# CRITIQUE OF THE DOMINANT IDEOLOGY THESIS

Okan Bağdatlıoğlu

Karabuk University Publications

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# Contents

ACKNOWLEDMENTS ..... vi

INTRODUCTION ..... 7

MARXISM AND IDEOLOGY ..... 13

Historical Materialism ..... 17

Ideology in Marx and Engels ..... 29

Appendix: Neutralization of Ideology by the Second ..... 38

International and Lenin ..... 38

Ideology in Western Marxism ..... 39

Class Consciousness and Reification in Lukacs ..... 39

Hegemony and Politics in Gramsci ..... 44

Ideology as an Instrument in Miliband ..... 54

Ideology as a Structure in Althusser ..... 57

The Ideological Function of Capitalist State in Poulantzas ..... 63

CRITIQUE OF THE THEORIES OF DOMINANT IDEOLOGY ..... 66

The Thesis of Dominant Ideology ..... 68

The Relationship Between Ideology and Class ..... 68

Commodity Fetishism and Reification ..... 72

The Modals of the Dominant Ideology Thesis ..... 73

Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner's Analysis ..... 78

Feudalism and Early Capitalism ..... 79

The Dominant Ideology in Late Capitalism ..... 81

The Dominant Ideology and Lower Classes in Late Capitalism ..... 85

Pragmatic Acceptance..... 89

Debates on '*the Dominant Ideology Thesis*'..... 96

CONCLUSION..... 109

REFERENCES..... 115

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# INTRODUCTION

In class societies, the concept of a dominant ideology holds a central place for those seeking to explain how the dominance of a particular class, or the continuity of the social structure as a whole, is maintained. Because a class-based social structure implies a struggle between the ruling class and the subordinate classes. Yet this conflict cannot always be said to occur through overt coercion. Therefore, the idea that forms of control may exist without coercion leads to the possibility that class societies may also possess a dominant ideology.

When we look at the meaning of the concept of ideology, we find ourselves in a highly ambiguous semantic field. The term carries multiple meanings and, like many political concepts, is contested (Eagleton, 1996: 17–18; Geuss, 2013: 17; Larraín, 1983: 1; McLellan, 2012: 1; Oskay, 1980; J. B. Thompson, 1984: 1–2). Pointing to the contradictions of the concept, Ünsal Oskay notes that ideology is used both in a sense that can be mobilizing, transformative, and progressive, and in a sense that can be conservative, making it harder for individuals to grasp the reality in which they live. For this reason, he considers the following distinction useful: ideology as an *-ism* and dominant ideology. According to this distinction, dominant ideology is conceived as a rigid and homogeneous structure, whereas ideology as an *-ism* refers to political movements seeking to construct a new social order (Oskay, 1980). By contrast, John B. Thompson (1984: 3–4) argues that ideology can be conceptualized in two ways: neutral and critical. The neutral conceptualization corresponds to systems of ideas, belief systems, and symbolic practices, and is used in a purely descriptive sense. The critical conceptualization concerns the maintenance of "asymmetrical power relations," that is, domination.

Eagleton, in turn, identifies a different dual distinction in the use of the concept of ideology: epistemological and sociological. The epistemological use concerns "true and false cognition," "illusion, distortion, and mystification," whereas the sociological use concerns the "functions of ideas in social life" (1996: 19). This epistemological usage—proposed as a counterpart to the sociological usages found in Oskay and Thompson—finds its first expression, according to Thompson, in Marx and Engels. By likening ideology to the operation of the *camera obscura*, Marx and Engels sought to convey that ideology is an illusion, that is, an inverted and distorted image of reality (1984: 5–6).

According to Jorge Larraín, there are two possible explanations for why definitions of ideology differ so widely. The first concerns problems generated by the concept's own content; the second concerns divergences within Marxist interpretations of the concept (Larraín, 1983: 1). To clarify

these differences, it is more useful to draw on the following broader definitions (Payne & Barbera, 2010: 340):

1. Epistemologically negative – ideology as a form of distorted or false thought (for example, the "consciousness" of human subjects in capitalist society);
2. Socially relative – ideology as any set of views, beliefs, or attitudes (for example, the "worldview" of a social group or class);
3. Restricted – "theoretical ideology" (a more or less conscious system of thought);
4. Expanded – "practical ideology" (a milieu of more or less unconscious and habitual patterns of behaviour).

Given the conceptual richness (or ambiguity) of the term, it becomes crucial to identify who uses it and in what contexts. Ideology, in its epistemological sense of false or distorted thinking, was first employed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The German Ideology*. Marx and Engels characterize the idealist epistemology of earlier German thinkers as ideological in order to criticize it. Thus, what is non-ideological corresponds to a materialist epistemology, the opposite of idealism. Yet this critique also extends to earlier, non-historical forms of materialism.

In its second sense, ideology again appears first in Marx and Engels' *The German Ideology*, where it is used to describe the ideas of German thinkers. This time, however, the term refers not only to an epistemological error but also to a problem within social and political thought. The issue concerns the structure of a class society and points to the relationship between ideas and social classes. Thus, ideology emerges as a concept closely tied to social relations. In this sense, the concept was later further developed by Marx in the *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* through the base–superstructure metaphor, and after Marx it was taken up and expanded by Vladimir Lenin and Georg Lukács.

In its third sense, the concept of ideology combines the first and second usages and refers to a cluster of economic and political ideas and theories. For example, "neo-liberal ideology" designates a theoretical ideology that possesses a more or less systematic coherence and aims at internal consistency. In this meaning, however, ideology does not carry the critical connotation found in the other three usages.

In its fourth sense, ideology takes shape in theories developed first by Antonio Gramsci and later by Louis Althusser, drawing on Marx. This definition is broader than the previous one and refers to ideas and practices that are not expected to have been systematically formulated. Here, ideology denotes the ideas and practices produced by the ruling class or by

the social structure itself in a class society. It is therefore closely related to the second meaning of ideology. As noted above, the concept is closely connected to the reproduction of a class-based social order. From this perspective, ideology refers to specific ideas and practices that provide advantages to the ruling class in the struggle between classes. Terry Eagleton explains this meaning of ideology as follows:

"Dominant power may legitimate itself by securing the adherence of beliefs and values congenial to it; by naturalizing and universalizing such beliefs so that they appear self-evident and inevitable; by denigrating ideas that challenge it; by excluding rival forms of thought, perhaps in an implicit yet systematic way; and by obscuring social reality in ways suited to its own interests" (Eagleton, 1996: 23–24).

Thus, the most fundamental reason for the need for a dominant ideology in a society is the necessity of concealing the domination of a particular class and the coercive structure of a class-based social order. For this to occur, the aim is to incorporate the subordinate classes into ideology. In this way, the subordinate classes begin to comprehend society through the concepts, categories, and value system of the dominant ideology. As a result, they accept the relations of domination in which they find themselves and exhibit forms of consciousness and practice consistent with them.

Yet how effective is dominant ideology? By likening dominant ideology to "social cement," one assumes that it unifies society through the sharing of values and norms that bind members collectively. According to Thompson, however, this assumption is contested and lacks adequate evidence. How, then, is social order maintained? He argues that the answer is to be sought not in consensus achieved through ideology but, on the contrary, in the absence of consensus (1984: 5). Similarly, Eagleton holds that the question of how a neoliberal party manages to win elections cannot be understood solely as a matter of dominant ideology. A variety of methods may be employed, from the use of police violence against organized working-class opposition, to the suppression of the working class through economic coercion by fostering unemployment, or the reduction of intra-class consensus by offering economic concessions only to certain segments of the lower classes. Or it may be that the capitalist mode of production drains workers' existing energies—much like a vampire—leaving no energy available for participation in oppositional political action (1996: 60–61).

The central problematic of Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill, and Bryan S. Turner's (AHT) *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (1980) is precisely this issue surrounding dominant ideology. They argue that Marxists overestimate the integrative capacity of ideology. According to

these three sociologists, neo-Marxists have developed a "dominant ideology thesis" to explain social order in capitalist societies. In this view, neo-Marxists maintain that dominant ideology is successfully implanted in the consciousness of the lower classes and thereby prevents revolutionary class struggle. Thus, they believe that class harmony and social order in capitalist societies are accounted for. Dominant ideology is even said to operate so effectively that it conceals class struggle altogether. However, this thesis—whose core assumption is the existence of a mechanism powerful enough to obscure the fundamental contradiction of capitalist societies, namely class struggle—stands in tension with the theories advanced by Marx. Furthermore, when the alleged ineffectiveness of dominant ideology is framed through an emphasis on the cultural autonomy of the lower classes, it contradicts neo-Marxist theories that attempt to explain social order through top-down ideological control. Arguing that this contradiction must be resolved through a reconceptualization of dominant ideology, AHT claim that dominant ideology affects the ruling classes far more than the subordinate ones (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 2015: 1–3; Abercrombie & Turner, 1978).

This is a bold claim, yet one that deserves consideration, especially in light of analyses of late capitalism that rely on dominant ideology. In addition, AHT argue that there is a rupture between Marx and the neo-Marxists. According to AHT, Marx does not claim in his analyses of capitalist society that the working class is fully subordinated by a dominant ideology. On the contrary, the working class is under economic domination because it has been separated from the means of production and is compelled to rely on capitalists in order to make a living (2015: 2, 8).

Among the neo-Marxists targeted by AHT's critique are Georg Lukács, Antonio Gramsci, Ralph Miliband, Louis Althusser, and Nicos Poulantzas. Thus, the scope of their criticism ranges widely, from fetishism and reification to political socialization through hegemony and ideological apparatuses. Although there are certain differences among these theorists, AHT argue that they are all empirically mistaken because they explain the stability of social order by assuming that the working class becomes ideologically incorporated into the system (2015: 1). The authors' counter-claim—that political and economic coercion remains effective even in late capitalism, and that the lower classes possess their own class cultures and ideologies—carries an implicit suggestion of a kind of economic determinism. For this reason, AHT's criticisms may be seen as pointing toward a neglected issue. That is, while accepting class struggle as the fundamental premise of Marxism, this approach can be understood as an alternative both to the dominant ideology theses that portray society as overly integrated and to postmodern conceptions of a decentered social

order.

Eagleton, in examining postmodern critiques of ideology, argues that three postmodern doctrines are at work: an empiricist critique, doubt concerning the possibility of true knowledge, and the claim that the concept of ideology becomes superfluous once the relations between rationality, interest, and power are reformulated (Eagleton, 1996: 12). In his view, these critiques become possible only by reducing the concept of ideology to an excessively crude form (1996: 13). Another postmodern objection concerns the claim that power is everywhere. According to Eagleton, if power is understood in this way, then no central locus of power remains toward which an ideology critique could be directed (Eagleton, 1996: 26–27). For this reason, in order to make use of the concept of ideology, it becomes necessary to determine anew which power is central and what precisely ideology concerns. Eagleton stresses the importance of situating ideology within discourse and context (1996: 28). That is, to understand whether a statement produces ideological effects, it must be evaluated according to its context within relations of power.

For Eagleton, ideology involves a critical conceptualization. The central question is how people, despite their own unhappiness and subjugation, can come to love power and constrain their own freedom—by themselves. Thus, the critique of ideology presupposes that people need not be the mental slaves of their circumstances, that they can be rational. Political emancipation remains a possibility despite adverse conditions (1996: 14–15). Yet Eagleton does not claim that people secretly understand everything. On the contrary, he argues that if people truly perceived their condition, they would be able to overcome the doctrines of domination promoted by ideology—that is, their own dependence, oppression, and colonization (1996: 16). Hill notes that a similar stance guided them while writing *The Dominant Ideology Thesis*. In his view, the dominant ideology thesis treats people as "ideological fools incapable of independent thought and rational action" (Hill, 2015: 2).

This study will address only a specific portion of a much broader debate. Its core focus is the Marxist theories and analyses that AHT describe as the "dominant ideology thesis," along with AHT's criticisms of them. Accordingly, the thesis is structured to present first the fundamental concepts and theories of Marxist thought, followed by the neo-Marxist analyses of ideology built upon them. The first chapter examines Marx's theory of historical materialism and outlines his views on ideology. The subsequent sections analyze the theories and interpretations of ideology developed by Georg Lukács, Antonio Gramsci, Ralph Miliband, Louis Althusser, and Nicos Poulantzas—figures targeted by AHT's critique. The second chapter presents AHT's theoretical objections to these approaches

and the empirical evidence they offer. The discussion then turns to the alternative explanations AHT propose for the maintenance of social order in place of the dominant ideology thesis. The final section considers the criticisms directed at AHT's own account and develops a broader discussion. In this way, the study explores what this debate between the two approaches can reveal and what conclusions may be drawn from it.

Since the central aim of the thesis is to examine the debate between Marxist theories of ideology and the critique directed against them, the study is confined to this specific discussion. Within this limitation, it is necessary to note two issues that the author considers important but has chosen not to include. The first concerns the historical and social conditions in which the theorists under consideration produced their work. These conditions are highly significant, as they reveal why these theories, concepts, and ideas emerged and how they were shaped by their contexts. However, addressing them would broaden the scope of the thesis considerably and exceed the boundaries of a theoretical discussion; therefore, they have been excluded. Still, as noted in the conclusion, this issue constitutes an important topic for future research. The second concerns various theorists whose perspectives might reasonably be expected to appear in a study of this subject and historical period, but whose inclusion would extend beyond the scope of the specific debate being examined. Figures such as Karl Mannheim and Göran Therborn fall into this category. Their approaches to ideology are neutral rather than critical, which is one reason they are not included in the thesis. Another reason, as mentioned above, is the thesis's focus on a specific theoretical controversy. For these reasons, the historical contexts surrounding the theorists are addressed only minimally, and certain ideology theorists are not included.

# MARXISM AND IDEOLOGY

Karl Marx (1818–1883) completed his doctorate in philosophy at the University of Jena in 1841. Although not yet a socialist during this period, he was an opponent of Prussian despotism, which drew him toward the Young Hegelians, a dissident intellectual circle active in the early 1840s. The group, known as the Young Hegelians, distinguished itself from conservative Hegelians through its critical stance toward religion and the authoritarian Prussian state. Among these thinkers, who developed an atheistic and revolutionary interpretation of Hegel's philosophy, the figure who most influenced Marx was Ludwig Feuerbach (Lenin, 2006: 13–14). This influence, however, would not last long. Although Marx intended to pursue an academic career after graduating, this proved impossible. As a result, beginning in 1842 he turned to journalism. The socio-economic problems he had to address in his articles between 1842 and 1844 gradually pulled him away from philosophy and toward the analysis of social relations and, increasingly, political economy. In this process, he formulated a materialist critique of Hegelian dialectics and laid the foundations of his own theory of historical materialism (Marx, 2005: 38–39).

A survey of Marx's life reveals that he consistently wrote for various newspapers (the Rheinische Zeitung, Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher, Neue Rheinische Zeitung, Neue Rheinische Zeitung Revue, the New York Tribune, and the People's Paper) in order to disseminate his ideas. His journalism, however, was generally short-lived (apart from the New York Tribune, to which he contributed regularly for income). The papers for which he wrote were either shut down, or Marx was expelled from the country. Born in the Rhine region near the French border, Marx spent much of his life in exile due to expulsions or threats of imprisonment. After periods in Paris and Brussels, he finally settled in London in 1849, where he lived as a political refugee until his death (Engels, 1869; Lenin, 2006: 14–16).

Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) worked in his father's factory in Manchester before meeting Marx. His observations of the city and of the working class during his stay in Manchester beginning in 1842 were published in 1845 as *The Condition of the Working Class in England.* It was during this period that Marx and Engels met. Engels also published articles in the newspapers edited by Marx (Lenin, 2006: 65–66). Although both were initially influenced by the Young Hegelians, this influence gave way to sharp criticism, as seen in the manuscripts they wrote between 1845 and 1846, later compiled as *The German Ideology.* The Young Hegelians are criticized by Marx and Engels for believing they had overcome Hegel

through critique while remaining unable to free themselves from Hegel's conceptual framework. More importantly, their oppositional struggle is characterized as ideology because it is waged only against discourse and philosophy while ignoring material relations (Marx & Engels, 2013: 29). After breaking with this form of ideology, their next destination became the Communist League. Founded in 1847 as a revolutionary socialist party, the Communist League commissioned Marx and Engels to write a party manifesto.

The *Communist Manifesto* ([1848] 2008) was published, in Engels's words, shortly before "the first great battle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie," the 1848 Paris Uprising (2008: 60). The first two sections of the *Manifesto* present a general summary of Marx and Engels's theory of history and argue that a unity of interests exists between the communists and the proletariat. The following section contains their critiques of contemporary socialist currents. These critiques do not accuse the socialists of being ideological in the sense used in *The German Ideology*, but instead characterize them as reactionary, conservative-bourgeois, or utopian. What warrants these labels, in each case, is that these groups do not identify their own interests with those of the proletariat and do not advocate revolutionary transformation (Marx & Engels, 2008: 33, 48). The central claim advanced in the *Manifesto* is that history is the history of class struggles. These struggles—between oppressor and oppressed classes—persist at every stage of history and continue in modern bourgeois society with new class configurations. In the class antagonism characteristic of bourgeois society, the oppressed class identified by the authors is the proletariat (2008: 22).

During and after the Revolutions of 1848, Marx wrote various articles for *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* and *Neue Rheinische Zeitung Revue*, the publications of the Communist League. These writings were later published as *The Class Struggles in France* and *Wage Labour and Capital*. The articles comprising *Wage Labour and Capital* were written to present, in simple language, the economic conditions of the struggle between classes (Marx, 2006: 15–16). *The Class Struggles in France*, which aims to explain the failure of the 1848 Revolutions, demonstrates that class struggles are more complex than they appear in the *Manifesto*. Engels explains the failure of these revolutions by noting that victory "cannot be won by a single decisive blow," that it is necessary "to advance slowly, through hard and bitter struggles from one position to another," and, in short, that social change is impossible "by a simple coup de main" (2016: 23). Thus, the experience of 1848 was of considerable importance for Marx and Engels. After this date, Marx's attention shifted to the functioning of the capitalist economy, a subject he had left unfinished in *Wage Labour and Capital*. A

*Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, published in 1859, was a product of this effort. In this work, the author aimed to produce a theoretical study of the science of political economy, moving beyond the practical issues he had addressed in his journalistic writings (Marx, 2005: 42). Compared with Volume I of *Capital*, which would be published in 1867, the *Contribution* is the embryo of that work (Marx, 2011: 17). Its most famous part has been its Preface, in which Marx outlines the theory that would later be known as historical materialism.

In 1864, he became one of the founders of the International Working Men's Association, known as the First International, established in London. In the organization's founding address, he sought to expose the misery of the British working class. Marx pointed to issues such as inflation, unhealthy living and working conditions, child labour, and poor nutrition, attributing these conditions to the lack of organization among workers. For this reason, the task of the International Working Men's Association was defined as unifying national workers' movements and creating a common force (Marx, 1977: 9–17).

In 1867, Marx completed and published the first volume of *Capital*, a work he had long been striving to finish. This volume examines the fundamental components and relations of the capitalist mode of production: the commodity, money, the production of surplus value, the transformation of money into capital, and the process of capital accumulation. In short, it analyzes social relations and social production processes in capitalist society. The second and third volumes of *Capital*, which continue this analysis, were published only after Marx's death, compiled by Engels from his manuscripts.

**Ideology in Classical Marxism**

This section will first discuss the developments that influenced the ideas of Marx and Engels and then present the theory of historical materialism. In doing so, it aims to establish a foundation not only for Marx and Engels's views on ideology but also for the subsequent critique of Western Marxism's approach to ideology.

Marx and Engels lived in a nineteenth century marked by profound political, economic, and cultural transformations. Although developments in science, technology, medicine, political rights, industrialization, and urbanization were each significant, the events that most deeply shaped their scientific and political ideas were the great social and technological revolutions. Eric J. Hobsbawm (2003), describing this period as the "Age of Revolution," identifies two revolutions that defined the century: the French Revolution and the technological revolutions that emerged in Britain. The French Revolution was a political victory in which Jacobin intellectuals, adopting Rousseauian republicanism, seized power

against absolute monarchy. Beyond this, it played a decisive role in disseminating the principles of Enlightenment philosophy across the world. The ideas of democracy, liberalism, nationalism, and socialism inspired the popular movements that culminated in the Revolutions of 1848—a moment witnessed by Marx and Engels themselves.

Just as the French Revolution inspired the political ideas of Marx and Engels, the emergence of new production techniques driven by advancing technology shaped their economic ideas. The greatest development of this period was the first Industrial Revolution, which had begun in Britain before the nineteenth century. These changes initiated the transformation of feudal aristocratic classes into agrarian and industrial capitalists. However, the broader spread of these technologies across Europe occurred largely in the nineteenth century. The diffusion of new production techniques brought with it several major social changes. These can be summarized as follows:

- With the declining need for agricultural labour, migration to the cities began (Hobsbawm, 2003: 56).
- Although migrants initially worked through simple putting-out systems, the development of the factory system created masses of wage labourers (2003: 46–47).
- Alongside these advances in production technology, total output—and consequently the population—grew rapidly (2003: 58).

Despite these transformations, there was no dramatic improvement in workers' living standards. Although living conditions improved slightly and life expectancy increased, harsh working conditions, low wages, inadequate nutrition, and housing problems persisted. Describing part of Manchester in the 1840s as "hell on earth," Engels (2013: 86) noted that his account fell far short of conveying "the filth, the heaps of debris, the complete absence of sanitation, and the unbreathable, unhealthy atmosphere of these uninhabitable places."

The emergence of various socialist perspectives under these conditions was no coincidence. Socialists such as Henri de Saint-Simon, Robert Owen, and Charles Fourier undertook a range of initiatives to realize the ideal societies they envisioned. Yet these initiatives did not propose ideas capable of transforming society as a whole; they therefore remained projects aimed at limited, moral reforms within capitalism. Marx and Engels were influenced by the ideas of these early pioneers of socialism, but because "the productive forces and the working class had not yet developed sufficiently" (Larraín, 1983: 206), they characterized their visions as misjudged and labelled them "critical-utopian" socialists.

Marx and Engels used the term scientific socialism[1] to distinguish their approach from that of the early socialists. For them, socialism was not a moral or rationalist blueprint for an ideal society, nor a utopia: "The theoretical statements of the communists do not rest upon ideas or principles that have been invented or discovered by this or that would-be universal reformer" (Marx & Engels, 1978: 484). Rather, they believed that social totality must be understood scientifically. Marxism therefore cannot be viewed as a continuation of utopian schemes (Tucker, 1978: xx). For this reason, Hegel's holistic philosophy constituted a fundamental source for their conception of scientific socialism. Yet Hegelian dialectics had to undergo a materialist transformation.

