit a system of representations which reached its full effectiveness in the second half of the nineteenth century, but that this system is no longer at the center of the imaginary. This hypothesis makes no claim to originality; an already extensive critical sociology—notably to which the names Marcuse, Whyte, Roszak and Baudrillard are attached—has brought to light the function now fulfilled by the themes of the organization, of social communication, of membership in a group, of consumption, etc. Since these ideas are no doubt familiar to the reader, we need not elaborate them here. On the other hand, we should emphasize the relation that contemporary discourse maintains, both with totalitarianism, and with bourgeois ideology, the way in which it is part of the general genesis of ideology. Although occasionally the totalitarian finality of this discourse has been justly emphasized, it has hardly been perceived that its formation attests to a "reflection" of the contradictions which haunt totalitarianism, to an attempt at forestalling the threat hanging over social existence, the project which would reveal the representation of homogenization and unification of social reality. This project, let us emphasize, is attached to its opposite, thereby cancelling the distance between discourse on social reality and social discourse, placing the first within the second. It is indeed this enterprise which is repeated in the new ideology, but it is dissociated from an assertion of totality, brought back to a latent state, and in this sense, is rearticulated to the principle of the system of bourgeois ideology, in which a displacement of imaginary formations was required, their conflict tolerated, and compromises constantly worked out. Concealing the distance between the representation and the real, which jeopardizes bourgeois ideology, and renouncing the achievement of the representation in the form of totalization of the real, constitute, in our view, the double principle which organizes a new logic of dissimulation.

If the affirmation of totality, notably in communism, is operated with the necessity of rejoining the State and civil society, of discarding the image of a fragmentation of power and its decline to the order of actuality, it implies, we observed, that the ideology's discourse is transformed into the power's discourse; this affirmation exposes it dangerously by revealing the divided instance of

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

decision and coercion and the features of the master, not only at the top of State bureaucracy, but through its multiple "representatives". A new strategy is developed to represent a society sheltered from this hazard. Certainly, the term "strategy" evokes the action of a subject who would enjoy the freedom of defining the best means of dissimulation. However, we have said often enough that the old ideology was not that of the bourgeoisie, so that we could not be accused of accepting the illusion that it would have become the ideology of a new class, for example, the technocracy, as some like to claim. The strategy to which we are referring designates the ruses of the imaginary, a process which, although unaware and "without history" in the sense that Marx intended, nonetheless takes into account the effects of knowledge and history and inserts them into new configurations at the service of a task which actually remains unchanged.

Thus the group, constructed as a positive entity, regarded both as expression and aim of social communication, comes to screen the separation of the apparatus of domination and the majority of those without power. The representation of the group's structure, indifferent to the conditions which dictate the status of its members, tends to exclude from its domain the question of origin, of legitimacy, of rationality, of oppositions and hierarchies instituted in each sector. A new faith is invested in this representation; a "mastery" of social reality in the experience of socialization itself *here and now*, that is to say, within the perceptible borders of each institution, in each situation where man finds himself placed according to the "natural" necessity of production or, more generally, of economic activity, but also of pedagogy or leisure, as well as political, union, or religious practice. So many analyses have been devoted to the phenomenon of human relations in industry, to the expansion of group techniques in a wide variety of organizations, to the practice of seminars, information conferences, to the spreading of social psychology in businesses, schools and hospitals, that it would be useful to linger over the ideology of social communication. Yet the function fulfilled with regard to this by the great instruments at its service, radio and television, is no less instructive. Without them, the new system of representation would certainly be non-viable, because it is in propagating itself, not only from one particular place to another, but each time from an apparently circumscribed focus to an apparently indeterminate focus, it is through the effect of its reply, indefinitely multiplied from the private pole of the institution to the public pole of information, that ideological discourse attains the generality necessary to its task of homogenization of the social domain in the implicit. With the incessant development of public debates, encompassing all aspects of economic, political and cultural life, ridiculing everything from the most trivial to the most revered, an image of reciprocity is imposed as the image of social relations itself.

This image is doubly effective because simultaneously the communication is valued independently of its agents and of its content, and the *presence* of individuals is simulated: a head of state confides his difficulties to someone designed to listen, or this listener, from the masses, but duly appointed, bears the contradiction to a minister or questions an expert designed to answer him, etc. This performance goes so far as to make the actors' identities perceptible.