**Historical Materialism**

Neither Karl Marx nor Friedrich Engels had been direct students of the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831). Yet in their time, especially in the universities where the Young Hegelians were influential, Hegelian philosophy held a dominant position. This influence is visible in Marx's early works. However, as Marx later emphasized in *Capital*, the impact of Hegelian dialectics on him was filtered through a critical lens. In Marx's view, Hegel's dialectic mystifies history. Even so, Marx regarded it as containing a rational core and praised its scope and power (2011: 29). Reaching this rational core, however, required turning Hegel "right side up."

The effort to set Hegel "on his feet" begins in Marx's youth, particularly under the influence of Ludwig Feuerbach. According to Kolakowski, Feuerbach was one of the materialist Young Hegelians who launched an early critique of Hegelian philosophy. His criticisms of Hegel and of religion reflected a materialist perspective. One of Feuerbach's

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[1] German *Wissenschaftlicher Sozialismus*. The difference between the German word *Wissenschaft* and the Turkish word *bilim* is significant. Although *Wissenschaft* is translated into Turkish as *bilim*, the former does not fully correspond to the positivist understanding of science used today. The meaning of *Wissenschaft* is much broader. It does not refer only to the natural sciences. It is the name of a much more comprehensive field of knowing and inquiry that examines all human activities such as history, literature, language, art, etc. In fact, *Wissenschaft* can be described as a general term that expresses every kind of activity of knowing and understanding. From this perspective, whenever *Wissenschaft* appears in the German philosophical literature, its broad meaning must be kept in mind. Indeed, for example, Hegel also uses the word science (*Wissenschaft*) for philosophy, and even states that the mode of knowing that appears at the stage where absolute spirit manifests itself is science (philosophy) in this sense (Gürler, 2016).

central claims is that God and religion are products of human self-alienation. It is not God who creates the human being; rather, the human being creates the idea of God. By attributing their highest qualities to a divine being, humans become alienated from themselves. His argument can also be interpreted as a reformulation of the Hegelian category of alienation from a purely naturalistic and human-centered standpoint (Kolakowski, 1978b: 114–116).

Engels made explicit, forty years after the publication of *The Essence of Christianity,* how influential the book had been and how decisive Feuerbach's role was in the shift from idealism to materialism. In this sense, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy,* written near the end of Engels's life, is an explicit defense of materialism and dialectics. In this work Engels states that his conviction that nature exists as a foundation independent of all philosophy—and especially of religion—and that it brings human beings into existence, gained definitive clarity with Feuerbach (and with *The Essence of Christianity*) (1992: 18). Accordingly, material nature exists independently of consciousness, and religious imagination is a reflection of material existence.

Feuerbach argues that philosophy is the conceptualized and rationalized form of religion and therefore another mode of human alienation. He maintains that overcoming this alienation requires the study of social relations among human beings and, by doing so, he discovers what he considers a genuine, materialist science. In other words, within philosophy one cannot reach the positive through the negation of the negation by means of logic; positive knowledge is acquired through the senses (2000: 106). Put differently, Hegelian dialectics takes the absolute and the abstract as its starting point. Thus, as noted above, philosophy and religion—both forms of human alienation—become the point of departure. For Marx, however, "it is not religion that creates man, but man who creates religion" (1978b: 53). Although Marx regarded Hegel as abstract and speculative, he also believed that Hegel's dialectic expressed the movement of history; the only problem was that this history was not yet the history of real human beings (2000: 106).

According to Marx, although Hegel's dialectic produces alienation because of its abstract character, its principles of movement and creativity can be taken up in a materialist sense. This requires beginning not from consciousness or spirit, but from real human beings. In place of Hegel's self-alienated spirit that overcomes its alienation through self-recognition, Marx places the self-alienated human being. Although Hegel developed a holistic philosophical system and explained historical progress as a dialectical relation, history was not a transcendent category for either Marx

or Engels.[2] History was shaped by the needs and relations of concrete human beings. In Marx's view, the human being is the result of their own labour, their own creation. For this creative labour to be freed from alienation, the human being must enter into an active relation—with other human beings—as their species-being, that is, must engage in cooperation (2000: 108–109).

Another influence of the Young Hegelians on Marx was political. The Young Hegelians believed that human history moved teleologically toward a more rational and just society. In their view, the constitutional monarchy in Prussia was not the most perfect form of the state; therefore, they argued that more radical democratic alternatives were available. To a considerable degree, the Young Hegelians constituted one of the most important intellectual movements in Germany at the time. Their influence was growing across several universities, and they criticized the Prussian monarchy, the church, and even the emerging bourgeois capitalist order (cited in Kolakowski, 1978b: 81–83).

The year 1843 marked the dissolution of the Young Hegelians. After this point, Marx began to break away from the tradition of pure Hegelian philosophy and to develop a revolutionary and entirely new system. This shift first occurred through the debates he entered with his former comrades within the Young Hegelian milieu. Between 1843 and 1844, as Marx became increasingly critical of the other Young Hegelians, he returned to Hegel in order to understand the source of the problem. Marx's critiques of Hegelian idealism can be found in *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1843), *The Holy Family* (1844), and *The German Ideology* (1845). Yet, until he wrote the *Theses on Feuerbach* and *The German Ideology*, Marx remained under the influence of Feuerbachian materialism. For example, in the manuscript known as *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, his critique of religion likens religion to an opiate used by people to soothe their real suffering. The abolition of religious illusion is presented as an important starting point for human beings to attain their real happiness.

However, in *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* and the *1844 Manuscripts*, Marx had begun to search for the sources of alienation not in religious consciousness but in social relations, and for this reason he started

[2] Marx explains his own dialectic, which he defines as its "rational form," as follows: "the moment we grasp the existent through the dialectic as something positive, we also grasp its negation, that it will necessarily perish; for the dialectic comprehends every formed shape within a flowing movement and therefore does not lose sight of its transient side; for the dialectic shrinks from nothing, it is in its essence critical and revolutionary" (Marx, 2011: 29).

to break with Feuerbach's materialism. Marx criticizes Feuerbach for failing to understand why people remain under the influence of religious alienation and therefore for being unable to explain how it can be overcome. Whereas in Feuerbach religious belief is viewed entirely as an error of consciousness, for Marx religion is a sincere response to the alienation produced by material life (1978b: 54). For this reason, the critique of material life had to precede the critique of religion. According to Marx, in the capitalist system the worker becomes alienated because they exist not as a person but as an instrument. In other words, labour has become a commodity like any other; this results from the alienating effects of capitalism, in which the worker themself becomes a commodity (Marx, 1978d: 70–71).

*The German Ideology* and the *Theses on Feuerbach*, written between 1844 and 1845, mark a turning point at which all ties with the Young Hegelians were severed. Here Marx and Engels criticize Feuerbach for being an abstract materialist, because Feuerbach understands human self-alienation as the result of a supernatural God alienating the human being. Marx and Engels, however, do not conceive alienation as a distortion located in consciousness. Alienation is the outcome of the relation that propertyless, deprived masses—dispossessed by capitalism—enter into with their social conditions. The human being becomes alienated from themself and from their species-being through the alienating effects of capitalist society. For Marx and Engels, overcoming alienation requires transforming social reality itself—that is, a communist revolution (2013: 51). In other words, the overcoming of alienation will occur together with the transcendence of capitalist society, ultimately leading to a communist society without classes, without the state, and without private property.

The scientific method of Marxist theory—historical materialism—first becomes clearly articulated in Marx and Engels's *The German Ideology* (1845). In this work, the authors aim to develop the scientific character of historical materialism in opposition to idealist and metaphysical materialist philosophy. Their central emphasis is that a materialist approach to history is distinct from philosophy because it investigates concrete social conditions rather than relying on philosophical abstractions and assumptions. To this end, it examines how human beings satisfy their basic needs and seeks to explain historical developments and the causes of change. Another key text on historical materialism is *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), specifically its Preface. Although brief and formulated at a macro level, this Preface clarifies the framework of the materialist approach and will therefore be addressed in this section.

The term *historical materialism*, used interchangeably with

Marxism, is a theory that analyzes history from a materialist perspective. It asserts that historical events are grounded in social relations—that is, in the material conditions under which people live, and particularly in the relations between social classes. At its core, historical materialism is a theory of history that investigates a society's material conditions and the forms of production and reproduction of the means that sustain its existence. For this reason, socio-economic relations occupy a central place in historical materialism. In *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, published in 1880, Engels sought to distinguish his and Marx's position from that of other contemporary socialists and to present a popular handbook of Marxist socialism. In this work, Engels offers a basic definition of historical materialism.

The basis of social structure is formed by the production of the means necessary for human life and the exchange of the objects produced. The mode of production that constitutes this foundation—determined by what is produced, how it is produced, and how these products are exchanged—shapes the distribution of wealth in society and the classes into which society is divided (Engels, 1974: 77). From this definition, the central historical thesis of Marx and Engels follows: history is to be explained not primarily through intellectual or philosophical factors, but through the relations among economic elements.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels first feel the need to define the human being who does not yet make history—that is, the non-historical human. Their repeated emphasis on the material existence of human beings reflects the outcome of their struggle against idealist philosophy. According to them, "the first premise of all human existence, and therefore of all history, is that individuals must be in a position to live in order to 'make history'," and this requires "the physical organization of individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature" (2013: 30). Thus, for human beings to make history, they must first be capable of producing their material existence. The production of the means necessary to satisfy basic needs constitutes the first historical act. Once these needs are met, new needs arise, and simultaneously the production of new human beings—that is, reproduction—takes place. When these relations occur together with other individuals, they assume a social form (2013: 36–37). In this way, the human being acquires a consciousness of the relation they establish with their environment. Although this consciousness initially concerns nature, it evolves into a social consciousness as social relations develop. At this stage, consciousness requires language and acquires a practical, material form (2013: 38).

The social division of labour emerges as productivity and needs increase and, as a result, the population grows. Yet a true division of labour

arises only from the split between material and intellectual labour. With the division of labour, classes come into being, because at this stage material and intellectual activity, and production and consumption, fall to different individuals in differing proportions. Thus the unequal distribution of labour and the products of labour gives rise to classes, which in turn generates conflict among them (2013: 38–39). In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels argue that in bourgeois society this conflict becomes increasingly simplified and unfolds between two main classes: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie (2008: 22).

Another claim advanced in the *Manifesto* is that history is a continuous history of class struggle between oppressor and oppressed classes. These struggles are described as occurring "now hidden, now open," and as ending "either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes" (2008: 22). Yet, in examining the Revolutions of 1848, Engels later notes that they were mistaken in not fully capturing the subtleties of class struggle (2016: 19).

A more comprehensive analysis of social classes would require the writing of *Capital*. In the third volume of *Capital*, Marx develops a more refined definition of class. These classes are distinguished by their sources of income: wage-labourers, capitalists, and landowners. Marx also notes the existence of middle and intermediate strata, as well as distinctions within the capitalist class itself. He states that many layers of interests and status could be identified, but his notes end before examining the relations among them (Marx, 1990: 775–776). In this regard, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, which offers a historical analysis of the 1848 Revolutions, may be more illuminating.

"Men make their own history, but they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves; rather, they make it under immediately found, given, and inherited circumstances" (Marx, 2016b: 19). Here we see a situation different from the struggle described in *The German Ideology* and the *Manifesto*. Marx emphasizes conditions that exist independently of human will. Yet *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* is not a text that analyzes history solely through the framework of such material conditions; it is instead a political work grounded more in human agency and in a nuanced analysis of historical events. In this text Marx highlights the coalition formed between the petty bourgeoisie and the workers, demonstrating that middle strata also exert influence within class struggle. This coalition resulted in the emergence of a social-democratic party, thereby "blunting the revolutionary edge of the proletariat's social demands," while at the same time pushing the demands of the petty bourgeoisie in a socialist direction (2016b: 61–62). As is well known, however, the 1848 Revolutions ultimately culminated in Louis Napoleon

Bonaparte proclaiming his own despotism (2016b: 148). Marx's analysis in this work, and in *The Class Struggles in France,* shows that historical materialism is not a social theory in which the capitalist mode of production unfolds independently of human agency and politics.

However, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,* written by Marx eleven years after 1848 and published in 1859, draws greater attention to the objective forms of class struggle within the mode of production. Engels's summary of Marx's political economy writings illustrates this point clearly: "The conflict between the productive forces and the relations of production exists objectively, independently of human will and action," and "socialism is the reflection of this conflict in the consciousness of the working class" (Engels, 1974: 79).

In turning to the famous Preface Marx wrote for the *Contribution,* we encounter a text that is brief in length yet significant in impact. For this reason, it must be quoted at length:

"In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will—relations of production corresponding to a determinate stage in the development of their material productive forces. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political, and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into contradiction with the existing relations of production—or, what is merely the legal expression of the same thing, with the property relations within which they have hitherto moved. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure. In examining such revolutions, one must always distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production—which can be determined with the precision of natural science—and the legal, political, religious, artistic, or philosophical forms, in short, the ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out to the end" (Marx, 2005: 39).

As this passage shows, a social system is determined by the dominant mode of production within it—for example, the capitalist mode of production in our own society, based on commodity production and the appropriation of surplus value for capital accumulation. The character of a

mode of production is shaped by two elements: the productive forces and the relations of production. The productive forces include material and social factors such as the means of production (tools, machinery, etc.), raw materials and natural resources, labour power (human physical capacity, knowledge, and skills), and infrastructure (roads, electricity, the internet, etc.). The productive forces appropriate to a given mode of production come together within relations of production. These relations consist of the connections between the owners of the means of production and the producers (under capitalism, wage labourers). Class structures, wage relations, and relations of domination all fall under the category of relations of production. Another important point emphasized in the passage is that revolutionary transformation results not simply from class struggle but from a contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production.

At this point it is necessary to mention a critical remark by Engels that is relevant to this text, because his intervention appears to be one of the foundational sources of later debates on ideology, which will be examined further on. In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, his anthropological work, Engels states that the determining factor in history, "in the last instance," is "the production and reproduction of immediate life" (Engels, 2012: 12). When the continuation of the text is examined, it becomes clear that what Engels has in mind is human reproduction—that is, the emergence of the family. When read together with *The German Ideology*, the family appears to belong to the base since it concerns the material production and reproduction of life. Yet, considering that the family contains within itself relations of division of labour, property, and therefore domination (Marx & Engels, 2013: 39), its reproduction can also be seen as involving the reproduction of all these relations. Moreover, the expression "in the last instance" may be interpreted to mean that material production is decisive ultimately, while superstructural institutions may exert influence beforehand. This is, in fact, the interpretation later found in Louis Althusser (1971: 127, 135).

*Capitalist Mode of Production*

In explaining the emergence of capitalism, Marx states that the means of production, money, and commodities have not always been capital.[3] They become capital only when they enter into a specific relation.

[3] An example illustrating the relationship between the means of production and the social relation of production: "A negro is a negro. He becomes a slave only under certain conditions. A cotton-spinning machine is a machine for spinning cotton. It becomes capital only under certain conditions. Remove it from these conditions, and just as little as gold is in itself money or sugar is the price of sugar, the machine

Two entirely different commodities—the worker's labour-power and the capitalist's money and means of production—must be able to confront one another. For this to occur, the worker must be a "free labourer," meaning neither a slave nor a serf, nor an independent peasant (Marx, 2011: 687). As Marx shows at the beginning of *Capital*, a commodity is a commodity only when it is destined for exchange—that is, when it possesses exchange-value (2011: 50). For the worker to sell labour-power as a commodity, they must not own their own means of production, as an independent peasant would. In short, the commodification of labour is the fundamental condition of the capitalist mode of production, and this condition is continuously reproduced by capitalism. Thus workers are continually separated from their property—that is, from their labour-power. Marx calls this process "primitive accumulation" (2011: 687).

Once capitalism establishes itself as an independent force and becomes the dominant mode of production in society, it turns into a social production process that generates and reproduces the entire social order. In other words, capitalist society produces and reproduces its own conditions of existence and the prerequisites necessary for production (Marx, 1990: 719). The capitalist mode of production rests on the appropriation of the worker's unpaid surplus labour. Although this appears to take place through the terms of a free contract, the worker is compelled to enter this relation. The portion of labour the worker performs beyond what is necessary to sustain their own existence is called surplus labour. For capital, this surplus labour appears as surplus value and exists materially as surplus product. For the continuation of the capitalist mode of production, the conditions that make surplus labour possible must also be reproduced. Yet this process results in the material and mental impoverishment and domination of workers. Marx also notes the role this plays in transitioning to higher forms of production, as it drives increases in labour productivity. As labour productivity rises, the amount of surplus labour extracted in a working day also increases, because more product can be obtained from labour in the same amount of time. Marx concludes that, in creating surplus product, the key factor is not the length of surplus labour but the productivity of labour and the favourability of the conditions under which labour is expended. In other words, as the productive forces develop, the contribution of intellectual labour and more advanced production techniques reduces the need for manual labour. At this point Marx evokes, albeit without elaboration, a realm of freedom—communism—which recalls the era of social revolution he described in the *Contribution* (1990: 720–721).

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ceases to be capital. … Capital is a social relation of production. It is a historical relation of production" (Marx, 2011: 732).

Before turning to this realm of freedom, it is useful to elaborate on the necessity of entering the labour process mentioned above. For although communism is presented as a new mode and society arising from within capitalism, capitalism itself erects various obstacles to it. "In the course of capitalist development, a working class arises which, through its education, tradition, and habits, accepts the requirements of this mode of production as self-evident natural laws" (Marx, 2011: 707). The necessities of the mode of production generate a kind of "silent coercion," because the domination exerted by its internal logic and laws over the working class occurs within the apparent natural order of the economy. For Marx, the fact that workers must sell their labour does not suffice; he notes the influence of extra-economic factors as well, though only as exceptions. These exceptions, he argues, apply primarily to the early stages of capitalism, when capitalist production mechanisms are not yet strong. At this stage, the bourgeoisie needs state coercion in order to secure profit, extend the working day, and bind the worker to itself (2011: 707).

As Marx's analysis of capitalism shows, capitalism is historical in the sense that it requires specific relations at a particular stage of history. Yet this historicity gives way to fetishized relations because capitalism presents its own operative laws as natural laws. As we will examine in more detail in the section on commodity fetishism, the commodity—an inanimate object—exerts significant effects over human beings. This can be understood as another expression of the coercive dynamics of capitalism that Marx describes as "silent coercion." However, to understand fetishized relations, it is appropriate first to return to *The German Ideology* and consider the alienating effects of the division of labour.

According to Marx, the division of labour produces not only an unequal distribution of wealth. It also generates a contradiction between individual interest and common interest. In the division of labour, each person performs a specific activity; in other words, society is divided into classes. Yet Marx and Engels argue that, although it may appear in misleading forms, this fragmented common interest must take on certain regulating and constraining shapes. Common interest first appears as a form of mutual dependence among individuals. This dependence is not voluntary, because it confines each individual to a particular sphere of activity, a particular occupation. If the individual does not wish to lose access to the means of subsistence, this dependence must be maintained. As a result, the person's own activity becomes an alien force standing over them and exercising power (2013: 41–42).

Another misleading form of common interest is the state. Although the state appears to represent common interest, it is in fact the form of one class's domination over the others (2013: 41). According to

Marx and Engels, at a certain stage in the development of the productive forces, bourgeois society encompasses all economic activity in a manner that exceeds the framework of the state and the nation. Yet in order for these misleading forms of common interest to be sustained, the bourgeoisie "must organize itself externally as a nation and internally as a state" (2013: 44).

*Communist Society and the Overcoming of Alienation*

Marx and Engels never describe the communist society they envision in detailed form; they speak of it only in broad terms. As far as can be seen, communist society is the antithesis of capitalism, because it is a society in which no fixed division of labour exists, in which everyone carries out the work they choose voluntarily, and, in short, in which alienation has been overcome (Marx & Engels, 2013: 41). Thus we may infer that in communism all the coercive and alienating effects of capitalist society disappear entirely—a society without a state, without private property, and without classes. Yet in the *Manifesto*, Marx and Engels state that their aim is not to abolish all property but specifically bourgeois property. "Communism deprives no one of the power to appropriate the products of society; all that it does is to deprive him of the power to subjugate the labour of others by means of such appropriation" (Marx & Engels, 2008: 36). In other words, in communist society the labour-power that becomes a commodity under capitalism—that is, the worker's own property—belongs solely to the worker. Individuals would thus enter into their mutual relations as free and equal persons, no longer subjected to the domination of bourgeois property. Marx describes this condition in *Capital* as the "realm of freedom."

"'The realm of freedom,' Marx writes, 'begins only where the sphere of labour determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases'" (1990: 721). The development that makes this possible is expressed as a certain level of advancement in the productive forces. Yet Marx adds several important points. Freedom can be realized only through the rational regulation of our relations with nature and can be achieved only by associated producers. Although the realm of necessity persists alongside freedom, production within it will occur "with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most worthy of human nature." For Marx, the fundamental precondition for this is the shortening of the working day (1990: 721).

The path of transition to a communist society appears in different forms across Marx's writings, yet the underlying rationale is always the same: the abolition of class domination. In *The German Ideology*, for example, communist revolution is described as a necessity. This is because among the emerging classes, the propertyless are socially disadvantaged,

while the dominant class derives its social power from property and takes the form of the state. Thus revolutionary transformation must target both property relations and state power. Marx and Engels argue that this transformation will be carried out "with a universal communist consciousness" (2013: 70). Accordingly, any class that seeks to become dominant—such as the proletariat—must present its own domination as the general interest of society and must seize political power (2013: 41). As noted earlier, Marx and Engels viewed the state as a misleading representation of common interest. Therefore, the capture of state power appears as a necessary stage for extending revolutionary transformation to society as a whole.

As noted earlier, the capitalist mode of production is a form of alienation. To overcome this alienation, Marx and Engels propose three practical, material preconditions. The first is that alienation must become "an intolerable power," that is, the number of propertyless classes must increase. The second is that these classes must enter into a contradiction with the "existing world of wealth and culture." The third concerns a certain stage of development of the productive forces. This stage must bind human beings to one another universally, and thereby enable communism to emerge as a universal event carried out by the simultaneous action of all peoples. Otherwise, communism would either remain a local movement and be suppressed, or the existing deprivation would only spread further (2013: 42). This explanation in *The German Ideology* was echoed roughly fourteen years later in the Preface to the *Contribution*, as mentioned above—namely, the impending contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production. Marx adds in that Preface: "A social formation never perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured within the womb of the old society" (2005: 40). In this way, Marx and Engels reinforce the claim that communism is not something to be invented but a real movement.

In his politically oriented writings, Marx also addresses the political stages of this transformation. In *The Class Struggles in France*, he proposes "the dictatorship of the proletariat" as "a necessary transit point" toward communism (2016a: 163). In another political text, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, this stage is described as the lower phase of communism. It is the lower phase because the pressures created by the division of labour—that is, the separation of manual and mental labour—have not yet been abolished (1978c: 531). The importance of this stage also becomes clear in Marx's debate with Bakunin. As an anarchist, Bakunin argued that the state must be abolished immediately after the revolution. Marx, in

contrast, maintained that class divisions still persisted and that state power therefore had to be used against the remnants of the old society (1978a: 543). In short, against the social-democratic theses proposed in the Gotha Programme and the anarchist theses of Bakunin, Marx continued to defend the communist theses advanced in the *Manifesto* (2008: 40). The revolution against capitalism, therefore, is one that must be made continuous through political means. Although the term "dictatorship" carries strongly negative connotations today, in the *Manifesto* this stage is described as "the conquest of democracy" (2008: 39).

Finally, it is necessary to address how the revolutionary subject—the proletariat—participates in this social transformation. Unlike the texts discussed above, which present the objective processes of class struggle, this point appears briefly in a text where Marx refers to a subjective condition: *The Poverty of Philosophy*. In this work, the Hegelian concepts "class in itself" and "class for itself" are used to describe the transition of a class from an objective existence to a subject endowed with conscious agency. According to Marx, the proletariat is already a class opposed to capital—that is, it exists as a class *in itself*. Yet it has not yet reached the stage of being a class *for itself*. The latter denotes a situation in which the masses engaged in struggle unite and consciously defend their class interests. At this stage, the struggle becomes a political one (Marx, 1978e: 218). In other words, Marx intends to describe a stage in which class consciousness develops. As he suggests, this involves an unfolding process within struggle. However, as will be seen below in the discussion of ideology, the question of consciousness is complex and not immune to the manipulations of the bourgeoisie and bourgeois society.

**Ideology in Marx and Engels**

The prominence of ideology as a major topic of debate for Marxists corresponds to the need to explain how capitalist societies maintain their relative stability despite the economic and political crises they experience and despite the class conflict that profoundly divides society. This situation can also be described as a "crisis of Marxism,"[4] because Marxist theory—whose core assumption is that class conflict will intensify and thus give rise to revolutionary consciousness and action—entered a period of uncertainty regarding the validity of its economy-based

[4] The first situation described as the crisis of Marxism concerns the economic crisis that emerged in Europe toward the end of the nineteenth century, the strategic debates within the Second International, and the divisions within Marxism. According to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, the inadequacy of the responses given to this moment of crisis is explained as the reason for the theory of hegemony (Laclau & Mouffe, 2015: Chapters 1 and 2).

theses when class conflict appeared to lose its force in advanced capitalist societies. For this reason, Marxists sought to explain the stability of capitalist society through factors other than relations of production, and Marx's reflections on ideology gained renewed prominence. Although this chapter is divided according to the four different meanings of ideology attributed to Marx, it must be remembered that there is always a degree of continuity and communication among the theories that emerge from these distinctions.

First, it must be stated that Marx did not construct a theory of ideology. What is called a "theory of ideology in Marx" was developed retrospectively by examining his works through this lens. The first problem this creates is that different commentators interpret him in different ways. For this reason, various distinctions have been proposed regarding ideology in Marx (Barrett, 2000: 13–25; Eagleton, 1996: 126–127; Larrain, 1983: 21; Rehmann, 2013: chap. 2):[5] The common points across these classifications may be summarized as follows:

1. Ideology as a critique of idealism: the "*camera obscura*"
2. The formulation "the ideas of the ruling class are, in every epoch, the ruling ideas"
3. The superstructure as the sphere in which class struggle becomes visible and is enacted
4. Commodity fetishism: the fetishizing, reifying, and socially mystifying effects of material structures

*Camera obscura and consciousness*

Before discussing the *camera obscura*, a few points must be clarified. First, the concept of ideology found in *The German Ideology*—a work by Marx and Engels that remained unpublished until the 1920s—was unknown to early Marxists (the Second International, Lenin, and Gramsci). Later Marxists (Althusser, Poulantzas, etc.) showed little interest in it because they considered this model to be plainly incorrect. Thus the *camera obscura* conception addressed in this section remained undeveloped and was even explicitly rejected. Nevertheless, given that it represents an initial step in the emergence of a historical-materialist theory of ideology, it can be regarded as an important stage.

[5] It should be noted that Rehmann does not fully agree with these distinctions. According to him (2017: Chapter 2), when Marx's and Engels's use of the term ideology is examined through the lens of the theory of fetishism, it converges on a common foundation that encompasses all their works.

*The German Ideology* is a work in which Marx and Engels confront Hegelian idealism and ahistorical materialism. The conception of ideology used here must therefore be understood within this context. Marx and Engels argue that the category of consciousness—which idealists treat as if it lacked any material basis—actually arises from material life. Yet their point concerns not only consciousness but the entire social structure and the state, all of which are grounded in the production of material life. The production of material life possesses constraints and premises of its own, independent of human will and consciousness. These material relations exert effects on human consciousness (2013: 34).

When we examine the paragraphs preceding the famous *camera obscura* metaphor ("the inversion of objects on the retina of the eye"), it becomes clear that Marx and Engels seek to show that various historical categories—town and country, division of labour, tribal, slave, and feudal property, etc.—arise from material relations in a historical-materialist manner (2013: 31–33). Indeed, in the preface to the book, the Young Hegelian philosophy that is subjected to critique throughout the text is mocked in the following way: it "contended that men drowned in water only because they were possessed by the idea of gravity. If they were to declare, for example, that this was a superstition and abandon the idea altogether, they would be completely liberated from the danger of drowning" (2013: 23–24). The expression described as *camera obscura* finds its meaning precisely in this jest. Thus idealism—where material and historical categories and concepts appear to exist autonomously, as if arising from themselves—is defined as ideology.

Materialism asserts that even the most extravagant ideas in people's minds rest upon material foundations and therefore do not exist independently. The most problematic expression here is likely "ideological echoes and reflections." Consciousness appears to arise as a simple, ahistorical reflection (Marx & Engels, 2013: 35). Consciousness "has no history or development of its own"; it acquires historicity only "as men develop their material production and their material intercourse" (2013: 35). Yet when the continuation of the text is examined, we see that consciousness can turn into an autonomous force and thereby exert effects on material relations. At a certain stage of the division of labour—namely, the separation of mental and material labour—consciousness can imagine itself as something distinct from material practice. For this reason, a contradiction emerges between material production and consciousness (2013: 38–39).

However, some argue that the mechanism of ideology presented here rests on an overly simple logic. David McCarney, for example, claims that *The German Ideology* is fundamentally a problematic text and that no

"theory of ideology" can be derived from what is essentially a polemical work. John Mepham similarly finds it inadequate because ideology is treated merely as an illusion (cited in Larrain, 1983: 16). Comparable critiques have been advanced by Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams, and Terry Eagleton. Their common contention is that Marx, in his early period, developed a naïve empiricist-positivist conception of ideology and equated ideology with false consciousness (Rehmann, 2013: 23). Rehmann partially accepts these criticisms, arguing that the *camera obscura* metaphor should be understood as referring to an "idealist superstructure" within the base–superstructure model and viewed as a transitional step toward a more advanced theory of ideology (Rehmann, 2013: 31–32).

In Marx's early writings, the critique of idealism focuses primarily on its limitations; in *The German Ideology*, however, the concepts of idealism and ideology begin to be used interchangeably. According to Bhikhu Parekh, this is not simply because the Hegelians were insufficienticiently materialist. Idealism is also defined as ideology because it "universalizes limited and narrow social viewpoints" (1982: 29). Thus, in *The German Ideology*, the concept of ideology is not employed merely as a form of cognitive distortion—an incorrect or imaginary representation of reality. It is also used to criticize the way idealist ideas rationalize and legitimate the existing structure of class society. To see this more clearly, we must turn to the passage in which Marx and Engels discuss ruling ideas.

*Dominant ideas and the means of mental production*

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: that is, the class which is the dominant material force in society is at the same time its dominant intellectual force. The class that has at its disposal the means of material production thereby also controls the means of mental production, so that, as a rule, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to this class. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations, the dominant material relations grasped as ideas—in short, the ideas of the conditions that make one class the ruling class; that is to say, the ideas of its domination. The individuals who compose the ruling class possess, among other things, consciousness, and thus think. Consequently, in so far as they rule as a class and determine the entire scope of a historical epoch, it is obvious that they do so in every sphere. Thus, among other things, as thinkers and producers of ideas, they dominate; they regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age. It is therefore evident that their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch" (Marx & Engels, 2013: 52–53).

Examining this passage shows that a connection is established between what makes certain ideas ideological and the structure of social

relations. In class societies this connection rests on two contradictions. The first is the division of labour, which arises with the separation between "mental and manual labour." The second is the divergence, under private property, between "the interests of the individual and those of the community" (McLellan, 2012: 14). Thus the emergence of ideology is tied to the emergence of surplus product and its appropriation by a minority, which produces an unequal distribution of wealth. Once a minority becomes "freed from the necessity of labour," its consciousness is shaped by its own material conditions, and it can generate ideas that justify and defend those conditions (Eagleton, 1996: 114).

However, how these ideas are produced is a contested question. Eagleton interprets the passage as implying a genetic link between ruling ideas and the ruling class (1996: 74). Larrain, by contrast, shows that the ruling class need not produce the ruling ideas itself. The key issue is ownership of the means of mental production. Even if subordinate classes generate ideas of their own, the absence of control over these means renders the connection between such ideas and their interests incoherent (1983: 24). Rehmann, taking a different angle, argues that the passage is politically damaging for the left because it presents the ruling class as possessing a clear advantage in the struggle for hegemony (2013: 33). Yet the continuation of the passage already contains the seeds of what will later appear in Antonio Gramsci's account of the role of intellectuals in constructing hegemony:

"The social division of labour manifests itself even within the ruling class as a division between mental and material labour. One part of this class emerges as its thinkers—its active ideologists, who make the creation of illusions about the class their chief livelihood and who possess the capacity for conceptual elaboration—while the others adopt a more passive and receptive attitude toward these ideas and illusions, for they are in fact the active members of the class and have less time to produce ideas and illusions about themselves. This division within the ruling class can even develop into a certain antagonism and hostility between the two sides. Yet this antagonism and hostility disappear of themselves in every practical clash that threatens the existence of the class itself, and with them also disappears the appearance that the ruling ideas are not the ideas of the ruling class and that these ideas possess an authority independent of the class's power" (Marx & Engels, 2013: 53).

This also anticipates Gramsci's later claim that every class must construct a hegemony extending beyond its immediate class interests: "every new class can establish its domination only on a broader basis than that of the previous ruling class" (Marx & Engels, 2013: 54).

Larrain objects to linking these passages directly to a theory of

ideology. He argues that reading them as references to a dominant ideology is a misunderstanding, since Marx and Engels are speaking about ideas in general, not ideology as such (1983: 24). Even so, Larrain acknowledges that subordinate classes, lacking control over the means of mental production, tend to reproduce ideas that reflect the interests of the ruling class. This suggests that his warning should be interpreted as follows: ruling ideas may not be ideologically distorted in an epistemological sense, but they possess ideological effects in terms of their social function. A further objection raised by Larrain is that thinkers such as Lenin, Lukács, and Gramsci had no access to *The German Ideology*, and this must be kept in mind (1983: 118).[6] Yet if we assume they had read the *Communist Manifesto*, it is difficult to believe they were unaffected by the claim that "the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class" (Marx & Engels, 1978: 489).

*Superstructure and ideological forms*

As noted in the section on historical materialism, the base–superstructure model—developed against idealist conceptions of society—constitutes, for Marx, the overall unity of a social formation. In this model, the economic base shapes the character of the superstructure, and Marx defines the superstructure as "legal and political" forms as well as "legal, political, religious, artistic, or philosophical… in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict" (2005: 39). In other words, the superstructure designates the various domains in which ideological class struggle is carried out. Eagleton (1996) and David McLellan (2012) regard the meaning of ideology here as neutral. According to McLellan, Marx does not use "ideology" as synonymous with the intellectual superstructure, since the superstructure contains both ideological and non-ideological elements (Eagleton, 1996: 121; McLellan, 2012: 19). This is correct, yet what matters most is the close connection posited between base and superstructure. How this connection should be interpreted has long been a contentious issue among Marxists: to what extent does the base determine the superstructure, and to what extent does the superstructure preserve the base?

Eagleton, this unity can be explained by the fact that the material base is internally fractured by its own conflicts and therefore requires legal, political, and ideological forms to regulate and stabilize it. As he puts it, "what lies concealed in the notion of the superstructure is the idea that certain institutions, alienated from material life, impose themselves upon

[6] These notes, which Marx and Engels did not publish during their lifetimes and which were later given the title *The German Ideology* by the Marx-Engels Institute through the work of David Riazanov, were not published until 1932.

that life as a dominating force" (Eagleton, 1996: 123). The superstructure is thus not an epiphenomenon; its institutions are necessary for the functioning of an economic order. The relationship between base and superstructure is best understood as a reciprocal process of preservation and conditioning. Subsequent Marxists took this relation seriously, and a broad consensus emerged that the superstructure possesses a degree of relative autonomy vis-à-vis the base. Arguments for this relative autonomy often draw upon Marx's analysis in the political work *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.*

According to Michel Barrett, the analyses in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* are significant because they demonstrate, through a concrete historical case, the superstructure's capacity to operate with a degree of autonomy from the economic base. The events in France between the 1851 coup and 1870 show a crucial function of state power. In the experience of Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, the state appears as a force that defends capitalist society while not being under the direct control of the capitalist class. Marx designates this configuration as Bonapartism. In his account, the contradictions of class struggle can prevent the capitalist class from exercising coherent hegemony, while the working class remains too weak to seize power. Under these conditions, the state can be taken over by an apparatus—typically the military or a political force external to the immediate class struggle—which then rules in the name of the "nation" or the "people" (2000: 23). As will be seen later, this explanation becomes a key reference for both Gramsci and the structuralists in emphasizing the political sphere's importance against economistic reductions.

*Commodity Fetishism*

With the term *commodity fetishism* in *Capital,* Marx argues that the relations people establish with the products of their own labor acquire a religious—*fetishistic*—character. In Marx's time, the term *fetish* was used to describe animist religions; Marx transposes this concept into political economy to show that the attributes ascribed to commodities, money, and ultimately capital under capitalism are not inherent properties of things.

In pre-capitalist societies, commodity production and commodity exchange were marginal phenomena. Most of the population consisted of peasants who did not sell the products of their labor but consumed them directly. Although peasants were required to deliver part of their harvest to feudal lords, the lords did not sell these products as commodities; they consumed them directly. By contrast, capitalism is defined by the fact that all products of labor become commodities—that is, they are bought and sold through the market. In a society where virtually all products take the form of commodities, a universally valid scale of exchange becomes necessary. In *Capital,* Marx seeks to explain why commodities possess a

specific value (exchange value). According to him, "so long as [the commodity] is a use-value, there is nothing mysterious about it" (2011: 81). The issue of determining the commodity's value, however, introduces an element of mystification. Here Marx targets the views of classical economists, who explain rising or falling commodity values through market events such as fluctuations in supply and demand. Marx argues that changes in a commodity's value do not stem from an intrinsic property within the commodity itself; commodities do not interact with one another in the market, for they are merely objects. Changes in prices reflect social relations, not relations among things. Classical economists, by treating commodities as if they interacted independently of those social relations, endow them with immaterial—even magical—qualities that they do not in fact possess:

> The reason why the commodity form becomes something enigmatic is simply that it reflects back to people the social character of their own labor as objective properties of the products themselves, as though these things possessed inherent social-natural qualities. Consequently, the social relation between producers and the totality of labor appears as a relation between things, a relation that exists independently of the producers. This is precisely what turns the products of labor into commodities—into objects that are sensuously perceptible yet endowed with an imperceptible social character (Marx, 2011: 82).

Marx argues that the difficulty arises from the fact that commodity production is carried out in isolation from society until the point of exchange. Producers enter into relations with one another only outside the production process, on the market; therefore "their social relations appear to them not as direct social relations between laboring individuals, but rather as material relations between persons and social relations between things" (Marx, 2011: 83). As a result, commodities are perceived not as products of a definite social process of production, but as if they existed independently on the market and interacted with one another in their own right.

Marx highlights a fundamental incompatibility between relations of exchange and relations of production. In exchange, different commodities (and the different kinds of human labor embodied in them) confront one another as mutually commensurable. This commensurability is made possible by converting all commodities into a common unit—the money-form. Yet the determination of commodity values (their exchange-values, i.e., their prices) occurs "within accidental and constantly fluctuating exchange relations." For Marx, however, the value of a commodity is determined by the "socially necessary labor-time" required for its production. Hence a structural tension emerges: price and value do

not coincide. This tension is not merely mysterious; it is coercive. Since capitalist production is carried out for the sake of exchange—turning products into exchange-value—the decisive factor for production becomes the price, itself shaped by contingent movements of supply and demand. Marx argues that when social relations are concealed within exchange relations and reduced to the price mechanism through the money-form, the movements of commodities appear to regulate the movements of persons. In effect, the actions of human beings become subordinated to the apparent motion of things (Marx, 2011: 84–85).

At first glance, commodity fetishism does not constitute an ideology theory in the sense of ideas being deliberately imposed. Yet because it shapes human consciousness and conduct, it yields ideological effects. Eagleton identifies three such effects. First, "the actual workings of society are thereby obscured," since commodities no longer appear as products of collective labor. Second, as the commodity-form expands—through the generalization of commodification—the social totality becomes fragmented, and "the capitalist order, no longer presenting itself as an integrated whole, becomes less vulnerable to political critique." Third, the domination of social life by relations between inanimate things confers upon that life "an air of naturalness and inevitability," making society appear as something other than a human creation capable of being transformed (Eagleton, 1996: 127).

*Engels and ideological forces*

Engels published *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (1992) in 1888, after Marx's death. The work can be regarded as a revised version of *The German Ideology*, which had previously never been completed or brought to publication (Engels, 1992: 7–9).

When compared with *The German Ideology*, the concept of ideology retains its core but the state is now described as an "ideological power." The reason is the state's alienation from the very foundations from which it arises, since it "sets itself up as independent of society the moment it is born" (Engels, 1992: 52). Because the state is the organisational instrument of the ruling class, conflicts between classes necessarily take on a political form.

One consequence is that the class struggle, which is fundamentally an economic relation, becomes obscured and appears purely as a political one. Engels argues that ideologues exploit this situation by concealing the relation between politics and economics within a juridical form. As a result, the economy is disregarded while law gains increasing autonomy. Yet there are ideologies whose distance from their economic foundations is even greater: philosophy and religion (1992: 52–53). It appears that Engels is linking here all the earlier notions of ideology—except fetishism—into a

single framework. Ideologies are alienated, idealised, and severed from their social roots; they also belong to the superstructure and are produced by ideologues as ruling ideas.

Engels also argues that, from the fifteenth century onward, philosophy itself became a product of the bourgeoisie. This claim encompasses not only the Young Hegelian philosophy criticized in *The German Ideology*, but the entirety of modern political philosophy, which he presents as a theoretical form of bourgeois ideology. Engels adopts a similar approach toward religion, asserting that in England Calvinism functioned as a cloak for the material interests of the bourgeoisie. Thus, in the relationship between religious ideologies and class relations, economic relations occupy the primary and determining position (1992: 53–57).

### Appendix: Neutralization of Ideology by the Second International and Lenin

The Second International, which first convened in Paris in 1889, held congresses and conferences until its dissolution in 1916, discussing what the Marxist approach to theoretical and contemporary problems was and should be. The main theorists of this period can be listed as follows: Vladimir Lenin, Georgi Plekhanov, Antonio Labriola, Ferdinand Lassalle, Eduard Bernstein, Karl Kautsky, and Rosa Luxemburg. Throughout the Second International, the fundamental topics of debate were how historical materialism ought to be understood and, in accordance with this, what kind of strategy should be pursued for revolution and for taking state power.

Many of these theorists diverged on numerous issues, and assuming that they reached any unified agreement on a particular idea of Marx would be an overly simplistic view. Therefore, David McLellan's remark that "with the simplification of Marx's ideas into a general doctrine of economic determinism, the equation ideology equals false consciousness came to the fore" (2012: 23) is open to debate. For example, Kołakowski characterizes this period as the golden age of Marxism (1978c: 1). Rehmann and Eagleton likewise argue, contrary to McLellan, that during this period the critical conceptualization of ideology was replaced by a neutral concept (Eagleton 1996: 134; Rehmann 2013: 61).

A critical conceptualization, which was rare in this period, was employed by Antonio Labriola. According to Rehmann, while Labriola defined Marxism as the negation of all ideologies, he also drew attention to the danger that Marxism itself could turn into an ideology (2013: 62).

In his book *What Is to Be Done?* (2008), first published in 1902, Vladimir Lenin approached the view that ideology is not a matter of truth or falsity but a political matter. Ideologies should be evaluated according to their usefulness in revolutionary struggle. Accordingly, for Lenin there exist

only two ideologies: bourgeois ideology and socialist ideology. This binary corresponds to the two main classes in society, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; therefore Lenin contends that no third ideology exists (Lenin 2008: 710). In this way, class struggle can also be conceived as the struggle between two ideologies. According to McLellan, this led ideology to acquire a new meaning, one freed from its negative connotations and filled with positive elements (2012: 23). However, Lenin maintained that the working class cannot develop this ideology on its own. For this reason, socialist ideology must be developed by party intellectuals and transmitted to the working class. As Kołakowski notes, the view of the vanguard party and revolutionary intellectuals found in Lenin is also shared by Karl Kautsky and Georgi Plekhanov (1978c: 42–43, 334).

According to Lenin, the reason the working class cannot independently develop a socialist ideology is quite straightforward. Bourgeois ideology emerged earlier and is therefore already highly developed and comprehensive (2008: 712). Since the ideology workers find already at hand is trade unionism—an ideology that is essentially bourgeois—it is entirely natural that trade unionism is adopted by the working class.

In his 1913 essay *Critical Remarks on the National Question,* Lenin supports this view by arguing that every nation contains both a democratic-socialist and a bourgeois culture. Yet the balance between them is unequal. National culture is dominated by bourgeois culture, produced by landowners, clergy, and the bourgeoisie. Democratic and social culture, by contrast, is still undeveloped (1964: 24). Therefore, for Lenin there is no national culture as such, but a bourgeois national culture. The term ideology also appears in the text, but it is used in a neutral sense to denote ideas reflecting class interests, while culture encompasses ideology as well.

### Ideology in Western Marxism

#### Class Consciousness and Reification in Lukacs

Georg Lukács is perhaps the most influential among the theorists who, after Marx, emphasized and further developed the concept of commodity fetishism. Lukács became a Marxist after the Russian Revolution, joining the Hungarian Communist Party in 1918. His earlier career, however, was not political; he had worked as a literary critic and dealt with cultural matters. Lukács's work focused on the Marxist method. For this reason, he sought to clarify the Hegelian methodology within Marxism and to construct a philosophical theory of Leninism.