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

Undoubtedly we have there one of the most remarkable forces of the imaginary: to absorb the personal element into the impersonal discourse which presents the essence of social relations, but substantiating the illusion of a living speech, a subject's speech, when in fact, the latter is dissolved into the ceremony of communication. It is an illusion because the limits of the debate are determined outside of its visible domain; the leader's neutrality conceals the principle of its organization and in the end, those who hold the power are presented on the same plane as those whose fate they decide behind the scenes.

We would still not take into account the full extent of the phenomenon if we were to become obsessed by the manifestly political aspects of social communication. The effectiveness of discourse such as that transmitted by radio and television lies in that it is only partially explained as political discourse—and it is precisely from this that it acquires a general political importance. Everyday things, questions of science and culture are what support the representation of an achieved democracy where speech would circulate freely. The signs of this circulation are ostentatiously produced, whereas the statutes remain crystallized according to oppositions of power. In no other epoch has there been so much spoken: discourse on social reality served by the different modern means of communication is carried away; it is overcome by a dizzying infatuation with itself; nothing escapes conferences, interviews, televised debates, from the generation gap to traffic flow, from sexuality to music, from space exploration to education. This narcissism is not that of bourgeois ideology, since the new discourse is not articulated from above; it employs no capital letters; it feigns to propagate information, even pretends to question; it does not overshadow others at a distance, but includes a representative in itself, presents itself as an incessant dialogue, and thus takes the space between the *one* and the *other* to make a place for itself. Through this operation, the subject finds himself (almost) accommodated in the system of representation in an entirely different manner than in totalitarian ideology, since at present he is invited to incorporate the terms of all opposition. At the same time, he is accommodated in the group—an imaginary group in the sense that the power is taken away from men to conceive of the real activity of the institution by participating in it, by confronting their relation through differentiation.

In this sense, the remark we made about the implication of the personal in the impersonal is clarified. This event again indicates the distance taken with regard to totalitarian discourse. The latter tends to dissolve the personal element, because it does not tolerate the image of a dispersion of the centers of socialization, nor does it permit an experience of the subject in a particular place that escapes from the general norm. But this dispersion no longer strikes at the integrity of the representation of social reality from the moment that the subject finds himself captured by his own image in the network of socialization. Thus the television screen only materializes an impalpable screen on which a social relation is projected, a relation sufficient in itself insofar as it condenses the double representation of a relation in itself and a relation between people. One could measure, for example, the effectiveness of a course of action which, from

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

commercials to political or cultural programs, provides the repeated illusion of an *entre-nous*.

The informant's speech is placed at the pole of anonymity and neutrality; under this condition, it diffuses an objective knowledge, whatever its nature, but simultaneously, it makes itself singular, mimics live speech, assumes the attributes of the person to assure its conjunction with those addressed, who, in spite of their numbers, of their separation and ignorance of each other, will each find himself personally reached and mutely assembled owing to the same proximity to the speaker. In this sense, the most banal program is an incantation to *familiarity*; in mass society it installs the limits of a "small world" where everything occurs as if each person were already turned toward the other. It provokes a hallucination of *nearness* which abolishes a sense of distance, strangeness, imperceptibility, the signs of the outside, of adversity, of alterity. Let us note in passing that it is amazing to occasionally see people strolling down the street or sunbathing on the beach, transistor radio glued to the ear, or to see homes in which the television or radio are on constantly, even without the presence of those who turned them on; no other phenomenon better demonstrates the imaginary dimension of communication. The latter provides the assurance of a social link, at a distance from its reality; it provides a background, an accompaniment—just as the music of the same name, which, however, is only a variant of generalized communication—and this background is the foundation, this accompaniment is the lining continuously spun from the intolerable fact of social division. The certainty of the communication could, if necessary, be sufficient, given that in actually removing himself, the subject remains in his network. It is of little importance that he stops watching or listening: his personal ghost is in place, once and for all, in the *entre-nous*.