Lukács opposed the deterministic conception of economic science—which he saw as ignoring human action, creativity, and conscious decisions in class struggle—and regarded it as a tendency that continued in the Second International and, to some extent, the Communist

International. To address what he considered a lack of a theory of class consciousness in Marxism, he turned to Hegel and to the newly emerging early works of Marx. In his view, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* had been subjected to a one-sided reading, leading historical development to be understood statically as the contradictions within the development of the productive forces. Yet for him, the example of the Russian Revolution refuted this.

In his 1920 article "Class Consciousness," Georg Lukács examines the problem of "class consciousness," an issue he believed Marx had left incomplete. He discusses what class consciousness means in relation to an objective class position determined within the relations of production, and the role of class consciousness within class struggle. As noted earlier, these questions had also been considered by Lenin, who argued that socialist class consciousness (ideology in a positive sense) would be developed by a socialist party and its intellectuals. In this article, however, Lukács raises another important question: Is class consciousness a sociological problem, or does the proletariat create an unprecedented and exceptional situation in history? (Lukács 1998: 111).

Regarding the concept of class consciousness, Lukács does not introduce any fundamental change to the Leninist understanding: similar to Lenin, he formulates two opposing types of class consciousness, "psychological class consciousness" and "real class consciousness" (Lukács 1998: 144–146). The transition between these forms of consciousness—namely, the path through which the proletariat can grasp the totality—is, for Lukács, possible only through the Marxist method. Indeed, he holds that the proletariat's grasp of the totality—its realization that it is both the subject and the object of history—constitutes the starting point of revolutionary practice. For this reason, a close connection must be established between Marxism and proletarian consciousness. Yet an important obstacle stands in the way: bourgeois ideology. For Lukács, one of the most fundamental distinctions between bourgeois thought and Marxism concerns the question of history. This view—described as bourgeois dogma—denies that history is a conscious human activity. In other words, the very effort to discover the laws of history is considered bourgeois because it denies this conscious activity. According to Lukács, bourgeois thought has committed itself to "defending the existing order of things" and "proving the immutability of this order" (1998: 113). By contrast, Marx's understanding of history, historical materialism, demonstrates that history and social relations are the conscious product of human beings.

For Lukács, bourgeois thought is a form of empiricism. What he means is a conception of history so atomized that it overlooks social

totality, and that, by analyzing what exists merely as it is, misses the dialectical transformation of history. This approach, which produces "false consciousness," makes it impossible to reveal the relation to the concrete whole (1998: 116–117). Opposed to this, he places what can be termed real consciousness. This form of consciousness corresponds to a condition in which the social totality can be grasped and in which action and awareness align with the objective position (class position) and interests situated within that totality. That is, consciousness, class consciousness, is an attitude appropriate or rational to the position one occupies (1998: 118).

How, then, is the connection to be established between the question of whether an objective position capable of grasping the totality of society is possible and the notion of class consciousness outlined above? Lukács seeks the answer in the possibility of moving from appearance to essence, to real relations. He describes this as an "objective possibility," and its realization cannot be achieved from the standpoint of any particular class position. The class position must be able to merge with the social totality (Lukács 1998: 119). Because of its "false consciousness," the bourgeoisie is incapable of attaining this objectivity. As Lukács argues, this consciousness stems not from any subjective or arbitrary reason but directly from the bourgeoisie's class position (Lukács 1998: 121). A similar state of "false consciousness" may also be observed in the petty bourgeoisie. However, this condition—described as a "lack of consciousness"—differs from that of the bourgeoisie. Since the petty bourgeoisie is not a "pure class" like the proletariat or the bourgeoisie, it constitutes a floating and constantly shifting group within class struggle. According to Lukács, because the petty bourgeoisie lacks an inherent historical mission, it possesses a consciousness composed of "purely 'ideological' forms," detached from reality whenever it does not act together with another class (for example, the bourgeoisie in the French Revolution) (1998: 127–129).

For Lukács, the bourgeoisie must "deceive the other classes" in order to maintain its domination, thereby preventing them from attaining a "clarified class consciousness" (1998: 137). At this point, his main difference from Lenin concerns the functioning of ideology. For Lenin, the strength of bourgeois ideology lies in its earlier emergence and greater development. For Lukács, however, the source of ideology lies not in the bourgeoisie's manipulation of working-class consciousness but in bourgeois society itself. In other words, the origin of ideological domination lies not in the inculcation of ideas into the working class but at a deeper structural level.

In the ideological class struggle as depicted by Lukács, it is asserted that, in contrast to the bourgeoisie's "false consciousness," the proletariat

possesses "the truth." This truth is historical materialism (1998: 139). This follows from the fact that historical materialism, as noted earlier, is able to grasp society as a totality—that is, it occupies a position free from the effects of "reification." Historical materialism views society from the proletariat's objective position. For Lukács, the way out of the logic of reification is through grasping society as a whole. This leads him to the proletariat, which itself constitutes a totality and is therefore capable of understanding reality as a totality and penetrating it:

> The superiority of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie—which surpasses it in intellectual, organizational, and other respects—derives solely from the fact that the proletariat looks at society from its center, sees society as an interconnected whole through its relations, and therefore knows how, or is predisposed, to act centrally and transform reality (Lukács 1998: 140).

However, there is a significant problem standing before the proletariat's objective possibility of attaining the "truth." Under capitalism, where the proletariat is reduced to labor-power—that is, transformed into a commodity—it is subjected to the effects of reification. In other words, by virtue of its mode of existence, the proletariat spontaneously acquires a reified consciousness. Reification is an effect on consciousness that makes it impossible to perceive the social totality. For this reason, the proletariat cannot see its central position in society and cannot transcend particularity to reach the universal (Lukács 1998: 149).

In his 1923 essay *Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat*, Lukács develops the concept of reification he had previously mentioned only briefly. According to Lukács, with the mechanization of the production process and its rationalization through new production techniques, every task (every act of labor) is broken down into machine-appropriate, calculable units. Thus labor becomes a mechanical, subjectless activity that is entirely independent of the worker's will and conforms to predetermined technical procedures (1998: 164–165). He argues that the proletariat occupies a privileged position capable of overcoming this condition because it is the only rational force in society and can therefore grasp the totality formed by the relations among institutions, people, and ideas. When the working class recognizes that it is a commodity, it will cease to be merely the object of history and will also become conscious of being its subject (Lukács 1998: 309–311). In this way, the transition from psychological class consciousness to real class consciousness will be achieved.

The theory of reification is explicitly developed on the basis of commodity fetishism, but Lukács gives it greater importance than Marx does. In his view, everything—including human consciousness—is reified;

every social relation is subject to reification. For this reason, the reality experienced in capitalist societies is essentially a relation between abstract things. Since commodity production and commodity exchange permeate every sphere of life, neither workers nor capitalists can escape reification. In other words, reification is not a problem arising from consciousness; it is grounded in the very reality with which we directly interact. Lukács differs from Marx here in claiming that reification exerts its influence over society as a whole. The obstacle preventing the working class from recognizing what capitalism is, the barrier standing in the way of grasping society as a totality, is precisely this reification. The effect of reification "makes us forget that society is a collective process, and it fragments and distorts it in such a way that we perceive it as isolated objects and institutions" (Eagleton 1996: 140).

For Lukács, the overcoming of reification, the proletariat's attainment of real class consciousness, and the socialist transformation all refer to the same moments. This is because the proletariat's task of creating a classless society runs parallel to its continual self-critique and its effort to repair within its own consciousness the destructive effects of the capitalist system. In other words, the struggle of the working class is directed not only against the capitalists but also against itself, in a struggle through which it must abolish itself (Lukács 1998: 154).

Eagleton and Rehmann note the influence of Max Weber's idea of rationalization on Lukács's development of the concept of reification. According to this view, capitalism shows a continual tendency to reshape all aspects of life according to its own rationality. Real class consciousness consists precisely in becoming aware of this rationality and adopting attitudes, thoughts, and actions that accord with it but serve the interests of the working class. The principal problem, however, is how the working class can free itself from reification, which affects society as a whole. At this point Lukács claims that the vanguard party—a Leninist concept—will carry real class consciousness to the working class (Eagleton 1996: 143; Rehmann 2013: 79).

Many criticisms have been directed at Lukács's theory. The common theme among them is the claim that the unifying effect of reification is overstated. Leszek Kołakowski, for example, argues that Lukács's notion of totality resembles a circular logic. In his view, Lukács's reasoning is deductive: he assumes that in order to understand the parts, we must first understand the whole. Yet it is not clear how we are to understand the whole from the outset (1978a: 299–300). Lukács is convinced that workers cannot free themselves from reification on their own, and this leads him to invoke the Leninist principle of the vanguard party as a deus ex machina. Thus "the subject of social transformation

becomes, in a sense, the Marxist intellectuals. A working-class consciousness will emerge only to the extent that Marxists teach the working class its social role" (Rehmann 2017: 91–92).

**Hegemony and Politics in Gramsci**

Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) was deeply influenced by the Soviet Revolution and by Lenin's ideas. Within the framework of Leninist party principles, he became one of the founders of the Italian Communist Party in 1921 and wrote on how the revolution carried out in Russia might be possible in Western Europe, taking Italy as a point of departure. The influence of his life as a militant party member is evident in his constant effort to connect practical circumstances with theoretical reflection. For this reason, Antonio Gramsci is regarded as a unique theorist within the neo-Marxist tradition. The British sociologist and intellectual historian Perry Anderson describes him as "the only man who, in his own person, realized the unity of revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice in a manner consistent with the meaning of the legacy left by the classical tradition" (2007: 80). Gramsci attempted to build a "united front" to reconstruct democracy in Fascist Italy between 1921 and 1926, but he was imprisoned in 1926 under new emergency laws. The writings he composed during the final eleven years of his life in prison were later compiled as the *Prison Notebooks*, a work recognized as one of the foundational texts of Western Marxism owing to its original perspectives, concepts, and strategies.

Gramsci's theories were developed within the political debates between the Second and Third (Communist) Internationals. For example, the concept of hegemony—perhaps his most famous term—had been used earlier by Lenin. The concepts of the "war of position" and the "war of maneuver" derive from the debates between Luxemburg and Kautsky over the question of the mass strike. Another major influence on Gramsci was Benedetto Croce. According to Croce, an important Hegelian figure in Italian thought, Marxism attributed too much weight to the scientificity of economic laws, thereby turning history into a rigid schema and neglecting historical specificity. Since, in his view, history can be understood only from a contemporary standpoint, no objective position from which to explain historical development is possible (Anderson 1977).

In the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci's criticisms focus on Nikolai Bukharin's *Theory of Historical Materialism: A Popular Manual of Marxist Sociology*, a book that had considerable influence among contemporary leftist intellectuals and that relied on economically determinist approaches. As seen in the introduction of the book, Bukharin attached great importance to the discovery of objective historical laws. He believed that these laws had been discovered by Karl Marx, and he stated that his own

goal was to reform sociology—viewed as a bourgeois science—according to the principles of historical materialism and thereby establish a "proletarian science" (Bukharin 1925). As intellectual historian Leszek Kołakowski notes, from Bukharin's perspective there was no methodological difference between the social and natural sciences in terms of the causal relations they established between their objects (Kołakowski 1978a: 57). Gramsci opposed this positivist understanding. In his view, the conflicts between social classes do not exist in practice as they do in theory; rather, they continually arise, dissolve, and re-form in a process of constant change (Gramsci 2007: 161–162). Against the version of Marxism that in Bukharin's hands turned into a kind of economism, Gramsci aimed to develop a historicist philosophy of praxis that assigned a degree of autonomy to politics, culture, and ideology and did not exclude human agency (2007: 48). For this reason, he held that it was necessary to struggle against "the view that presents and exhibits all fluctuations in the sphere of politics and ideology as expressions of the structure" (2007: 116). For example, Gramsci believed that the October Revolution developed in a way that overturned all these supposed laws, and he described the October Revolution as a "revolution against *Capital*" (Gramsci 2000: 32–36). In this text he explains that he rejects the notion that the productive forces must reach a sufficient level of development for a socialist revolution to occur. In other words, Gramsci shows that he does not regard revolution as an inevitable (fatalistic) historical outcome. Consequently, he argues that the interaction between base and superstructure in the Marxist sense is mediated, and that these mediations may have their own dynamics. This mediation, as will be discussed later, is Gramsci's concept of civil society.

According to him, another problem of economism is its inability to explain how Marxism could become an ideological force. For this reason, Gramsci distinguishes between organic ideology and rationalist ideology. Organic ideologies "have validity because they are historically necessary; this is a 'psychological' validity; these ideologies 'organize' masses of people and provide the terrain on which they will act, become conscious of their situation, struggle, etc." (Gramsci 2007: 82). Here Gramsci reiterates Marx's assessment—recalled from section 1.1.4.2—that the superstructure consists of the "ideological forms in which people become conscious of this conflict" (Marx 2005: 39). Thus, for Gramsci, we may conclude that the organic relationship to be established between base and superstructure must be taken seriously from the standpoint of Marxism (which he describes as a philosophy of praxis). Otherwise, so long as Marxism remains merely a rationalist ideology, there will be a distance between it and the masses. As we will also see in the discussion of hegemony, for Gramsci a group becomes a historical force not merely when it pursues its economic interests but when it enters the stage of defending and developing the

organization of a new order (when it forms a historical bloc). In explaining this, he criticizes—similar to Lenin—the trade unions' focus solely on economic gains (Gramsci 1992: 161–162).

In Gramsci's thought, the category of the organic is frequently used in a broader sense to describe a mutually reinforcing relationship between base and superstructure. Just as with ideologies, crises are also categorized as organic and non-organic. Noting that the crises of capitalism do not necessarily correspond to a social transformation, Gramsci emphasizes the importance of identifying organic crises. Even though societies regularly experience economic crises and face political or social turmoil, real struggle emerges only when an organic crisis occurs (Gramsci 2000: 427–428). For Gramsci, an organic crisis refers to a situation that challenges the continued rule of the capitalists, because it signifies their loss of legitimacy in the eyes of the masses. The loss of legitimacy arises from the ruling class's inability to secure the active consent of the popular masses. Such a situation may occur, for example, when the ruling class undertakes a major initiative such as war. When the masses do not consent to such a large-scale venture, their forced participation can transform their passivity into political activity. These moments correspond to organic, or in other words hegemonic, crises. For Gramsci, political activity—even if unorganized—contains within itself the potential for revolution (Gramsci 2007: 277–278). These crises are moments when the masses mobilize to address the failures of the ruling class, bringing about a genuine revolutionary offensive (or a constituent role) against the old order. For example, the crisis of authority in Russia arose because the Tsarist regime and the capitalist class continued to incite war despite social disintegration and continuous military defeats.

Gramsci attaches importance to the idea of mobilizing the masses because of his analyses of the development of the modern nation-state in Italy. In his view, the failure of the *Risorgimento*[7] stemmed from the fact that nationalist revolutionaries such as Giuseppe Garibaldi and the Action Party were unable to genuinely connect with and mobilize the broader layers of Italian peasants and the urban poor. This produced a sharp inequality between northern and southern Italy and resulted in a stunted ruling class, leading to the emergence of a weak state. By contrast, for Gramsci, the French Revolution organized by the Jacobins is a superior revolutionary model in terms of uniting peasants, the *sans-culottes*, and artisans (Gramsci

[7] This historical process, which may be translated into Turkish as "Rebirth," refers to the rise of Italian national consciousness in the nineteenth century for the purpose of freeing the Italian states from foreign domination and consequently achieving Italian national unification.

2000: 249–254). The comparison of the Italian case with the French and Russian revolutions provides a framework for considering whether revolutionary transformation moves from below or from above. For Gramsci, the French and Russian revolutions were successful "revolutions from below," but he also defines a non-mass "revolution from above" (2000: 428). Gramsci describes this phenomenon—signifying a major structural or social change implemented from above—as a passive revolution ("revolution without revolution"). Such an event arises at the intersection of the international and the national, given the unified yet uneven character of the world economy and nation-states. Here, new production techniques or political innovations (such as constitutions or parliamentarism) are imported from abroad by a dominant class and introduced into domestic use. A passive revolution is simultaneously a "revolution-restoration," marking the post-revolutionary phase when the working class revolts but fails to take power (2000: 427). Although a bloody counter-revolution is always possible, passive revolution allows the ruling class, by presenting itself as a progressive force, to secure the consent of broad masses and to rebuild society and the economy.

Gramsci's opposition to economism leads him to direct his attention more fully toward politics. Drawing on the Italian example, he argues that a political movement cannot be understood solely as the seizure of state power; communists, if they wish to succeed, must organize not only within the state but also within civil society. In other words, communists should not rely on the fatalistic belief that capitalism will collapse on its own nor leave room for the ruling classes to carry out a passive revolution; instead, they must build their hegemony by first taking cultural and intellectual leadership. The following section will examine Gramsci's conception of hegemony and its implications for his theory of politics and ideology.

*Hegemony and ideology*

Hegemony refers to the way in which a class or group influences other classes and groups so that they pursue its political and economic aims. In other words, the concept emerges as an answer to the question of how the dominant class in a system that exploits and alienates the masses maintains its rule. To address this, Gramsci analyzes the functioning of the superstructure. He begins by distinguishing between civil society and political society (the state). Civil society consists of private organizations, and hegemony is constructed within and through these organizations. The spontaneous consent of the masses to the directives imposed by the dominant group constitutes that group's hegemony. Political society, by contrast, operates not through such mediating organizations but through direct coercion. When groups do not give spontaneous consent, the

coercive legal power of political society (the state) is used to discipline them (Gramsci 1992: 12). Thus, people's acceptance of the existing order—though coercive forces of the state play an important role—is not secured solely through repression. Rather, acceptance of the order is achieved through an organic unity of coercion and consent (like a centaur, a mythical creature half-beast and half-human). In this dual mechanism, hegemony stands in contrast to authority. As Gramsci's equivalences indicate, the concept of hegemony is associated with consent, civilization, universality, and strategy, whereas authority or coercion is associated with force, particularity, and tactics (Gramsci 1992: 170).

As will be examined in more detail below, hegemony first refers to the dominance of one group within a class—for example, a group within the working class exerting hegemony over the class as a whole. The acquisition of hegemony, or the organization of consent within a class, is both an ethical-political issue and an economic-corporate process. A group seeking dominance pursues not only ideological struggle but also economic concessions to win the consent of other groups. This process—hegemony—thus also indicates a balance between concession and coercion (Gramsci 1992: 160–161). Consequently, it can be said that the struggle for leadership within a group and the national-popular struggle for leadership in the broader society require different balances between coercion and concession. For Gramsci, relations within a group should be based on "good faith," whereas domination and coercion may be directed against adversaries (Gramsci 1992: 168).

To illustrate the "power relations" involved in the formation of hegemony on a national scale, Gramsci outlines a three-stage scheme: analysis, organization, and military (political) action (2007: 270–277). The analytical stage is a preparatory phase in which the capacities and constraints within society are identified. At this point, the objective relations among social forces—still closely tied to the economic foundation and independent of human will—are examined. In this way, an attempt is made to determine whether the "necessary and sufficient conditions" for transforming society exist; in other words, to assess the realism and likelihood of realization of ideologies that arise from the contradictions of the social foundation. Put differently, the organic relationship between ideology and historical conditions is investigated. The importance of the analytical stage is supported by two propositions: "No social formation disappears before all the productive forces for which it provides adequate room have developed within it," and "a society cannot undertake tasks for which the necessary conditions of resolution have not yet emerged" (2007: 302). Here Gramsci reiterates Marx's formulation in the Preface: "A social formation never perishes before all the productive forces for which there is

room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society" (Marx 2005: 40).

The organizational stage has three levels: economic-corporate consciousness, class consciousness, and political class consciousness. At the first level, those within the same occupational group "feel that they should stand in solidarity" and form occupational groups (corporations). At the second level, members of similar occupational groups become aware of the "unity of interests" among them and demand political and legal equality from the ruling classes in order to participate in legislation and governance. According to Gramsci, the first two stages remain within the economic sphere, but in the third stage the class—now surpassing its own "corporate limits"—begins to recognize that it has "common interests with other groups" associated with it. The crossing of economic-corporate boundaries marks the transition to the superstructural level, a "political phase." This is also "the period in which the ideologies that had already germinated become 'parties'" (2007: 271–272). In this process, various groups begin to come together and organize around certain interests. One group within this constellation acts in such a way as to secure the cohesion of the whole and to obtain leadership within it. At this point, relations within the group can be said to depend more on concession and consent than on coercion. During the group's process of becoming a party, a stratum of organic intellectuals emerges to provide political, moral, and intellectual direction. Through this, the group will enter the struggle for hegemony at the national level. The struggle continues beyond economic and political objectives until intellectual and moral unity is established—until, in other words, the hegemony of one social group over other subordinate groups is secured. As Gramsci notes, these groups are not arbitrary human collectives but groups of people with shared economic interests—that is, a class objectively determined in Marx's sense. Yet Marx had not sufficiently explained how a class becomes a political force. In Gramsci, however, this group forms an increasingly elevated historical bloc—both economically-politically and culturally-morally—if we recall the base–superstructure metaphor (Gramsci 1992: 366). Put differently, the historical bloc refers to the tight unity formed between intellectuals and the masses.

Thus one moves to the military or political stage, where power relations produce more decisive outcomes. At this stage, there are three possible forms of struggle: the war of maneuver, the war of position, and underground warfare (Gramsci 2007: 293). Since, according to Gramsci, only the side possessing overwhelming superiority has the ability to choose the form of struggle, "the methods of the ruling classes should [not] be

blindly imitated" (2007: 296).[8] For this reason, instead of underground warfare conducted through paramilitary or guerrilla methods, or the war of maneuver involving a direct assault on state power, Gramsci argues that wars of position must first succeed. This is because in advanced societies "civil society has a very complex structure, and the superstructures in these societies resemble, in a sense, the trench systems of modern warfare" (2007: 299).