What appears in this *entre-nous*, air freshener or an increase in prices, highway deaths or feminism, is not of great importance. More important is the power to infer a primordial relationship which could not be brought into play in the discourse's operation and the possible oppositions of its agents. The faith in social communication and in the attachment to a group still leaves room for the idea of social division when even this is camouflaged, that is to say, passed off as a failing of a dialogue between individuals or classes, or a break in the cohesion. On the other hand, the representation of the social relationship is unconscious, the *entre-nous* assures the staging of the communication as well as the subject's involvement in the group. This involvement requires neither its being the aim of the group in its actuality as a valid group, nor an identification with the power which is supposed to represent its unity. At the level of the *entre-nous*, the "we" is not asserted but presupposed, destined to invulnerability from remaining invisible. No doubt a political leader is led to proclaim "We liberals . . .", "we men of progress", or "we socialists", just as the speaker on the air, outside of a political context, proclaims "We the French"; but this "we", however effective it remains, is secondary, because arranged prior to his statement are the conditions of a network in which agents are linked to each other through being deprived of the marks of their oppositions as well as those of discourse as discourse.

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

Only these conditions allow ideological discourse to be constantly buried in the socialization process, and simultaneously create the illusion that, in principle, nothing is concealed from communication. The dispute is centered on ideas, on particular agents, that is to say, precisely on what appears, on that which lives on bourgeois ideology, on its ineradicable residue, and (for all that) on the representation of oppositions, absolutely necessary to sustain the dialogue. Yet what escapes, or tends to escape the dispute is the fantasy of reciprocity, according to which everything is shown to be open to discussion, visible, intelligible, because such indeed is the ultimate effect of the occultation of the division: the image of a discourse without limits in which everything comes to appear. One can understand, consequently, that this discourse feigns to ignore prohibitions; since it invades the social domain, it abolishes all the distances contrived by bourgeois ideology. It introduces sexuality, violence and madness into the *entre-nous*; it effaces the division between the ordinary world and the depths of society; it ignores the danger of nature. Similarly, this trait distinguishes it from a communist discourse which, ever haunted by the representation of a total social reality, of a flawless body, does not tolerate an attachment to signs which would strike at its integrity, which supports itself by multiplying taboos about subjects which escape social controls. This discourse is distinguished, too, by its aptitude for letting its agents speak instead of restricting the granting of speech, defending itself against the violation of its space by simulating within itself a place for the contradictor.

The system's effectiveness simultaneously supposes the representation of the discourse's scientificity. In one sense, the latter was found at the heart of bourgeois ideology; but with it, science still represents a visible pole. Discourse on science exists at the same time as an exploitation of science in order to elaborate social reality. In the context of industrial production itself, a knowledge of the rationality of labour is defused, a knowledge which is displayed, but which is also circumscribed within the limits of a ruling apparatus. Taylorism, as is known, will eventually give it its full expression. Assuredly, the persistence of the old ideology must here again be recognized, but even more so, the extent of the modifications which have occurred must be measured. Firstly, the locus of the enterprise must be considered, not to determine the features of its actual transformation, but in order to examine the representation. It is the representation of the organization, one which is not a product nor an application of science, but which embodies it, and whose formula is not the property of the managerial class but is inscribed in reality. This representation no longer tolerates the division of directors and those who execute their directives, nor the division of human labour and means of production; it links all the terms by effacing their subordination, in order to articulate them within a structure which would function in itself, through rational imperatives, and independently of men's desires and choices. The image of the instances of decision and restraint, the image of the rule, are covered by the law of the organization. This law coincides with the organization's discourse; it is concealed from the subject's view, although here and there they reveal absurdity in the details of programmed operations. Its effectiveness lies in

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

that it is not perceived as external; just as the effectiveness of the discourse which transmits it lies in the fact that it is not constrained to appear as discourse on the organization, or that the latter, having just been expressed, only represents a part of the former, and leaves as implicit its validity and legitimacy. This inference of the law and discourse is only possible because the agents find in them the form of their established relation, because their action and cooperation are supposed to be prefigured in the model of the organization. But it would be a mistake to think that the relation between individuals is reified, to use the Marxist expression; the model tends to convert the subject into the "organizational man", as Whyte indicates. In other words, what is considered as real becomes the organization; indications of a rationalization in itself of social reality, and those of his own identity are provided according to a supposed knowledge that the organization holds *over him*.

Again, it must be emphasized that this representation is not circumscribed within the limits of the production enterprise. It is propagated in all the great social establishments, in commercial enterprises, in public and private administrations in the universities, in hospitals.