At this point it is useful to pause and examine how civil society is constructed in Gramsci's work and how this relates to the East–West distinction. A key question is whether the situation Gramsci envisioned was compatible with the Russian Revolution, or whether, starting from the Italian case, he believed that revolution in Western Europe required a different strategy. Perry Anderson explores this issue in his article "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci," where he analyzes the contradictions in the use of the concept of civil society in the *Prison Notebooks*. In the Russian Revolution, the working class became a hegemonic force by winning the support of soldiers and peasants. The leadership of the Russian working class over the nation was secured through its promise to address the needs and demands of the lower classes—"bread, peace, and land." In this sense, there is an undeniable similarity between Lenin's theory of hegemony and Gramsci's. Lenin outlines the main features of hegemony—*gegemonia*, a term in Russian that can be used synonymously with "vanguard"—in *What Is to Be Done?*. According to Lenin, the working class, acting as a vanguard, must form an alliance with peasants and other oppressed groups in revolutionary struggle against Tsarist autocracy, bringing them under its hegemony. Thus the revolution would be realized under the leadership of a revolutionary vanguard party. Compared with this historical situation, it may be said that Gramsci understood the concept of hegemony in a similar way. However, in the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci's use of the concept of civil society is not entirely consistent: at times he employs it as something opposed to the state, at other times as something separate from it, and at yet other points as something that shares a joint role with the state in the construction of hegemony. This ambiguity also appears in Gramsci's important distinction between East and West with respect to Marxist political action. He argues that because civil society in Russia was still weak, a direct revolutionary assault on state power (a war of maneuver) was possible. In the West, however, the growth and strength of capitalism had

[8] In the 5th edition of *Hapishane Defterleri* published by Belge Yayınları (2007), the rendering of this sentence as "edilmelidir" is a typographical error. For comparison, see Gramsci, A. (1992), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Hoare, Q., Smith, G. N., New York: International Publishers, p. 232.

resulted in the development of more complex bourgeois social institutions and traditions, making the struggle for socialism a slower and more intricate process—a war of position (Anderson 1977).

The *Prison Notebooks* were written in a context in which Gramsci found himself imprisoned as a result of the Italian Communist Party's failure to prevent Mussolini and the fascists from coming to power. For this reason, what Gramsci sought to understand and explain through the concept of hegemony may also have been why a revolution occurred in Russia but not in Italy. In his view, the situation in Tsarist Russia differed from that of Western Europe. The ruling class in Russia had not become a hegemonic force, and this made a war of maneuver against state power successful. In contrast, in Western Europe the bourgeoisie possessed positions through which it could secure the consent of the governed, thanks to developed civil society institutions and parliamentarism; in other words, power was not a monolithic structure that could be destroyed with a single blow (Gramsci 2007: 300–301).

However, once Gramsci's concept of the "ethical state" is taken into account, the distinction he seeks to draw between civil society and the state becomes considerably blurred. For Gramsci, every state is "ethical" in the sense that it aims to elevate the cultural and moral level of the populace in accordance with the needs of the productive forces. These arrangements, oriented toward the interests of the ruling classes, reflect the state's character as an "ethical" as well as a "class-state." Schools and courts assume the most important educational functions through which these activities are carried out. In addition to these state activities, Gramsci argues that ostensibly "private" organizations also act toward the same objective. All these apparatuses—whether state or private—constitute the instruments of the ruling classes' political and cultural hegemony (Gramsci 1992: 258). In this sense, Gramsci conceptualizes the state as the sum of political society and civil society. Coercion is understood as a shield surrounding hegemony (Gramsci 1992: 263). As noted at the beginning of this section, coercion is a disciplinary measure applied to those outside hegemony—that is, those who do not give consent.

As presented up to this point, the construction of social hegemony involves a combination of economic analysis to identify organic ideologies, the establishment of group cohesion through these ideologies, and subsequently the conduct of a national struggle within various positions. For Gramsci, it is not sufficient for a class to wage a political struggle aimed at seizing state power solely in accordance with its economic interests. Such a class must also forge both an economic unity and an intellectual and moral unity between its own interests and those of other groups. To achieve this, it must secure the consent of these groups in both senses of the term.

At this point, Gramsci emphasizes the importance of intellectuals in the construction of hegemony. In his view, because everyone possesses the capacity to understand the world at some level, everyone is in a sense an intellectual. Yet not everyone plays the social role of an intellectual. For this to occur, a division of labour must emerge within each class. Within this division of labour, organic intellectuals have two primary roles: first, to elevate the intellectual capacity of their own class; second, to win the hearts and minds of subordinate classes and groups, incorporating them into the hegemonic bloc. Only classes capable of sustaining such a division of labour can achieve both internal unity and intellectual and moral leadership within society. In short, Gramsci likens hegemony to an educational relation in which intellectuals "translate the dominant ideology into a language that the people find convincing" (Rehmann 2017: 13; Gramsci 1992: 350).

To understand this more clearly, it is necessary to look closely at Gramsci's concept of the intellectual. Gramsci argues that everyone can be an intellectual—that is, even if not all individuals are university professors, everyone can contribute to the production and circulation of ideas: "the starting point must be to demonstrate that all men are 'philosophers'. Only, in doing so, we must define the limits and characteristics of this spontaneity of philosophy that is common to all" (2007: 17). At this point Gramsci introduces a hierarchy among forms of thought. He first distinguishes between *common sense* and *good sense*.[9] Common sense consists of widely held beliefs that may be entirely mistaken. Good sense, by contrast, refers to insights acquired through experience and therefore closer to reality (Gramsci 1992: 323).

Alongside these criteria, Gramsci proposes another hierarchical differentiation: philosophy, religion, and folklore. Philosophy, by virtue of its scientific rationality, occupies the highest position relative to the other two. Religion refers not only to doctrinal systems but also to a broader moral sense. Finally, folklore (or popular wisdom), as simple culture and everyday values, is associated more with superstition than with good sense

[9] The difference between common sense and good sense is that the former is a consciousness containing fragmented and contradictory elements, while the latter is "practical, even if not rational or scientific" (the quotation belongs to the editors, 1992: 322). These two concepts appear in Italian as *senso comune* and *buon senso*. In Turkish, however, both concepts are used in everyday language as *sağduyu*. Yet, in order to emphasize Gramsci's distinction here, I consider it more appropriate to translate the first as *ortak duyu* and the second as *sağduyu*. Perhaps the terms *kamusal düşünüş* and *sağduyu* or *hissiselim* and *aklıselim* may also be suitable, but drawing a clear distinction between them and finding widespread usage is difficult.

(Gramsci 1992: 325–326).

According to Gramsci, the worldview of the masses operates at the level of *common sense*. In this respect it differs from coherent ideologies, philosophies, and other systematic bodies of knowledge. However, this also makes it fragmented and inconsistent, and—more importantly—inclined to coexist in conformity with the conditions in which it exists. For this reason, common sense is not self-critical. Owing to the contradictory content of consciousness, it can in fact be described as a form of "dual consciousness." Gramsci argues that this arises because individuals within the masses lack a theoretical consciousness that corresponds to the consciousness generated by their own practical activities. On one side, there develops a consciousness that brings them into cooperation with others engaged in similar practical actions; on the other side, there persists a "common sense inherited from the past." This second, contradictory consciousness places them in a state of "moral and political passivity" (2007: 31). It is at precisely this point that the intellectuals' task of organizing and shaping the masses begins.

The field in which intellectuals operate lies between common sense and the systematic philosophy appropriate to their class. For this reason they must be well-versed in both. In Gramsci's terms, the consciousness of the "average person" exists at the level of common sense. Compared with systematic philosophies, common sense contains within it elements of good sense, popular religion, and folklore—producing a contradictory, inconsistent, and fragmented consciousness inherited uncritically from the past. Owing to this contradictory structure, common sense places an individual "simultaneously within several mass human groups … the past, the present, and the future coexist within that person at the same time" (Rehmann 2017: 138). However, common sense is not directly shaped by systematic philosophies; rather, it becomes capable of producing *good sense*—a more refined, rationalized, and ethically grounded form of common sense—through the work of organic intellectuals. Otherwise, systematic philosophies cannot meet the masses and thus cannot become social forces. For this to happen, common sense must be subjected to critique so that the conformist elements influenced by historical and political conditions can be separated out.

Gramsci interprets the coexistence of such contradictory elements as the expression of a deep struggle tied to the influence of the ruling classes over subordinate classes. To illustrate this, he gives the example of the Catholic Church's relationship with Catholic believers. In Gramsci's view, there is a difference between popular religious belief and doctrinal religion. The Church strives—through its clergy—to eliminate this high/low distinction and maintain doctrinal unity among the educated faithful. In

this way, it aims to create unity between intellectuals and the masses, and between theory and practice (Gramsci 2007: 17–30, 139–141).

**Ideology as an Instrument in Miliband**

In the 1950s, debates within Marxist theory changed in a striking way. The post–Second World War economic boom[10] and the social-democratic consensus, combined with Cold War anti-communism, became powerful factors in severing the connection between Marxists and the working class. In addition, during the postwar prosperity period, those who believed that capitalism's contradictions and the social conflict between left and right had been overcome declared the end of ideologies.[11]

After the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, the implementation of de-Stalinization policies and the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution by Warsaw Pact forces led many members of official Communism to leave the movement. During this period, interest was also revived in the early, more humanist Marx—considered Hegelian in orientation—against dialectical materialism, the Stalinist interpretation of Marxism.

In his 1969 book *The State in Capitalist Society,* Miliband sought to develop the view of the state as an instrument of the bourgeoisie, taking aim at liberal-pluralist political theory. Pluralist theory, which argues that there is no class domination in liberal societies based on political and social equality, attributes this to the fact that economic and political elites have divergent interests and therefore cannot form a coherent ruling class (Miliband 1969: 24–25). In addition, managerialism[12] is said to have separated ownership from control—those who own a corporation and

[10] One of the theories put forward to explain the support of the working class for radical political movements is embourgeoisement. According to this explanation, workers become embourgeoisified because they "adopt middle-class values and lifestyles as a result of increasing welfare" (Abercrombie et al., 2006: 128).

[11] In his book *The End of Ideology,* Daniel Bell links the end of ideological struggles to the successes of democratic politics and capitalism in the West (Turner, 2006: 34).

[12] In his 1941 book *The Managerial Revolution,* James Burnham argues that professional managers (or executives) would form a new class and thus replace the old ruling class, the capitalists. According to this explanation, because this new class is relatively propertyless, its primary aim would not be profit maximization; as salaried employees, they were expected to act as a balancing force between capital and labor and to be socially responsible (Abercrombie et al., 2006: 229).

those who manage it (managers, CEOs)—allowing corporate management to function more smoothly and independently of direct pressure from owners. It was even claimed that since the selfish interests of owners no longer guided capitalist production, a period of "neutral technocracy" had begun. In short, the theory of the end of ideologies was being restated in different terms.

In response to these claims, Miliband argues that the real issue is not how capitalists behave as individuals but "the principles imposed by the capitalist mode of production." Regardless of who holds control, the capitalist logic remains the same (1969: 29–34).

According to Miliband, the claim that there is no class domination is in one sense correct and in another sense incorrect. Historically, it is incorrect: between the 1880s and the 1950s, 60% of members of the U.S. Congress and one-third of members of the British Parliament were businesspeople. Even though this proportion later decreased, it did not alter class domination, because capitalists continued to exercise political dominance through their political representatives rather than by directly holding office themselves. Therefore, "the idea that businesspeople do not directly interfere in government and administration is false" (1969: 55); and for Miliband the real issue is not whether a ruling class exists but "the extent to which the ruling class exercises power and influence over other classes" (1969: 48).

To show that class domination exists and operates within the state, Miliband focuses on the relationship between capitalism and the individuals occupying positions in the various institutions that make up what he calls the "state system." Pluralists claim that senior civil servants, high-ranking military officers, and judges are neutral, but Miliband argues that this is untrue. The primary task of individuals in these positions is not merely to maintain social order but to defend "a particular social order." In doing so, they do not openly declare that they are advancing their own partisan interests; rather, they frame their discourse in terms of the interests of the whole nation. Yet because they defend the existing order, they possess a conservative ideology. For this reason, they consciously or unconsciously act as allies of the economic and social elites (1969: 123, 129, 139).

According to Miliband, the main reason the state increasingly relies less on coercion is the success of the legitimization process. To explain how legitimization occurs, he draws a parallel between Marx, Gramsci, and Parsons through the concept of hegemony. The thesis that "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas," the theory of hegemony, and Talcott Parsons's claim that political socialization produces consensus all point to a similar function. Yet for Miliband, the

process of ideological inculcation within political socialization is concealed. In his view, the true aim of political socialization is "a process of mass indoctrination" that ensures "the acceptance of the capitalist social order and its values, and the rejection of alternatives" (1969: 179–182).

Institutions that carry out the function of legitimization are led by political parties, but Miliband does not believe that all parties defend conservatism. In his view, every country has at least one party that functions as an instrument of the capitalist class. Since the primary task of such parties is to legitimize the existing order, they are characterized as conservative parties. Capitalists need these parties for three reasons: (1) economic dominance does not automatically translate into political dominance; (2) there must be an intermediary that, on the one hand, propagates capitalism and, on the other, can respond to the demands of the lower classes; (3) despite social inequality, the formal equality produced by elections provides legitimacy to the system. To achieve the second function, conservative party politicians "especially in times of crisis, present themselves in a supra-partisan manner as the spokesmen of the nation and national interest" (Miliband 1969: 209). They do this by using "a non-political language" and rhetoric that refers to religious and national values. The inculcation of such conservative values produces loyalty to the state and generates integration and stability within society (1969: 184–218).

The other instruments of political socialization are the media and education. According to Miliband, media institutions in capitalist societies are not monopolized under the control of the ruling political power as they are in Communist regimes. For this reason, they do not function directly as government mouthpieces, and they also give space to oppositional views. Nonetheless, this space is quite limited, because despite the apparent pluralism of the media, no views positioned to the left of moderate social democracy are ever included. Miliband explains this primarily by noting that the media are owned either by the state or by capitalists (1969: 219–221).

For Miliband, education likewise functions to produce a compliant acceptance of the social order. To demonstrate how legitimation occurs through education, he draws on Talcott Parsons's article on the socialization function of schooling. In his 1959 article *"The School Class as a Social System"*, Parsons analyzes primary and secondary school classes as agents of socialization. From a functionalist perspective, school classes serve as instruments of socialization that prepare individuals for adult roles by giving them the motivational and technical competencies required. Socialization here has two aims: first, to instill commitment to the values of society as a whole; second, to enable individuals to acquire the occupational skills appropriate to their social and educational status within

the structure of society (Parsons 1970: 129–131). However, Miliband argues that the article ignores the ideological and legitimizing functions of schooling. In his view, education instills ideas that lead the working class to accept the conditions in which it lives. Thus, by overlooking the legitimating role of education, Parsons provides "a perfect example of ideological concealment" (Miliband 1969: 241).

Another role of education, according to Miliband, is the transmission of middle-class values—values alien to the working class. Teachers, whom he sees as belonging to the middle class, become agents in transmitting these values to students. These are not random middle-class values; rather, a specific worldview is being conveyed. As Émile Durkheim states in *Education and Sociology*, schools aim to transmit society's "fundamental principles," the "basic elements of reason, science, ideas, and sentiments" that constitute the foundation of democratic morality (quoted in Miliband 1969: 243). Thus education becomes one of the obstacles to recognizing class divisions and developing class consciousness. By transmitting values and knowledge aligned with the existing order, it produces legitimacy.

In contrast to these legitimizing superstructural institutions, Miliband also points to a logic operating at the level of the economic base. This logic—formulated by Karl Marx in *Capital* (Vol. I)—holds that capitalism's own mode of operation generates its legitimacy: "In the course of capitalist production, there arises a working class which, owing to its education, tradition, and habit, accepts the requirements of this mode of production as self-evident natural laws… the silent compulsion of economic relations completes the domination of the capitalist over the worker" (Marx 2011: 707). For Miliband, this means that capitalism is not only an economic system but also a social system that produces its own legitimacy. The working class itself generates the values, prejudices, and modes of thought that correspond to its lived conditions, thereby providing the underlying basis upon which all further processes of socialization operate (Miliband 1969: 262–264).

**Ideology as a Structure in Althusser**

French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser (1918–1990) was a public intellectual situated within the official communist movement, with one foot in academia and the other in the party. His approach—known as structuralist Marxism—places him in a distinctive position within Marxist thought. With the publication of *For Marx* and *Reading Capital* in 1965, Althusser and his students broke sharply with earlier approaches, particularly those associated with humanist and historicist Marxism.

Althusser established an independent *Capital* reading group in order to interpret Marxism outside the framework of the French

Communist Party. Étienne Balibar, one of the students who participated in these seminars, describes this project in his preface to *Reading Capital* as a critical rereading of Marx's texts. This rereading involved applying concepts drawn from Freudian psychoanalysis to Marx's writings, subjecting them to what Balibar calls a "symptomatic reading" (Balibar 1997). The attempt rested on Althusser's claim that Marx had undergone an epistemological transformation. According to Althusser, with the writing of *The German Ideology* in 1845, Marx experienced a radical *epistemological break* and definitively separated himself from Hegelian philosophy.[13] They characterize this break in epistemological terms because they believe Marx abandoned German idealism and philosophy and turned instead toward a new problematic: the development of a science of history. From this point on, Althusser asserts that Spinoza, rather than Hegel, should be considered the decisive precursor to Marx and his materialism (Althusser 1997: 4). As Jan Rehmann notes, this proposal is striking, since in Spinoza's worldview there is no place for human subjectivity; free will is an illusion that ought to be forgotten (Rehmann 2013: 161).

Althusser's reading sought to uncover hidden meanings in Marx's texts—meanings that Marx himself may not have been aware of. For this reason, he partially set aside the apparent meaning of the text and subjected Marx to a symptomatic reading in order to identify gaps, absences, and latent meanings within it (Anderson 2007: 95–96; Rehmann 2013: 197).

Through this approach, Althusser radically reconceptualized Marx's method. His aim was to criticize those who interpreted Marx as a "humanist" or an "economist," both of which he viewed as consequences of the errors of the Second International.[14] One of the core assumptions of Marxist humanism is that the human subject is the conscious agent who makes history. For Althusser, this Hegelian-influenced view represents an attempt at revisionism. More importantly, he argues that Marx broke from such humanism and from Hegelian philosophy in 1845. Therefore, humanism—which he considered a bourgeois ideology—had to be

[13] Althusser classifies Marx into four stages—youth, break, maturation, and maturity—and regards the early Marx as ideological due to his Hegelianism, while asserting that after the "epistemological break" he was engaged in a scientific endeavor (2005: 35).

[14] We may understand the humanism criticized by Althusser as the "socialist humanism" or "Marxist humanism" that was popular in the 1950s and 1960s and developed under the influence of the theme of alienation in Marx's early works and of Lukács's ideas. But, of course, there are other strands of socialist humanism, such as Praxis School from Yugoslavia. For further examination, see Yamak, 2023c.

excluded from Marxism. Althusser claims that the conception of historical materialism developed by the later Marx as a scientific theory is theoretically anti-humanist. In his view, Marx "was the first to treat history as a 'process without a subject'" (Althusser 1971: 94).

*Reproduction and the ideological apparatuses of the state*

Althusser rejects economistic readings of Marx and the deterministic interpretation of the base–superstructure metaphor. In his view, the social whole is not the expression of a single element (the economic base) or a single contradiction ("expressive totality"), but rather the product of complex, interwoven relations and determinations among relatively autonomous levels. He explains this through the concept of overdetermination (Althusser 2005, ch. 3). Even the dominant element within a social structure not only influences the others but is also influenced by them. Thus, by arguing that the fundamental contradiction between capital and labour is itself shaped by other contradictions in society, Althusser rejects economic determinism.

In "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," he argues that a social formation consists of three interconnected and relatively autonomous levels and practices: the economic (the unity of productive forces and relations of production), the ideological, and the political-legal (1971: 134). Although these levels have relative autonomy, they are closely intertwined and cannot be understood separately. There has never been a moment when the economy existed in a "pure" state, detached from political and ideological structures. Economic relations can persist only if supported by the appropriate political-legal and ideological arrangements. For example, under the capitalist mode of production, a legal system—including property law, contract law, and similar regulations—is required across every sphere from production to exchange. In short, for Althusser the economy, as a condition of existence, must possess superstructural elements to reproduce itself. As he puts it: "every social formation must, in order to survive, reproduce the conditions of its production; in doing so, it must reproduce the productive forces and the relations of production" (1971: 128). This reproduction occurs within the mechanisms of the state apparatuses.

Althusser then turns to the apparatuses through which reproduction is carried out, distinguishing in the same article between the repressive state apparatus (RSA) and the ideological state apparatuses (ISAs). As in Gramsci, the state is not limited to institutions of coercion; civil society institutions are also included within the ideological structure. Althusser lists the institutions within these RSA and ISA categories as follows: the repressive state apparatus consists of "the government, administration, army, police, courts, prisons, etc.," operating through

physical or non-physical coercion; the ideological state apparatuses include "the religious, educational, family, legal, political, trade-union, communications, and cultural" institutions (Althusser 1971: 142–143). According to Althusser, which apparatus becomes dominant depends on the needs of the mode of production—for example, in the ancient world politics was dominant, while in the Middle Ages religion fulfilled this role.

*Reproduction*

For Althusser, every economic system must secure certain conditions in order to reproduce itself. It must reproduce both the relations of production and the productive forces. The reproduction of the productive forces is not limited to the simple renewal of the physical means of production; it also includes the reproduction of labour power. This reproduction of labour power begins with preventing upward class mobility so that workers remain bound to the necessity of labour, and with establishing a wage system adequate for this purpose. Such a wage system is designed to ensure only the biological and material needs required for the physical reproduction of labour power. In addition, workers must acquire the knowledge and skills appropriate to their future occupations, which requires a form of mental production. Yet for Althusser the content of this instructional process is not merely technical knowledge; the rules of the existing social order are also transmitted. Labour power is thus reproduced both biologically and mentally, and at the same time its obedience to the existing system is reproduced (Althusser 1971: 130–132). Consequently, the most important of the ideological apparatuses is the school: "no other ideological apparatus" has "the privilege of addressing an audience which is captive for so many years and so many hours," and which is "the most vulnerable to ideology" (1971: 153–156). Through the educational process, children receive both the knowledge and skills required for their future occupations and the ideological formation appropriate to them. Some become disciplined workers; others take up positions within the repressive and ideological apparatuses and thereby supervise this process of reproduction.

The fundamental distinction between the repressive and ideological apparatuses is that the repressive apparatuses operate as a unified institutional body (the state) and function through violence or the threat of violence, whereas the ISAs operate in the private domain, in a dispersed and non-centralized manner, through ideology. Yet Althusser insists that these distinctions should be understood as general tendencies rather than strict separations. Certain apparatuses—such as the prison or the law—have both physical coercive power and symbolic force (1971: 144–149). Even when the repressive apparatuses do not apply violence, they still possess the potential for it and embody material practices that

confer ideological effects.

The unity of the repressive apparatuses follows from their institutional concentration within the state, but the diversity of the ideological apparatuses poses a problem. Because the ISAs belong to the private sphere, they lack centralized control, and different institutions may operate with different forms of ideological recognition and material practices. At the same time, the repressive and ideological apparatuses must function in a coordinated fashion so that the unity of the social formation is not disrupted. For Althusser, what secures this unity is "the ruling ideology, that is, the ideology of the ruling class" (1971: 149). The ruling ideology is the dominant form of recognition and practice across all these apparatuses.