The organization's discourse is not realized in the totalitarian fantasy. We have already noted its limits. Yet it is important to point out the support given to it by the diffusion of the representation of science outside of the context which we have just mentioned. This representation does not allow itself to be localized. In it is invested a generalized belief in the self-intelligibility of social reality and the self-intelligibility of man. In other words, at the level of objectivity, the distinctions essential to bourgeois ideology tend to be effaced: those of nature, of the psyche, and of the society. In particular, it is impossible to appreciate the range of the organization's discourse and how it is preserved in the implicit without pointing out the work effected by the human sciences. As Marcuse has rightly noted, the official discourse of psychology and sociology is governed by artificialism, operationalism and formalism. The psyche, society and culture are commonly defined as systems; the general model of an organization, of the personality's functioning is imposed by the concepts of social integration, communication, tension and regulation, in the simplest or the most sophisticated versions.

Truthfully, if we wished to develop the analysis of the various forms of ideology, it would be necessary to examine the unique contribution (even more so in that they are often presented as anti-ideological criticism) of literature and literary theory, of philosophy or aesthetics. There is a search for a language which makes the question of its genesis perceptible, which no longer accepts the assurance of the narrative, the novel, the image, the theory, the assurance of a natural distance between a supposed subject and a supposed object, a language which departs from the established lines of reading and writing, of the viewer and visible, of the author and the other, which welcomes the departure of meaning, the break of origin, as Merleau-Ponty would say. This language is applied to deciphering unconscious structures in which desire and thought are at work before any thought or desire takes form. In short, all that gives strength to

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

the instituting discourse finds itself hidden under the new illusion of a machinery of the text, of thought, desire, the illusion of a game in itself, of difference, of the "real" suppression of the subject, sense, origin, history. It is an illusion which gives substance to new indications, which is maintained by eluding the hazards of the unconquerable division between the one and the other, between sense and nonsense, between the space of the work and that of the world, between what is within and what is without, an illusion which, in all modes of writing, results in a technique of illegibility, which significantly tends to abate the danger of interpretation, providing the process of occultation which governs the organizations's discourse with its precise response.

But since we must be content with only a glimpse of these contributions, let us rather emphasize psychology, because it operates, not at the periphery, but at the center of the new ideology. Indeed, how can one fail to see that it is psychology which provides the organization with the representation of a knowledge about the subject, which feeds the illusion of the agent's evaluation, not of his aptitude, but of his personality. It places this illusion in the materiality of a battery of tests, questionnaires, and maintenance guides, in an apparatus claimed to be scientific, whose triple function is to determine the image of the "organizational man", to make him appear to himself through knowledge of the other, and to conceal the image of those in power by generating the illusion of an impersonal norm.

Undoubtedly, one could justly note that the entire system of education, and not only psychology, is organized according to a capacity to measure knowledge and imposes the self-image of an evaluated individual. It must also be observed in passing that one of the dominant themes in modern pedagogy, self-evaluation, is among the most effective for obliterating the educator's presence and for invisibly imprinting the power's discourse. In any case, diploma-worship— independent of the education system's efforts to procure the "socially necessary" agents for the world of the organization—generates, in the entire range of society, the individual's identification with the agent of knowledge.

Even though it is more particular, psychology's action is no less decisive, because through it, the imaginary "personality" arises: a system decipherable for the other, or since the other takes refuge behind science, one which would be offered to the understanding of the organization. For the rest, the psychologist's place in the system of education cannot receive enough attention. Even very young children are affected by testing. The psychologist's knowledge penetrates them already at this age, in order to imprint upon them the mark of inaptitude or deviance. He is slowly substituted for the educator, to displace the relation to the law, to ward off the visible blow of authority, and to link sanction to the decree of a neutral and anonymous force.

Moreover, it is impossible not to examine the great staging of scientificity developed by radio, television and the printed media. The incantation to social communication is doubled by one to information. We cannot underestimate the hold of the experts' knowledge, or of the servants of scientific vulgarization, who, day after day, dispense the truth about child education, for example, about the couple, sexuality, the secrets of the organism or of space. It is not only the magic

DISAPPEARING IDEOLOGY

of the *entre-nous* which renders everything speakable; there is also the magic of objectivity. One feature of the system which must not escape our attention indicates again the distance taken with regard to totalitarian ideology. The borders of knowledge are not represented, nor is it necessary for them to be. If everything can be pronounced, the indefiniteness of what is said must be noted; thus its perpetual newness. Totalitarianism insures itself against the hazard of a fragmentation of time through the stark assertion of a historical truth, which makes the development of the present from future progress (in such a way that there are always only certain utterable things within the borders of the established order, and that the unknown is domesticated, circumscribed to the level of what is known). Where it acts in that way, the new ideological discourse again takes hold of signs, cultivates them, in order to efface the historical threat. As social communication is content to be realized here and now, knowledge is exhibited here and now, bearing the solutions to the secret of nature, the secret of man, arousing a fascination with the present. Not knowing, then, signifies not coinciding with the times, not coinciding with social existence as it is manifested. It signifies incurring the society's tacit sanction, excluding oneself from legitimate social bonds.