*Ideology: general and historical*

Althusser's popularity was due in part to his attempt to reconceptualize the notion of ideology. His theory can be read as an effort to resolve the tension between Marx and Lenin. To do so, he distinguishes between ideology in general—which functions to secure social cohesion—and particular historical ideologies (Bottomore 2001: 251). His aim is to develop a materialist theory of ideology that avoids both idealist categories such as consciousness and economistic reductionism. In making the distinction between general ideology and historical ideologies, Althusser argues that the former is supra-historical (omni-historical): it operates independently of human action. Its structure and functioning render it outside history in the strict sense. Ideology exists in all historical stages and will continue to exist (1971: 159–161). He underscores this by drawing an analogy to the timeless functioning of the unconscious in psychoanalysis. Historical ideologies, by contrast, belong to specific social formations and represent particular class positions; therefore, they have a history. Their functioning is embedded in the ideological state apparatuses and, as in Gramsci's theory of hegemony, is not a matter of consciousness but of ideological practices determined by structures.

Althusser advances two theses about ideology in its general form. First, he rejects the conception of ideology as illusion found in the young Marx. As discussed in the "Camera Obscura" section, the young Marx treats illusion as a problem of consciousness, and communism represents the overcoming of this problem, the disappearance of ideology. Althusser rejects this model, arguing that Marx is not yet fully Marxist here because he still relies on categories such as consciousness. For Althusser, ideology is not an illusory distortion in consciousness but a structural necessity. Individuals necessarily apprehend their real conditions of existence through imaginary relations. Ideology is the site where these imaginary relations are lived.

Second, he rejects the idea of ideology as a set of ideas or a purely spiritual entity, arguing instead that ideology has a material existence. Ideology "always exists in the apparatuses and in the practices of those apparatuses" (1971: 162–170). In other words, subjects situated within an ideological structure (for Althusser, this includes all aspects of social life) must perform certain material practices and rituals, and there is no practice that is not ideological.

*Interpellation and Recognition*

To understand how ideology operates in Althusser, it is necessary to examine the process of interpellation, through which subjects are constituted. Since the function of ideology is "to constitute concrete individuals as subjects," the subject is "the fundamental constitutive category of ideology." The transformation of individuals into subjects is an ideological practice of recognition. In everyday life, individuals address one another in various ways—shaking hands, calling someone by name, and so on. These material practices show that individuals mutually "recognize each other as unique subjects." Yet for interpellation to succeed, the individual must respond correctly, that is, must recognize the call in the appropriate ideological framework; the call must be meaningful within the ideological apparatuses. This familiar, taken-for-granted process is not perceived as ideological because "individuals living in ideology believe, by definition, that they are outside ideology" (Althusser 1971: 171–175).

Althusser argues, in a way that renders the question of the subject's origins meaningless, that "individuals are always-already subjects" (1971: 176). The formation of individuals as subjects—shaped in accordance with the conditions of their existence—is something that must occur in any society; it is an indispensable component of social life. For example, as Althusser shows in For Marx, in capitalist society "the bourgeoisie lives its relation to its conditions of existence" through the ideology of freedom embodied in liberal law. According to this legal framework, all persons—including wage labourers—are "free." Yet this freedom obscures the relation of domination between capitalist and worker (Althusser 2005: 234–235).

Althusser concludes his essay by briefly stating that an ideology becomes dominant only through class struggle operating within structures and institutions. In other words, a dominant ideology "is neither spontaneous nor achieved merely by seizing state power" (Althusser 1971: 185). Yet he does not explain how this struggle unfolds within ideology itself. This omission led to frequent criticisms that his concept of ideology was static. In response, he later appended a note to the essay. There, he argues that the very attempt to impose a dominant ideology already presupposes resistance—that is, class struggle. The working class can free

itself from the dominant ideology only by "winning its own autonomy [and] developing the practices and forms of organization that constitute its own ideology, that is, proletarian ideology" (Althusser 2014: 230).

Although Althusser acknowledges that the ideological state apparatuses are sites of class struggle, he never fully develops this insight, as Eagleton observes (Eagleton 1996: 207). E. P. Thompson argues that Althusser's conception of the role of science and intellectuals is elitist: genuine knowledge is inaccessible to the ordinary worker, who can exist only in a continual state of ideological abstraction. In this framework, the struggle is between Marxist science and ideology, and only scientists can reach objective truth (Thompson 1995: 4). According to Thompson, this derives from Althusser's academic distance from working-class movements. Simon Clarke goes further, contending that the autonomy and authority Althusser grants to mental labour over material labour constitute a form of "bourgeois ideology" (Clarke 1980: 16).

**The Ideological Function of Capitalist State in Poulantzas**

Nicos Poulantzas (1936–1979), the most prominent figure of Althusserian Marxism, became known in the 1970s for the structuralist approaches he developed toward Marxist class and state theory. One of his principal aims was to examine what the growing new middle class in Europe meant for Marxist theory. This project must be read alongside the rise of Eurocommunism,[15] which argued that a revolutionary strategy based solely on the working class was no longer adequate, and that socialism would instead be reached through alliances among diverse social classes and strata, by more peaceful and democratic means.

In his work on the structure of social classes, Poulantzas criticizes the orthodox Marxist view. For him, defining social classes exclusively by people's given position within economic relations is too restrictive. As he puts it: "the economic position of social subjects plays a fundamental role in the determination of social classes. But we cannot conclude that this economic position is sufficient to determine them" (Poulantzas 1973). Thus, drawing on a structuralist logic inherited from Althusser, Poulantzas argues that "social classes are the result of structures [economic, political,

[15] Eurocommunism, which was first intended for implementation in the Italian Communist Party and later in the French and Spanish communist parties, emerged in response to developments such as the de-Stalinization process that began in 1956 and the violent suppression of the Hungarian uprising, as well as from the need for a socialist strategy suited to the structural changes created by the postwar economic boom within capitalism (Bottomore, 2001: 180). De-Stalinization gave rise to other debates, for example, the debates within the British Communist Party see: Yamak, 2023a.

ideological] and of their relations" (Poulantzas 1979: 63). Conceptualizing classes through inter-structural relations requires distinguishing between the objective position given by production relations and the subjective class position.

At this point, the debate between Poulantzas and Ralph Miliband on the state becomes significant. Building on Althusser's idea that a social formation consists of three levels, Poulantzas argues that the state exists at the political level and performs a function that stabilizes society. In contrast to Miliband, Poulantzas maintains that the state is not the outcome of direct oppressive relations between the capitalist class and the working class. Rather, the state is a structure that constitutes and shapes social relations. In other words, there is no such thing as a unified entity called "the state." Instead, it consists of "various apparatuses and institutions" that exercise both repressive and ideological functions (Poulantzas 1969). Because Poulantzas locates the state outside the economy and within a distinct political structure, it can acquire a national-popular character.

In *Political Power and Social Classes* (1978), Poulantzas begins his analysis of the operation of dominant ideology by criticising functionalism and historicism for presupposing an organic link between ideology and class subjects. Functionalist sociology explains social cohesion through a balance produced by the sharing of normative values. This balance, in turn, is said to be secured by a hegemonic class that reconstructs society in its own image through political institutions and cultural values. Poulantzas argues that this explanation rests on a mistaken premise because it equates dominant ideology with the consciousness of the hegemonic class (1978: 199–201).

He also rejects the historicism of Lukács and Gramsci on similar grounds. For Poulantzas, the relation between dominant ideology and dominant classes remains unresolved in Lukács, while Gramsci cannot adequately explain the relation between subordinate classes and dominant ideology. Gramsci posits that a class must first construct its hegemony—imposing its worldview upon the social formation—before it can become politically dominant. Poulantzas maintains that the working class cannot establish ideological hegemony without first taking power. Thus, both approaches face the same underlying problem: the assumption that a class imposes its worldview upon society (1978: 203–205).

Drawing on Althusser's conception of ideology, Poulantzas defines ideology as an imaginary relation through which individuals relate to their actual conditions of existence. In this process, subjects become carriers of structures and live within imaginary relations that permeate every level of the social formation, producing the experience of a coherent and unified reality even in the presence of real contradictions. Ideology

therefore functions by concealing social relations.

However, Poulantzas argues that the notion of ideology as a class worldview does not explain why subordinate classes accept the dominant ideology. The assumed organic link between ideology and class also fails to account for the persistent presence of dominant and petty-bourgeois ideological elements within working-class ideology, which manifest as syndicalist and reformist distortions. These distortions, he claims, can be overcome only by establishing a radical distinction between science and ideology and by employing Marxist scientific critique as an instrument of ideological critique (Poulantzas 1978: 204).

According to Poulantzas, the principal way in which dominant ideology conceals social contradictions is by reflecting the concrete political relation between the dominant and subordinate classes. Dominant ideology is therefore not identical to the consciousness of the dominant class; it contains elements that correspond to the conditions of existence of non-dominant classes as well. Yet although it is not reducible to the dominant class's consciousness, its representations, values, notions, and beliefs belong to the dominant class's ideological universe (1978: 207). In other words, ideology is relational in the same way that classes are relational: "Dominant ideology must be effectively related to the lived experience of the lower classes; and the way these lower classes live their lives is typically shaped and influenced by the ruling ideologies" (Eagleton, 1996: 148).

Poulantzas likens ideology to culture in the sense that it permeates every sphere and shapes experience. Unlike culture, however, ideology constructs a coherent discursive universe and provides an imaginary social unity. For dominant ideology to accomplish this, it must symbolically reorganise and reflect the social whole on an imaginary plane. Thus social contradictions are reconstructed within dominant ideology and transformed into imaginary relations that do not correspond to their real form.

Even so, dominant ideology does not do this without limit. It operates within the constraints set by the mode of production and the structure of the social formation.

# CRITIQUE OF THE THEORIES OF DOMINANT IDEOLOGY

Three British sociologists—Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill, and Bryan S. Turner (AHT)—first in their 1978 article *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* and then in their 1980 book of the same name, direct a set of criticisms at the dominant-ideology thesis within Marxist literature. In their view, the dominant-ideology thesis assumes that in class societies there exists a ruling class that controls both the material and mental means of production. Through this control, the ruling class can manage the construction of beliefs aligned with its own interests. The ruling class's beliefs are not only more coherent than those of subordinate classes but are also transmitted more powerfully and intensively through the apparatuses that convey ideology.

According to this thesis, dominant ideology penetrates and shapes working-class consciousness, causing workers to understand and experience reality through the conceptual categories of the ruling class. In effect, dominant ideology incorporates the working class into a system that in fact operates against its own interests. Social cohesion and integration in capitalist societies are therefore explained through this ideological incorporation.

AHT aim to show that political and economic control over the working class is far more significant than ideological integration. In their view, ideology is useful for explaining cohesion *within* the ruling class, but inadequate for explaining cohesion *across* society as a whole. For this reason, they argue that Marxists have overstated ideology's role in securing social order (Abercrombie et al., 2015: 1–3). Empirically, they claim, modern capitalist societies neither possess a shared culture encompassing all classes and groups nor require a dominant ideology for the maintenance of social order (2015: 41, 50).

Within this problematic, AHT seek to answer four questions when conducting a historical analysis of dominant ideology (2015: 2):

What is the content of the dominant ideology?

What is the effect of the dominant ideology on the ruling class?

What is the effect of the dominant ideology on subordinate classes?

What is the mechanism through which dominant ideology is transmitted in society?

As these questions indicate, the authors believe that neo-Marxists

concerned with ideology have not provided conceptual clarity. For this reason, AHT examine the effects of dominant ideology in Britain across three historical periods in light of these questions: feudalism (1200–1400), early capitalism (1780–1880), and late capitalism (from the Second World War to 1980). Although a dominant ideology existed that unified ruling groups in feudalism and early capitalism, the subordinate classes could not be ideologically incorporated because ideological communication apparatuses were insufficiently developed. In late capitalism, by contrast, conflicts of interest within the ruling class prevented the emergence of a coherent dominant ideology, while developing communication technologies enabled a limited degree of incorporation of subordinate classes (2015: 156–158).

AHT do not deny the possibility of ideological incorporation but maintain that ideology plays a secondary, partial, and marginal role in establishing social order. Even though ideological apparatuses in late capitalism are highly developed and theoretically capable of playing a significant role in incorporation, this potential is unrealized for several reasons. One is the inconsistency of the dominant ideology itself, rooted in the differentiation of the ruling class into strata with distinct economic interests. Another is the relative autonomy of working-class culture vis-à-vis dominant culture. For these reasons, the persistence of late capitalism should not be explained through ideological hegemony or notions of incorporation via a shared culture, but through alternative references (2015: 155).

Before examining AHT's arguments concerning the inefficacy of dominant ideology, it is useful to recall that they do not advance a version of an "end of ideology" thesis. For them, postwar claims that a welfare consensus existed or that civic culture secured a successful reconciliation between competing parties are debatable. In contrast, "class struggle retains its significance, and the pluralization of lifeworlds generated by it increases value conflict" (Turner, 2015: 246).

The authors describe their inquiry, with reference to Weber, as an empirical social-scientific effort aimed at understanding concrete reality (2015: 6). Yet it is difficult to regard them as purely Weberian. The first reason is that they frequently draw on Marx and Durkheim when constructing their theoretical framework. In their view, these three classical sociologists explain social order in capitalist societies without invoking values and norms—namely, without relying on dominant ideology or shared-culture theses. In other words, the coercive operational logic of capitalism itself suffices to explain social order.

The first and second chapters of *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* are devoted respectively to critiques of neo-Marxists and of Parsonsian

functionalism. The authors develop their criticism primarily through close engagement with the writings of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. Their main objective is to expose the theoretical weaknesses of approaches that either neglect or subordinate conflict between social classes and, in its place, posit a central ideological or cultural mechanism of incorporation. Although the 1980 edition does not explicitly state this, when considered alongside Bryan S. Turner's later work, it is clear that AHT's approach can also be understood as historical sociology. The core claim—shared by the collective AHT and by Turner individually—is that the differences between Marx and Weber have been exaggerated, especially by neo-Marxists and functionalists (Abercrombie et al., 2015: 2, 45, 174; Turner, 1990). In their view, neither Marx nor Weber believed that the reproduction of capitalism required a dominant ideology or, more generally, a shared set of religious values. While Weber did identify a connection between Protestantism and the early development of capitalism, this relation was contingent and historical, hence temporary. It is therefore misguided, they argue, to confine Marx to economic determinism and to portray Weber as a superstructural theorist standing as an indeterminist counterpoint to Marx.

The subsequent three chapters examine historical and contemporary sociological studies. Through these analyses the authors empirically test the "dominant ideology thesis." AHT thereby adopt a perspective that favours a "bottom-up" rather than a "top-down" understanding of socialization. This orientation reflects their defence of a robust social subject against structural determinism. In the structure–agency debate, they grant greater autonomy to agency and explain social processes in terms of the creative capacities of individuals. In this sense they argue for a dialectical relation between individual and structure (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 2006: 9). On this basis AHT maintain that everyday life is constituted and sustained through interpersonal relations. Yet this line of reasoning carries the risk of relativism. To address this, they reintroduce Marx's analysis of the coercive structure of capitalism and the relatively rigid link that Marxism posits between class interests and ideology.

### The Thesis of Dominant Ideology

### The Relationship Between Ideology and Class

In this section, the aim is to identify weaknesses in dominant ideology theses by examining both the arguments presented in Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner's *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* and Abercrombie's theoretical discussion in *Class, Structure and Knowledge*, a work in the sociology of knowledge.

In response to the Marxist use of the dominant-ideology argument

to explain social cohesion, AHT shift attention to how Marx himself explained this phenomenon. Excluding his early writings, Marx did not offer a theory of dominant ideology; rather, social cohesion is explained as "the subordination of workers through economic and political means" (2015: 1). Marx held that while pre-capitalist modes of production required extra-economic forms of coercion, in capitalism economic coercion alone provides an adequate explanation. Because the working class is separated from the means of production, its dependence on capital in order to survive constrains its capacity for effective resistance. For this reason, the authors argue, Marx did not believe that the working class needed to be ideologically incorporated into capitalism (2015: 56). It is only later Marxists who derive a dominant-ideology thesis from Marx's early works. This makes it necessary to revisit *The German Ideology* and *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, the early texts on which such theses rely.

From the passage in *The German Ideology* that begins with "the ideas of the ruling class are, in every epoch, the ruling ideas," three conclusions about dominant ideology can be drawn. First, the passage centers on what Marx and Engels call the "means of mental production," that is, the instruments through which ideology is transmitted. Because the ruling class controls these means, it is able to shape the intellectual life of society. Second, the ruling class produces the ruling ideas in its capacity as a class of thinkers. According to AHT, this corresponds to a "class-theoretical" model in which "one class does something to another." A third conclusion concerns the force of ruling ideas and depends on how the passage is interpreted. In the weak interpretation, "the ruling class dominates a society's intellectual life; an external observer cannot easily detect the culture of subordinate classes because the institutions capable of articulating that culture in public are absent." In the strong interpretation, "because the ruling class controls the means of mental production, a culture of subordinate classes cannot develop; all classes are incorporated into the same dominant intellectual universe." For Abercrombie and his co-authors, when this passage is read alongside Marx and Engels' other works, it clearly supports the weak interpretation. Marx and Engels held that ideological struggle was central, alongside economic and political struggle; they did not envision a society in which ideological incorporation was complete (2015: 7–8).

Yet—as examined in section 1.2—many Marxists turned to the question of "ideological control" to explain stability in capitalist societies and the absence of a radical working-class consciousness. They believed this could account for the political passivity of the working class and its tendency to align with the capitalist ruling class rather than a revolutionary

movement. This shift elevated the theoretical status of ideology relative to the economy. For these reasons, AHT argue that the passage has been consistently over-interpreted in a strong form, which has led to an exaggeration of dominant ideology's influence (2015: 9). In their view, if the ruling class truly controlled the mental means of production and if these means were as powerful as claimed, it would be extremely difficult to explain the emergence of dissenting and radical viewpoints (2015: 54).

In contrast, the proposition in the *Preface* to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*—"social being determines consciousness"—explains the emergence of distinct systems of ideas for each class by grounding them in the powerful element of class interest. For Abercrombie, this interest-centered approach provides a strong starting point for arguing that dominant ideas cannot fully incorporate subordinate classes (1980: 25–26). He rejects the claim that prioritizing interest is a form of reductionism and interprets the proposition "social being determines consciousness" to mean that "class position is more important than other social factors in the formation of ideas." Other factors may also shape ideas, but class is primary (Abercrombie, 1980: 13–14). This yields an explanatory framework that allows for the formation of ideas not reducible to class interest.

Abercrombie maintains that Marx does not claim the entire superstructure is strictly determined by the base. Marx instead presents the superstructure as a domain that includes all systems of ideas, even those distant from economic influence (for example, aesthetics). The superstructure is therefore not reducible to the base. Yet, in Abercrombie's view, Marxists tend to overlook this or, relying on a base–superstructure dialectic, place excessive emphasis on the superstructure's function of preserving the economic base. This tendency arises from reading the relations of production as if they were more fundamental than the productive forces, leading to an interpretation in which relations of production are simply equated with class relations. Marx, however, explicitly states that the relations of production arise from the interactions among the different elements within the productive forces (1980: 20–21). Consequently, neither sphere can be reduced to the other.

Even though the link between a social class and the system of ideas appropriate to it can be explained through the notion of interest, the issue itself is complex. Marx speaks, on the one hand, of subjective interest and, on the other, of real interest. For example, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx refers, on one side, to "the different systems of ideas and interests among the various fractions of the bourgeoisie," while on the other he argues that "the socially decisive conflict of ideas and interests is between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat." In the first case, there are subjective

interests, openly expressed through people's desires; in the second, there are real interests of which they are unaware or which they sometimes even reject. How to relate these two is a central problem.

According to Abercrombie, one possible answer is that "all interests are subjective interests," because ultimately "we can learn an individual's or a group's interests from what they themselves think about the matter" (1980: 15). Yet Abercrombie adds that focusing solely on subjective interests brings several difficulties. First, a person may "be mistaken about their own interests and fail to recognize the ineffectiveness of what they believe to be in their interest." Second, a person may lack sufficient information to be aware of their own interests. Third, a person may have difficulty articulating or clearly expressing their desires. These reasons can be used against the claim that interests can only be subjective.

For Abercrombie, a stronger argument is that "desires are given to people by the structural elements of society and are even manipulated." In this way, one can say that people are "forced to have false desires" (Abercrombie, 1980: 15–16). This is the core argument of the dominant ideology thesis. However, before turning to that issue, it is useful to note Abercrombie's remarks on how real interests are determined in Marxism.

Abercrombie argues that Marxism contains two doctrines for determining real interests: the "proletarian truth doctrine" and the "autonomous science doctrine." According to both, all ideas are shaped by class interests. Yet the first doctrine holds that not all classes possess particularistic class interests. At a certain stage of history, the interests of the working class will coincide with the interests of society as a whole. This signals a future classless society, in which class interest disappears. If we can identify genuinely proletarian ideas, we can expose truth against ideology. Abercrombie, however, identifies several problems in this solution.

First, it is unclear at what historical stage the proletariat will transcend its class interests. This has not occurred, and it is assumed that "the proletariat possesses a false consciousness due to the bourgeoisie's control over the means of mental production" (1980: 27). This implies that correct consciousness must be transmitted to the proletariat from outside. Second, the proletariat itself contains heterogeneous and mutually conflicting ideas. An external procedure would be needed to determine which of these counts as the correct one.

The second doctrine posits an autonomous field of science that develops "independently of class interests." This implies a clear demarcation between science and ideology: ideologies, shaped by class interests, distort reality, while science—presumed to be independent of interest—reflects it accurately. The difficulty here is determining by what criteria a science "independent of ideological knowledge" can be identified.

Moreover, "to claim that science is independent of social practices is not particularly sociological" (Abercrombie, 1980: 27–28).

**Commodity Fetishism and Reification**

According to Abercrombie, Marx in *Capital* appears to advance a strong contrast between science and ideology. In Marx's view, under capitalism there is no problem in how people *perceive* reality; the problem is that reality itself is deceptive. The appearance of social relations diverges from their underlying structure, which means that reality cannot be grasped directly. The distinction between appearance and essence, or between forms and reality, corresponds respectively to the sphere of exchange and the sphere of production. Exchange relations obscure the more fundamental relations of production. For instance, the legal relations between worker and capitalist are merely formal and conceal the underlying reality. Economists, Marx argues, fall into error because they analyse only these appearances. This is elaborated more fully in the section on commodity fetishism (1980: 76–79).

Commodity fetishism theory holds that capitalist society replaces social relations among people with exchange relations among the products of labour. When these exchange relations are perceived as the *real* relations, they generate an illusion of social totality: people take the social relations they themselves produce as natural and self-evident. For Lukács, commodity fetishism reifies human relations, because they appear as relations between things. Reified relations acquire a quasi-objective character. As a result, they gain an autonomous, rational semblance strong enough to conceal the relations among people (Lukács, 1998: 163–164).

At this point Lukács fuses the Weberian account of rationalization with the Marxian account of reification, arguing that the ultimate effect of reification is rationalization. The first consequence is the erosion of workers' individual qualities under rationalized production. The second is that, with rational specialization and an intensified social division of labour, bureaucracy and the state themselves become reified. Rationalization and specialization erode the organic unity of society (Abercrombie, 1980: 81–83).

According to Abercrombie, commodity fetishism as an ideology theory has several deficiencies. First, fetishism does not explain how specific ideological forms arise. It says little about the content of ideational systems; it merely asserts that consciousness is fetishized in capitalist societies. For instance, it does not help explain the differences between eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century individualism. Second, fetishism appears to operate only within exchange relations. The mechanisms by which its effects diffuse across the entire society remain unspecified. Although the theory implies that capitalism's fetishizing effects

encompass everyone, it does not clarify why, for example, "individuals not involved in commodity production share fetishistic ideas," nor does it specify who is actually affected (Abercrombie, 1980: 88). Thus, it does not allow for a distinction between fetishized and non-fetishized systems of thought. It captures the general character of consciousness under capitalism but says nothing about its content.

Abercrombie argues that Lukács recognized this problem and attempted to resolve it by combining commodity fetishism theory with the notion of class interest. In this formulation, capitalist society appears the same to both bourgeoisie and proletariat, yet the bourgeoisie is more deeply reified, while the proletariat is positioned to transcend reification. Reification theory is therefore compelled to merge with class-interest theory (the traditional approach) (1980: 89).

In *The Dominant Ideology Thesis*, the authors add a further critique: the theory rests on a mistaken assumption. Commodity fetishism theory presupposes "a society composed of independent producers engaged in commodity exchange," yet "it is unclear how [the theory] can be applied to contemporary capitalist society, where workers sell their labour power to an employer" (Abercrombie et al., 2015: 27). For all these reasons, "commodity fetishism is an inadequate version of the dominant-ideology thesis," because the theory "does not rest on coherent arguments and offers no evidence" (2015: 189).

**The Modals of the Dominant Ideology Thesis**

According to Abercrombie, in explaining the determination of a class's ideology, "the traditional approach gives priority to class, whereas contemporary Marxism[16] places the mode of production at the centre" (1980: 110). He labels these respectively the class-theoretic and the mode-theoretic approaches. In the first, ideologies are determined through the mechanism of class interest; in the second, ideology is located within the mode of production as one of the conditions of existence of the economy.

However, he argues that it is doubtful to what extent the mode-theoretic approach actually diverges from the class-theoretic one or expands explanatory power. At its core, the mode-theoretic approach "carries a teleological implication." It treats ideology as a condition of existence of the economy without explaining how such ideology emerges or how it is secured, presupposing its automatic formation. The mode-theoretic approach avoids this error only by allowing space for the subjectivity of social classes (Abercrombie, 1980: 111–113).

*Class-Theoretical*

[16] Abercrombie is referring here to structuralist Marxism.

According to the authors, Gramsci is one of the Marxists who contributed most substantially to the dominant-ideology thesis. His critical stance toward economism led him to assign greater importance to the effects of politics and ideology. Even so, they place him in a different category from the Marxists discussed in the first chapter. Although Gramsci held that the hegemony of the ruling class influences the consciousness of subordinate classes, he did not believe that workers could be fully incorporated ideologically. The primary reason is his view that workers possess a "dual consciousness," one side imposed by the ruling class and the other developing through workers' everyday practices (Abercrombie et al., 2015: 14). For this reason, the worldview of the subordinate classes stands in tension with the theoretical ideas of intellectuals. Nonetheless, the development of working-class consciousness requires self-awareness and political action. The ideological struggle waged through the intellectuals of the political party is therefore decisive.

Although Gramsci argued that the working class is steered toward ideological compliance, he maintained a balance between coercion and ideology. He did not commit "ideological reductionism," and for this reason Abercrombie and his co-authors consider it mistaken to interpret hegemony merely as "ideological control" (2015: 14–15). Yet Gramsci also held that when working-class consciousness combines with the dominant ideology, it produces "moral and political passivity." From this, one may infer that "the stability of capitalist societies depends on the effective functioning of a dominant ideology" (Abercrombie, 1980: 72–73).

In contrast to Gramsci, Miliband's interpretation of hegemony rests on a model in which a dominant ideology can incorporate workers without difficulty. His view of ideology parallels his instrumentalist theory of the state: ideology functions as a tool in the hands of the ruling class. In his account, the class that is economically dominant in capitalism is also dominant politically, and through its political power it inculcates an ideology that legitimates the capitalist social order (Miliband, 1969: 182–183). For Abercrombie and his co-authors, this position reflects Miliband's tendency to treat working-class consciousness as a "tabula rasa on which the dominant ideology can simply be inscribed." Moreover, the ideological institutions depicted in this legitimating process are so powerful that it becomes difficult to imagine how workers could generate their own ideas and mount opposition to the system (2015: 55).

Miliband also interprets Marx's remark in *Capital* about the "dull compulsion of economic relations"—the claim that the working class accepts capitalist production "as natural laws arising from habit, custom, and education"—as evidence of ideological incorporation (1969: 262). Abercrombie and his co-authors reject the argument that workers accept

capitalist relations as legitimate because of the education system or any other ideological apparatus (2015: 166).

*Mode-Theoretical*

According to Abercrombie, the class-theoretic approach explains people's social positions and corresponding forms of thought effectively through the concept of interest, but it remains inadequate for explaining how the thought-forms of *non-class* social groups arise. For this reason, we must consider not only economic requirements but also the interests of other non-class social groups (ethnic minorities, generations, women) situated within the social order. However, expanding the concept of interest in this way risks emptying it of meaning, which is why Abercrombie maintains that the compatibility between interests and the forms of thought they produce can only be determined empirically (1980: 172–173).

Structuralist Marxists, who criticise the class-theoretic approach, offer what Abercrombie considers a more developed theory of ideology in this respect. Yet they also posit an excessively rigid relationship between ideology and the economy. Although it is true that the economy requires extra-economic forms to function, it is unclear *why* particular ideologies are necessary for this purpose or why political structures alone are insufficient. Even if the claim that ideology functions as a condition of existence of the economy is weakened, structuralist Marxism still fails to explain how ideologies are produced and by whom. Abercrombie rejects the structuralist account because he sees a strong connection between ideology and class subjects. For this reason, he defends the class-theoretic approach, arguing that ideologies are produced by "classes, class alliances, or social groups" in ways "appropriate to their economic activities" (Abercrombie, 1980: 173–175).

Althusser, in contrast to Marx and Engels's definition of ideology in *The German Ideology*, argues that ideology (in general) is not a mere empty illusion but the lived experience of real relations in an imaginary form (Althusser, 1971: 159–160). However, as Abercrombie and the others note, proponents of Althusserian ideology theory still maintain that ideologies, even if not illusions, nevertheless have misleading effects. This raises a central question: How can ideology be both misleading and socially effective at the same time?

According to the authors, Althusser resolves this tension by conceptualizing ideology as imaginary relations that are embedded within material practices, necessary for the functioning of class societies, and yet capable of concealing the real nature of those societies. For example, bourgeois freedoms such as freedom of contract are required for the buying and selling of labour power on the market; at the same time, these formal freedoms conceal the fundamentally unequal structure on which capitalism

rests. Thus, although Althusser avoids the older view that ideology stems from false beliefs or errors in consciousness, he still argues that ideology can effectively incorporate subordinate classes by concealing or misrepresenting their real conditions (Abercrombie et al., 2015: 189).

According to *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (DIT), Althusserian ideology theory is the most typical example of the dominant-ideology thesis because it excludes class subjects and leaves no room for class struggle. Although *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* can be read as an attempt to correct this deficiency, DIT argues that the attempt is problematic. In that article, the bourgeoisie constructs a dominant ideology through the ideological apparatuses and, by implanting it into subordinate classes, secures the reproduction of production relations. Yet this move brings Althusser dangerously close to the very instrumentalist theory of dominant ideology from which he wished to distance himself (2015: 24–26).

In other words, much of Althusser's analysis resembles a class-theoretic rather than a mode-theoretic approach. Abercrombie argues that Althusser implicitly treats ideology as an instrument of the ruling class when he asserts that "no class can retain state power for long without exercising hegemony in the ideological state apparatuses." Here the emphasis falls not on ideology's representation of real social relations but on its distorting effects. Moreover, despite Althusser's efforts to avoid economism, his analysis of the ISAs remains economistic because it stresses the importance of ideology for the reproduction of the economy, specifically the relations of production (Abercrombie, 1980: 124).

The notion that ideology exists within all social practices is so expansive that it leaves no form of practice outside ideology. Abercrombie argues that ideology must be distinguishable from political coercion and from the "economic logic" imposed by the mode of production, yet Althusser's tight linkage between these spheres neglects such analytical distinctions. Moreover, this tight linkage lacks a strong justification. In fact, "the conceptualization of the relations of production and productive forces does not require that ideology function as a condition of existence." For a theory of ideology to make the necessary distinctions, "ideology must be treated as ideas rather than practices," and it must also account for the fact that ideologies are produced by subjects (Abercrombie et al., 2015: 189–190). According to *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (DIT), the underlying problem is that the relationship between economy and ideology is conceptualized at an abstract level rather than examined at the level of concrete social practices (2015: 171–173).

Although the class-theoretic and mode-theoretic approaches differ in their accounts of the source and operation of ideology, Miliband

and Poulantzas reach similar conclusions regarding its effects. For Miliband, "the ruling classes apply a massive process of indoctrination to maintain their economic and political supremacy, to secure the acceptance of the capitalist social order and its values, and to ensure the rejection of alternatives" (1969: 182). Poulantzas, similarly, holds that "within a social formation, ideology consists of a combination of representations, values, notions, and beliefs that sustain class domination; in other words, the ideology of the ruling class is the dominant ideology" (1978: 209). From this perspective, dominant-ideology theories rest on four assumptions (Abercrombie et al., 2015: 29):

1. There exists a dominant ideology, but its specific components are not clearly identified. Moreover, it is unclear by what scientific criteria an ideology becomes dominant.
2. Ruling classes benefit from the effects of the dominant ideology, even if not through their own conscious action. However, insufficient research has examined the effects of dominant ideology on ruling classes themselves.
3. The dominant ideology incorporates subordinate classes and politically pacifies them. Yet the extent and inclusiveness of this incorporation, with respect to social stability, is open to debate.
4. The mechanisms that disseminate ideology must be powerful enough to overcome the structural contradictions of capitalist society.

According to *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (DIT), Marxists attribute excessive power to dominant ideology because they rely on an "over-socialized conception of the person" (Abercrombie et al., 2006: 281). This tendency, the authors argue, can be traced to the influence of Parsonsian structural-functionalism on Marxist thought. Abercrombie and the others (2015: 54) claim that there is a strong analytical parallel between functionalism and the dominant-ideology thesis within Marxism. While Talcott Parsons stresses the necessity of a shared culture for social stability, Marxists—though critically—use the dominant-ideology thesis in a similar way. Just like dominant ideology, a shared culture assigns subjects to the social roles they are expected to fulfil. Thus both frameworks share comparable theoretical weaknesses. These weaknesses can be summarised as follows (Abercrombie et al., 2006: 285):

1. a theory ill-suited for empirical application;
2. an excessive emphasis on values and norms;
3. insufficient attention to social conflict;
4. a tendency to treat individual action as structurally determined

due to the failure to reconcile action theory with system theory;

5. functionalism's teleological character.

However, there are additional reasons why ideology theory gained prominence. The first is the inadequacy produced by the Second International's treatment of ideology as false consciousness opposed to "scientific socialism" (Eagleton, 1996: 132–133). Marxists dissatisfied with the economic reductionism of Second-International Marxism shifted toward superstructural themes—politics and ideology—even at the cost of setting economic analysis aside (Abercrombie et al., 2015: 31). Linked to this shift were the critique of positivism and the growing conviction that capitalism would not collapse under the weight of its own economic contradictions, developments that strengthened interest in the human factor, voluntarism, and humanism.

In his survey of Western Marxism, Anderson (2007) argues that after 1920 the focus moved from economic and political issues to the cultural superstructure. The key reason was the belief that the stability of capitalism, despite its contradictions, had to be explained by the superstructure. With the exception of Gramsci, most of these theorists of the superstructure came from petty-bourgeois backgrounds and pursued academic careers. Their distance from activism produced "an ever-widening separation between socialist theory and working-class practice" (2007: 141). Eagleton similarly notes that "Marxist intellectuals who make a profession of ideas" tend to "overstate their own importance," and that there is nothing crude or naïvely economistic in observing that "what politically demobilises people is less transcendental signifieds than the amount of money lodged in their pockets" (1996: 63).

**Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner's Analysis**

According to *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (DIT), the effects of a dominant ideology can be examined empirically, both through historical cases and through contemporary sociological studies. This section draws on the historical examples analysed by Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner in their book *The Dominant Ideology Thesis*.

In this part of their work, which focuses on the analysis of historical sources, DIT seeks answers to four questions and evaluates the validity of the dominant-ideology thesis on that basis. To restate, the authors first question the specific components of the system of ideas referred to as the dominant ideology. As noted earlier, DIT holds that the effects of a dominant ideology must be observable phenomena. Thus, by identifying these components and examining their impact on both the ruling and subordinate classes, one can assess whether a dominant ideology exists or whether it is effective. The final question the authors pose is this: even if a

dominant ideology does exist, what mechanisms transmit it, and are these mechanisms sufficiently effective? (2015: 2).

**Feudalism and Early Capitalism**

According to DIT, Marxists commonly characterise feudalism as a period in which Catholicism functioned as the dominant ideology. They reach this conclusion by linking three distinct contexts (Abercrombie et al., 2015: 62–63; Abercrombie & Turner, 1978). The first is a footnote in *Capital* in which Marx responds to a criticism. An American journalist had argued that the base–superstructure model grounded in material interests could not apply to the Middle Ages, since what determined that period was not capitalism but Catholicism. Marx replies that the "predominant role of Catholicism" in the Middle Ages can itself be explained by "the way in which those societies earned their livelihood" (Marx, 2011: 91).

The second context concerns Poulantzas's reading of this footnote. As he writes, in feudalism "the dominant field within the ideological formation is religious ideology," because "religious ideology best conceals the dominant role of ideology" (Poulantzas, 1978: 211). The third context is Abercrombie's addition of the "model of dominant ideas," that is, the ideology model found in *The German Ideology*. Combining these three, Abercrombie and Turner conclude that Marxists assume that under feudalism "peasants shared the religion of the feudal lords," and that through this mechanism "revolutionary interests were obstructed" (1978).

According to DIT, Catholicism was indeed a dominant ideology under feudalism, but it was *not* an ideology capable of encompassing everyone. A recurring mistake, they argue, is to generalise about medieval Europe by examining only the activities of "elite groups" or geographically localised groups (2015: 69). Entire eras are thus explained by the thought of a narrow stratum. Contrary to this, the effects of Catholicism are most visible among the ruling classes, who were the most exposed to the dominant ideology. These effects can be listed as follows:

1. Catholicism unified the ruling class around shared beliefs, thereby minimising conflict among the feudal elites. Given that the primary threat to the stability of feudalism—contrary to the claims of the *Communist Manifesto* (Marx & Engels, 1978: 473)—was conflict *within* the ruling class rather than between lord and serf, this is significant.[17]

[17] The accuracy of AHT's claim deserves scrutiny. For, when the *Communist Manifesto* is examined, Marx argues that there was a class struggle between lord and serf. However, Marx maintains that the class which brought about the end of feudalism was not the serfs, but rather the struggle jointly waged by the bourgeoisie

2. The Church's teachings on sexuality, monogamy, and familial obligation ensured the preservation of property within noble family structures. This facilitated the stable intergenerational transfer of landed wealth to the eldest son.

By contrast, the vast majority of the population—the peasantry—was not incorporated into the dominant Catholic culture. The "educational and cultural apparatuses" capable of transmitting ideology were weak. Furthermore, the thesis that "the ruling ideas of every epoch are the ideas of its ruling class" (Marx & Engels, 2013: 52) does not hold for feudalism. Not only were lords "religiously, linguistically, culturally, and morally quite distinct from peasants," but more importantly, "no effort was made to incorporate peasants into this ruling culture" (Abercrombie et al., 2015: 70–71).

When the transition from feudalism to the early capitalist period occurred, the rising but not yet dominant bourgeoisie possessed a radical philosophy that united it against the aristocracy. According to DIT, this philosophy consisted of "a mixture of Malthusian population theory, utilitarian legal and political philosophy, and the economic doctrines of classical political economy" (2015: 97–98). Through these ideological elements, the bourgeoisie both naturalised and scientised its economic and political activities. These ideas also justified the denial of aristocratic responsibility toward the poor, presented individual self-interest as moral and rational, and redefined the economy as a matter of private rather than public concern. The belief that economic laws operate independently of human agency likewise became embedded in the ideology of the ruling classes. Although these notions were originally directed against the aristocracy, they eventually functioned as an ideology that unified the new ruling class—the bourgeoisie—by minimising internal conflicts of interest (2015: 105).

In the nineteenth century, as capitalism became established, the bourgeoisie attempted to instil ideas that would pacify the working class and secure acceptance of the new economic and social order. Yet, according to the authors, this process involved the adoption not of a fully hegemonic culture but only of selected elements, such as Methodism.

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and the proletariat in 1789 (Larrain, 1983: 29). Indeed, when the subsequent passages of the *Communist Manifesto* are examined, Marx asserts that with the arrival of medieval serfs in the towns they gradually transformed into the bourgeoisie, and that the bourgeoisie was the most revolutionary class in history up to that point (Marx & Engels, 1978: 474). Therefore, although AHT's inference is correct insofar as it highlights the importance of struggles among feudal classes, it misinterprets Marx.

Moreover, the working class possessed an autonomous culture capable of resisting bourgeois hegemony and fostering a radical class consciousness (2015: 110–113). Referring to E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*, they cite the "radical, rationalist, and collectivist tradition" of the English working class as evidence of the persistence of an autonomous culture opposed to individualist bourgeois ideology. This collectivist tradition reached its high point in the first half of the nineteenth century with Owenism and Chartism.

DIT argues, however, that the unity and ideological development of the nineteenth-century working class should not be overstated. Otherwise one could too easily claim that these traditions disappeared completely in the second half of the century and were replaced by a dominant ideology (2015: 115). Instead, the authors emphasise that the working class did not undergo such an extreme cultural transformation; rather, it maintained its cultural and ideological autonomy. As in feudalism, this outcome is attributed to the underdevelopment of ideological transmission mechanisms such as mass education and mass communication.

**The Dominant Ideology in Late Capitalism**

According to DIT, significant differences emerged between late capitalism, which developed after the Second World War, and early capitalism. Whereas in earlier periods a dominant ideology could be clearly identified, in late capitalism it becomes inconsistent and filled with contradictions. The authors attribute this mainly to a transformation in the composition of the ruling class. They explain this transformation through two developments: the decline of the family as an economic actor, and the separation between the ownership and the management of capital—what they term *managerialism*.

DIT argues that the growth of monopoly capitalism, financial capitalism, and the expanding role of the state in the economy displaced the family-owned firms that once concentrated capital and transmitted it across generations. These were replaced by a small number of large joint-stock corporations. The ownership of these corporations rests not with families but with financial institutions, larger corporations, and the state itself. In other words, capitalism no longer depends on the family as an institution for the accumulation and intergenerational transmission of capital; corporate legal entities now fulfil this function. This shift reduces the ideological importance attributed to the family within dominant ideology and reshapes the composition of the ruling class (2015: 128–129).

According to DIT, what it calls *managerial capitalism* is marked by the rise of large bureaucratic corporations run by salaried managers who sit on corporate boards. This situation differs sharply from early capitalism, in

which corporate control rested directly with owners. In other words, the key decision-makers of the new economy are no longer capitalists in the traditional sense but salaried, relatively propertyless managers. Miliband argues that this shift does not alter capitalism's profit-driven logic or its control over the labour process (1969: 34). DIT, however, contends that the division of the ruling class into two groups—with different and potentially conflicting interests—produces an inconsistent dominant ideology containing contradictory elements.

"Many sociologists who use concepts such as bourgeois ideology or ideological hegemony take for granted that a coherent and clearly identifiable ideology actually exists" (2015: 129–130). DIT argues that this assumption is not self-evident, because "direct studies of the values, ideas, and social consciousness of ruling groups" are extremely limited (2015: 130). Consequently, what is taken to constitute the content of the dominant ideology is usually inferred indirectly rather than established through the direct examination of ruling-class belief systems.

The institutions Miliband analyses in *The State in Capitalist Society*—conservative political parties, business organisations, ideological biases embedded in governmental and legal structures, and the partiality of the media—are indirect routes for learning about ruling-class ideology. From the standpoint of the neo-Marxists discussed in Section 1.2, directly interviewing ruling-class actors to discover their ideological commitments would be an implausible expectation. DIT nonetheless insists that determining the content of the dominant ideology requires precisely this kind of direct investigation.

*Elements within the content of the dominant ideology*

As discussed in earlier sections, proponents of the dominant-ideology thesis hold that the government, political parties, and other state apparatuses function as institutions of bourgeois ideology. From this perspective, one might expect the dominant ideology to contain elements that legitimate property rights. Abercrombie and the others, however, criticise this view as a traditional conception of capitalist ideology that fails to take into account recent developments in the capitalist economy and in the composition of the ruling class. They argue that although the right to acquire property is not in dispute, the rights to bequeath property and to use property without restriction were subjected to various limitations by British governments between 1945 and 1980 (2015: 131–133). From this, they conclude that property rights no longer occupy the central ideological position they once did. When considered together with DIT's claim that the late-capitalist ruling class increasingly contains propertyless elements, the weakening of property ideology appears consistent.

Accordingly, the ruling class can be understood as being

concerned less with property rights and more with the reproduction of capital and capital accumulation. Despite the shifts in the significance of property rights, ensuring the continuity of capital accumulation remains indispensable for capitalism (Althusser, 1971: 87; Miliband, 1969: 33). The extraction of surplus value from workers provides the basis for capital accumulation and the reproduction of capitalism itself. Thus, the capitalist economy requires ideas that legitimate capital accumulation. The organisations of the ruling class and governments focus their efforts not on property rights but on securing the conditions for the reproduction of capital.

However, Abercrombie and the others argue that this requirement takes a form different from early capitalism's laissez-faire orientation. The state is now expected to undertake investments that employers once had to make themselves, through macroeconomic planning and welfare policies. "The necessary and intrinsic role of the capitalist state in the reproduction of capitalism has become deeply embedded in the political philosophies of governments and political parties" (2015: 134).