"Newness", then, is nothing more than the materialized proof of temporal difference, of the historical, and thus of its concealment behind the illusion of a difference in time, of a masterable distance from the present to the past, of a conquerable relation to the present as such. Invisible once again is the operation which diffuses the effects of the institution of social reality, which attempts to prohibit the question about the sense of the established order, the question about *potentiality*. Whereas potentiality is linked to desire, whereas it brings into play the refusal of experience, newness blocks the view. In other words, it is the rattle which an infantilized group tries to grasp or catch, always a motion behind the appearance of the object they are to know. Once again we must not neglect to associate with the mania for newness at all the borders of organizations, the mania manifested (especially in France which is exemplary in this respect) by the circles of intelligentsia, devoured by the fear of not producing or not grasping that little thing which carries the guarantee of the death of the past and of the fullness or splendour of the present.

In conclusion, we hold that it is from this perspective that the function of ideology in consumer society could be interpreted. Too many analyses, in the context of a critical sociology, perpetuate ambiguity in overemphasizing the consumption practice. It may not be possible to conceive of this practice without linking it to the genesis of historical society. We may only be able to attempt to interpret through this phenomenon the signs of the institution of social reality, of which no one is the instigator, and we may not be able to do better than to question a world in which our own identity is given to us. On the other hand, the representation which haunts the consumption practice is open to criticism precisely in that it arises from the institution's actions to conceal it, that it develops a "response" destined to conjugate the insecurity engendered by the differentiation and the "not knowing" of the differentiation in space and time.

IDEOLOGY AND POWER

Baudrillard has shown in depth that the consumer product, whatever its nature, does not exercise an attraction in order to respond to some need whose origin can be located in the individual or group. It becomes the representative of a "system of objects" in which are related the demand, the satisfaction and the articulation of the signs to each other, in such a way that it turns back on itself and presents the illusion of social reality as such. In this sense, the discourse of consumption condenses the representation of the organization and of communication. It introduces a universe where the difference between producer and product is effaced through the appearance of an independent network of objects and where the difference between someone and someone else is simultaneously effaced through the appearance of a common adherence to the same world. Yet it still must be noted that what is consumed is incessantly new, the representative of a difference in time which feeds desire by simulating an indefinite return to the desired object, at the precise moment where the desire is held by the representation. This simulation, once again, indicates an attempt to represent the historical, to make change invisible by determining the visible.

Nonetheless, by holding to these observations we might miss the essential ideological function of consumption discourse, because the illusion it substantiates is that of a world where man perceives only signs of men. It is a world whose space is open to any route, where all is perceptible provided that one has the means, a world where vision, the manipulation of objects, activity are multiplied by an instrument without obstacle, and are as if fitted to something all-visible, all-manipulable, all-explorable. We need only consider the advertising which presents us with the house of our dreams, ready to welcome us, key in the door; it summarizes a very long discourse on social reality which teaches that the things of the outside are there, within, that the universe is arranged for man, that nature is the environment. There, ideology reaches the limit of its task; it puts the great wall in place, but makes it invisible, saves itself having to make a statement about whole man and the total society.

But although ideology achieves its task, must we think that its contradictions are resolved? How could they be if it is true that historical society is that society which undermines any representation of its institution?

The more that discourse on social reality seeks to coincide with social discourse, the more it applies itself to mastering the unmasterable activity of the institution, to taking hold of the signs of the institutor, and the more it runs the risk of losing the function assumed until then by ideology; the legitimation of the established order, not only that of a regime of ownership, but that of reality as such; it generates the conditions for a questioning which (in the East as well as the West) is aimed beyond the expressions of power and exploitation, at the indices of socialization in the modern world, and which brings the question of the *Other* and *Being* back into focus.

Paris, France