Another key element of the dominant ideology is the *managerial ideology* that legitimates income inequality. According to this view, income differences are justified by the principles of supply and demand in the labour market and by the functional importance of different occupations. Managers—who are relatively propertyless—claim that their individual success derives not from ownership or inheritance but from talent and effort. In this way, privilege, prestige, and high income appear as outcomes of meritocratic justice. This ideology conceals the fact that such achievements often depend on the inherited advantages individuals possess and that markets are not neutral but systematically favour those already in positions of power (2015: 135).

DIT argues that the ideology of state neutrality and the state's welfare function occupies an important place in all pluralistic liberal-democratic societies (2015: 136–137). Liberal democracy, despite economic inequalities, promises equal citizenship rights for all and seeks to prevent the economically dominant class from establishing *political* domination on top of its economic power. Consequently, liberal democracies cultivate the belief that the state is neutral: it merely balances the interests of competing groups and uses public resources to mitigate the harmful consequences of economic inequality through welfare policies. The state is portrayed as an organisation controlled by no group or class and as one that does not favour capital at the expense of others. In other words, the central role of the capitalist state in capital accumulation and reproduction, as well as its systematic defence of the interests of capital owners, is denied.

Abercrombie and the others also question the thesis that culture performs strong ideological functions. It is often argued that bourgeois culture permeates all areas of life and thereby prevents workers from developing an autonomous worldview, integrating them into capitalist society. They counter that culture, unlike other elements of ideology, is difficult to investigate empirically and relies heavily on "vague generalisations" (2015: 137–138). Even so, they acknowledge that bourgeois culture—defined by empiricism, individualism, and traditionalism—discourages forms of critical thought capable of probing the real nature of class society and encourages deference to authority and hierarchy. It is therefore unsurprising that the bourgeoisie would promote such ideas.

Up to this point, DIT identifies the following components of dominant ideology in late capitalism: elements legitimising property rights, capital accumulation, income inequality, and state neutrality. Yet DIT argues that these elements contradict one another. The requirement that the capitalist state promote capital accumulation conflicts with the principle of state neutrality in liberal democracy; similarly, welfare policies and the determination of wages through market principles are in tension. This indicates that the dominant ideology in late capitalism is fragmented and inconsistent rather than coherent and unified as in early capitalism. As a result, it cannot integrate the ruling class internally, nor can it unify society as a whole.

The ruling class itself consists of fractions with divergent material interests: managers of large corporations and financial institutions, owners-managers of small firms, and rentiers and landowners whose wealth derives from property. These fractions can be expected to respond to different ideological elements. For example, after the Second World War, managers of large corporations supported compromise-based welfare policies because these policies promoted social stability and spread the cost of highly skilled labour across society. Other interest groups opposed state intervention in social and economic affairs. Owing to these internal conflicts, the ruling class cannot be said to possess a coherent dominant ideology (2015: 138–140).

Although DIT rejects the idea that these ideological elements form a coherent dominant ideology, it leaves nationalism aside in the book itself—despite Miliband and Althusser having assigned it major functions (Althusser, 1971: 154; Miliband, 1969: 206). DIT discusses the matter later, in the 1983 article "Determination and Indeterminacy in the Theory of Ideology." For DIT, nationalism cannot form a full dominant ideology, nor can it effectively unify the ruling class. In late capitalism—transnational in character—ruling-class fractions represent different national or

international economic interests, and this produces contradictory effects (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 1994: 162). In the absence of a coherent ideology, successful ideological incorporation remains highly improbable.

### The Dominant Ideology and Lower Classes in Late Capitalism

Evaluating Marxist analyses of working-class consciousness, AHT identifies two underlying assumptions. The first is an expectation of a radical form of class consciousness. In other words, the working class is expected to "grasp the structure of a class society," to maintain "collective solidarity against the ruling class" together with their fellow class members, and to "clearly articulate the envisaged alternative social order." When these elements are not found, it is claimed that class consciousness is insufficiently developed or even aligned with the dominant ideology. The second assumption is that the rejection of the dominant ideology and the existing social order must take on a political character. Yet, according to the authors, it is unreasonable to expect from the working class a coherent, integrated, and clearly expressed worldview—something that is rare even among the ruling class. Such coherence can be found only among certain intellectual groups (2015: 140–141). Moreover, the dominant ideology may be rejected not entirely but partially, and an alternative vision may also be partial. However, assuming that workers' consciousness is aligned with the dominant ideology merely because it is inconsistent or not based on radical values "makes it difficult to understand the degree to which ideology has been rejected." At the same time, "the alternative visions embedded in the oppositional consciousness that workers develop under limited conditions should not be overlooked" (2015: 141). Ultimately, expressing and conveying abstract ideas clearly is not easy. Alongside these difficulties, AHT cautions that identifying the failure and rejection of the dominant ideology requires looking in the right place. According to the authors, ideology is most clearly rejected not in politics but in the economy, because labor relations are where conflict is most explicit and where ideology fails in its articulatory function.

Drawing on these critiques, AHT argues that the normative principles carried by the dominant ideology have limited capacity to shape working-class consciousness. For them, the essential problem is determining the extent to which the dominant ideology is rejected and what practical consequences this rejection produces. To this end—and taking inspiration from Gramsci—they propose that the working class simultaneously adopts and rejects the dominant ideology, exhibiting a dual consciousness. According to this inconsistent and contradictory dual-consciousness assumption, workers align with dominant elements when it comes to abstract principles, yet accept deviant values in concrete

situations directly concerning their everyday lives. This unclear worldview leaves workers caught between vague and populist slogans that divide society into rich and poor, and conservative political values that lead them to accept the status quo (2015: 142).

At this stage, AHT brings into discussion two empirical studies on class consciousness and the influence of ideology. Michael Mann and Frank Parkin, in their respective studies conducted in the United States and the United Kingdom, arrive at the following findings. In his 1967 work *Class Inequality and Political Order,* Parkin argues that the "dominant value system" is produced by those who hold power and privilege in society and that it becomes embodied at the institutional level. Opposed to this, he places the "deviant value system." The dominant value system, which legitimizes inequality, penetrates the consciousness of the lower classes through institutions and provides them with a moral framework that enables them to accept the existing situation. However, the lower classes do not adopt these values as they are; rather, they incorporate their own class values into them. Thus emerges a modified value system that is compatible with the overall system. Although this new value system bears skeptical features toward authority and toward groups perceived as "others," it nevertheless has an effect that reconciles them with the unequal situation in which they find themselves (Parkin, as cited in Abercrombie et al., 2015: 142–143).

In his 1970 study, Mann argues that the reason for the compliant behavior of the lower classes in liberal democracies is that they perceive reality as it is. This leads the lower classes to accept the social order in a pragmatic manner. The ideological distortion created by the dominant ideology is already aligned with the existing economic order. This also indicates that they lack an autonomous value system that would show they have internalized the dominant ideology. According to Mann, since what is expected from the lower classes is not the internalization of ideology but obedience to the requirements of the order, accepting the social order on a pragmatic rather than a normative basis is sufficient (Mann, 1970).

In response to these two studies, AHT accepts the influence of ideology in certain areas but defends a view that grants greater autonomy to working-class culture, does not expect to find a fully coherent and clearly articulated value system, and does not neglect the power of pragmatism (2015: 143–144).

With this perspective, AHT begins to examine what the elements of the dominant ideology—identified in the previous section as property, capital accumulation, the neutral liberal state, bourgeois culture, and nationalism—mean for the lower classes.

According to a 1974 study conducted in Britain by H. F.

Moorhouse and C. W. Chamberlain, the lower classes' approach to property differs from that of the ruling class in several respects. For example, tenants oppose landlords using their houses as they wish, and they also oppose individuals owning more than one home (1974). AHT interprets this as an indication that the lower classes oppose the right to acquire property. In addition, a large portion of the lower classes appears to support the occupation of empty houses and factories (2015: 144). When compared to the ruling class's property ideology, this suggests that the lower classes do not share the dominant ideology.

Similarly, it cannot be said that the lower classes fully internalize the ideology of capital accumulation. Especially when it comes to wage increases, workers do not appear to be influenced by the ideology that legitimizes capital accumulation. Income differences between professions and the inequalities arising from them, however, are less opposed than the principle of capital accumulation itself. It has been observed that the lower classes largely agree that education, training, and skill should determine economic rewards and status. Yet they are also aware that the system does not function as it is supposed to. For this reason, it can be said that the lower classes both endorse the ideology and are capable of penetrating the reality at the same time (2015: 144–147).

In contrast, there is no consensus among the lower classes regarding liberal democracy. In studies published in 1968 on affluent workers, half of the interviewed workers believed that companies had too much power and that different laws applied to the rich and the poor (Goldthorpe, Lockmann et al., as cited in Abercrombie et al., 2015: 147). They also felt inadequate in influencing government policies. Yet the other half of the workers supported the dominant perspective. Abercrombie and others argue that the reason may lie in the fact that rejecting the ideology of liberal democracy does not have direct practical consequences (2015: 147–148).

The authors do not consider working-class culture to be entirely under the influence of bourgeois culture. Workers do not acquire bourgeois values directly; rather, these values reach them only after being filtered through family, social circles, trade unions, and labor parties. In their view, working-class culture continues to carry oppositional and collectivist elements, even if it does not easily translate into political action (2015: 149).

In late capitalism, the expansion of mass education and the development of mass communication have increased the effectiveness of ideological apparatuses to an unprecedented degree, making it possible for dominant values to spread universally. However, Abercrombie and others argue that there is a significant gap between the potential of these

apparatuses and their actual impact. The most widespread among them are the media and education. Because the media are owned by large corporations and wealthy individuals, it is assumed that content can be shaped directly by them and thus reflect the values of dominant groups. Even those who deny direct manipulation claim that media content is shaped by the market and caters to individuals with high purchasing power, thereby reflecting and reproducing middle-class values. Although this situation does not determine people's ideas directly, it has the capacity to draw the boundaries of what can be thought. In contrast, Abercrombie and others argue that media influence is quite limited. According to them, the media can exert influence only in exceptional situations that people cannot experience directly or acquire from their cultural traditions—for example, the denigration of Soviet-type socialism (2015: 151–152).

Education is considered effective in embedding the dominant ideology because it plays a major role in children's socialization. Educational institutions possess an official curriculum composed of academic knowledge and a hidden curriculum composed of values, attitudes, and principles. In this hidden curriculum, social inequalities are taught as natural, and students are shaped to be compliant and obedient to authority both in school and in society (Abercrombie et al., 2006: 182). Even within the official curriculum, "the deviant populist tradition of the lower classes is disregarded" (Mann, 1970). Yet Abercrombie and others argue that this ideological articulation process does not fully succeed. According to them (2015: 151–152), the values schools seek to inculcate are effective only when there is congruence between those values and the values acquired outside school—for example, in the family or the surrounding environment.

Abercrombie and others argue that while individual achievement, self-realization, and creative activity are presented as successes in schools, occupations based on manual labor are not addressed (2015: 148–151). In addition, obedience to hierarchy and authority is encouraged. Yet various studies demonstrate that children refuse to submit to authority, defend collective and solidaristic values against individualism, glorify manual labor while denigrating mental labor, and are aware that their labor will hold only the status of a commodity in working life. In this way, the ideology that schools attempt to instill is reversed, and its effect paradoxically leads children to adapt to working life. Recognizing early that they will neither be able to choose their future occupations freely nor find self-realization or job satisfaction in them, children pragmatically accept the coercive and commodifying nature of working life. This indicates that they are aware of alienation while practically accepting it. The failure of education in ideological articulation can be observed in students' resistance to authority

while still in school, and it cannot be said that these students become fully disciplined workers in later working life (Abercrombie et al., 2006: 182).

Addressing the claim that nationalism is a dominant ideology, AHT argues that the findings contain contradictions. First, in the example of the Falklands Crisis, the articulatory effect of nationalism was not long-lasting. According to them, such "short-term social dramas" do not alter the underlying causes—namely "hopelessness, indifference, and a sense of defeat"—which can be explained in pragmatic terms. Second, nationalism can at times become an element used by left-wing politics to "restrict the circulation of capital." Because of this contingency of ideology, they argue that it is difficult to draw general determinative conclusions (Abercrombie et al., 1994: 162–163).

Ultimately, Marxists, assuming an excessively socialized view of society, adopt an erroneous approach to the influence of dominant ideology and to the ideas and cultures of the lower classes. The conflictual nature of interclass relations is most clearly visible in the economy. Moreover, no homogeneous ideology can be found within the working class. This indicates the failure of ideological articulation. Although this conflict does not take forms capable of overthrowing the existing social order, the persistence of that order cannot be explained by ideological articulation or by a consensus around dominant values.

**Pragmatic Acceptance**

Abercrombie and others, arguing that the dominant ideology has very limited effect in securing social cohesion, maintain that "it is mistaken to expect to find social cohesion in the first place." Societies do not operate harmoniously; rather, they are "divided by conflicts manifested in various forms, from peasant revolts to workers' strikes" (2015: 159). Given this, they regard coercive apparatuses and economic compulsion as the main mechanisms that uphold stability in societies.

In the previous section, the authors had noted the ineffectiveness of ideological apparatuses under feudalism. In contrast, they argue that "peasants' obedience in feudalism is explained not by the 'political/ideological instance' but by force, the threat of force, and the oppressive conditions of daily life": "landowners were able to control peasants thanks to their economic control over land and mills, as well as their superior military power that supported this control" (2015: 72). In addition, everyday oppressive conditions—such as hunger, harsh labor, and disease—contributed to the peasants' powerlessness and their subjection.

In early capitalism, the authors emphasize the resistance of the ruling classes and the operation of state coercive apparatuses in the face of

the struggles waged by the working class in the first half of the nineteenth century. "Routine imprisonment, deportation, and the execution of activists" led to "the depletion of the movement's strength and the demoralization of workers" (2015: 122). Toward the end of the first half of the nineteenth century, "police forces were established for the first time in history, the army was used to maintain internal order, and the expanding railway network increased the army's effectiveness in suppressing uprisings." The state's instruments of violence "became increasingly used and their effects grew over time" (2015: 122–123).

In late capitalism, while the situation differs somewhat, "legal coercion continues to operate to the benefit of corporate management; for example, the requirement that managers give orders and workers obey them" remains unchanged. The state, in Weber's terms, is the holder of the legitimate monopoly of violence; "even if such coercion is not frequently exercised in practice, the mere possibility of physical force is sufficient to maintain order" (2015: 155). The difference in late capitalism is that "in workers' everyday lived experience, police and legal coercion manifest themselves less visibly" (2015: 159). For this reason, in late capitalism, the coercive functioning of the economy is regarded as the primary factor securing social order.

In class societies, what is expected from subordinate classes is not the endorsement or internalization of dominant ideological values, but the satisfactory performance of the tasks assigned to them (Abercrombie et al., 2015: 142). Immanuel Wallerstein, in *The Modern World-System*, examines a similar claim through the problem of governmental legitimacy. According to him, the relationship between the masses and the rulers has never been a matter of legitimacy. The key relationship in which legitimacy must be secured is that between rulers and the cadres within the state apparatus. If the consent of these cadres is obtained, the regime can be considered legitimate. Thus, for Wallerstein, "throughout history, very few governments have been considered legitimate by the majority of the exploited and oppressed; rather, governments are not things to be loved or even supported, but things to be endured" (Wallerstein, 2011: 174–175). For this reason, AHT turns to a different explanation of workers' acceptance of the capitalist mode of production.

They introduce Michael Mann's distinction between pragmatic acceptance and normative acceptance. According to Mann, pragmatic acceptance is "the individual's acquiescence when no realistic alternative is visible," whereas normative acceptance is "the individual's internalization of the ruling class's moral expectations and the perception of their own subordinate position as legitimate." Mann argues that "pragmatic acceptance is compatible with Marxism, but the popularity of normative

acceptance has caused deficiencies within Marxism" (1970). Based on this distinction, AHT interprets normative acceptance as an effect of the dominant ideology. Pragmatic acceptance, on the other hand, does not entail adherence to any belief or false consciousness and therefore provides a more accurate account of capitalism's coercive functioning and the political passivity it generates.

According to the authors, the central concern of pre-Parsons classical sociology was to explain how capitalism forces individuals to behave in certain ways despite their own choices and desires. In this sense, the pragmatic acceptance thesis is more compelling. From this perspective, the similarities among Marx, Weber, and Durkheim outweigh their differences. Yet "the central importance Weber and Durkheim attributed to economic structures and coercion in explaining industrial society has been pushed to the background through their 'Parsonization'," and a similar situation applies to neo-Marxists as well (2015: 31).

*Economic coercion of social relations*

Compared with neo-Marxists, Marx places greater emphasis on the coercive character of the capitalist economy. The formulation in Capital of the "silent coercion of economic relations" can be understood as a form of pragmatic acceptance:

"For the transformation of money into capital, therefore, the owner of money must meet in the market with the free labourer, free in the double sense that as a free man he can dispose of his labour-power as his own commodity, and that on the other hand he has no other commodity for sale, is short of everything necessary for the realisation of his labour-power. ... Mere possession on one side and mere non-possession on the other are not enough. The labourers must *voluntarily* sell themselves. ... In the course of capitalist production itself, there develops a working class which by education, tradition and habit looks upon the requirements of that mode of production as self-evident natural laws. The organisation of the capitalist process of production, once it is fully developed, breaks down all resistance; the constant generation of a relative surplus population keeps the law of supply and demand of labour, and therefore wages, within the limits that suit capital's valorisation needs; and the silent compulsion of economic relations sets the seal on the domination of the capitalist over the worker. Extra-economic, direct force is still of course used, but only exceptionally. In the ordinary run of things, the worker can be left to the 'natural laws of production', i.e. to the dependence on capital that arises from the conditions of production created, guaranteed and perpetuated by the capitalist mode of production. The situation is different during the historical genesis of capitalist production. The rising bourgeoisie needs and uses state force to regulate wages, i.e. to keep them within the limits

required by its need to make profit, to lengthen the working day, and to maintain the worker himself at an adequate degree of dependence. This is a fundamental element of 'primitive accumulation'." (Marx, 2011: 707).

It can be argued that the silent coercion of economic relations operates on two levels. According to the first, the capitalist's control over the worker concerns the worker's lack of access to the means of production and the wage relation, which forces the worker to enter capitalist production relations, however unwillingly (2015: 57). In this sense, the worker is dependent on the capitalist for subsistence; therefore, subordination to capitalist authority occurs automatically.

Marx defines the capitalist mode of production by the private ownership of the means of production, the extraction of surplus value by the capitalist for the purpose of capital accumulation, wage labour, and market-based mechanisms. In other words, capitalism is the sale of labour-power for wages by a free worker who is deprived of the means of production. Since the worker has no control over the means of production, the labour process, or the distribution of resources, the worker is subjected to economic coercion. The worker, who must work in order to live, enters a wage relationship with the capitalist. This renders the worker dependent on the capitalist.

For economic coercion to function in this way, the presence of the "free" worker and the free market is necessary. By contrast, under feudalism, peasants who controlled the labour process were considered to be at least partially independent of the lord's authority. This assigned a significant role to military and legal coercion. In capitalism, although both forms of coercion continue to operate together, Abercrombie and others argue that economic coercion has become increasingly dominant. Yet the question of why and how economic coercion is accepted still poses a problem. According to them, explanations claiming that capitalist relations are accepted by the working class as fair are incorrect.

*Mutual dependence*

The second effect of the silent coercion of economic relations (2015: 160–166) concerns the general social division of labour within the economy. This division of labour produces a mutual dependence between capitalist and worker for the realization of production, and more broadly, a mutual interdependence among all members of society. Durkheim explains the role of mutual dependence in establishing social order as follows. In simple societies, relations between individuals rest on personal ties and traditions. However, with increasing population, population density, and specialization, relations between individuals acquire a more complex form. In such advanced societies, the mechanism that holds social relations together is the mutual dependence individuals feel toward one another.

Durkheim views this change as a progression from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity. Yet in the latter case, elements such as religion that once constituted a collective consciousness steadily lose their influence, and social integration weakens. Durkheim defines this condition, in which society fails to provide moral guidance to individuals, as anomie. According to him, the unhappiness of people forced to work in occupations they do not desire and the resulting anomie are the sources of social conflict.

For Durkheim, organic solidarity does not produce social integration. Nevertheless, Abercrombie and others believe that the situation Durkheim describes contributes to the maintenance of social order. They develop this view by drawing on Lockwood's distinction between social integration and system integration. "Social integration refers to the regular or conflictual relations that individuals establish with one another in society. System integration refers to the relations among the components of the social system, that is, the degree to which social institutions function harmoniously." Based on this distinction, Abercrombie and others argue that "although social institutions such as the economy, politics, the family, and education are functionally well integrated under capitalism, social integration remains weak due to the class struggle between capitalists and workers" (2006: 351).

One further effect of the division of labour in capitalism is the growing control over the labour process. Along the historical trajectory from outwork systems to Taylorism, the development of managerial techniques has placed labour power under increasingly tight domination. As the division of labour became more complex, and as management techniques were refined accordingly, workers were reduced to machines performing predefined tasks. Another consequence of this expanding division of labour is that capitalists can no longer manage the entire production process on their own. For this reason, the management of firms has been transferred from capitalists themselves to professionals who carry out this function (2015: 160–161).

What is overlooked in the debate on dominant ideology is not simply the extent of political or economic coercion. The durability and strength of capitalism and class society do not require normative explanations or ideological indoctrination. When unemployment is taken into account, the argument of dominant ideology becomes unnecessary for explaining workers' dependence on capitalists. Unemployment in itself has a disciplining effect. Moreover, responding realistically to the power of the existing social order and living in accordance with it cannot be explained in terms of loyalty, nor does it prevent workers from turning to more attractive and realistic alternative systems. For example, reformist and trade-union activity does not amount to endorsement of capitalism. On the contrary,

for those who cannot wage a total struggle against capitalism but nevertheless seek to escape poverty, trade unionism has been effective in raising real wages and improving living conditions (2015: 122).

While capitalism exploits workers, it has also raised living standards with the increase in material capacities. In such a situation, whether overthrowing capitalism aligns with the rational interests of the working class becomes an issue to consider, especially given the uncertainties associated with the benefits socialism might bring. When capitalist countries such as Britain and Australia are compared with Russia and Poland, it can be argued that high living standards, rather than ideological articulation, play the larger role in maintaining order (Turner, 2015: 246–247). Most economic systems offer rewards to subordinate classes in order to pacify them. These rewards motivate workers not only to survive but also to secure the rewards themselves. Consequently, workers direct their efforts toward increasing these rewards. Yet "reward motivation cannot be considered ideological manipulation [...] after all, these are not illusions" but concrete gains. Furthermore, "the greater the rewards provided by an economic system, the more costly it becomes to change it. Conversely, a decline in rewards brings existing social conflicts to the surface" (Abercrombie et al., 2015: 168).

*Everyday life*

Abercrombie and others' view that pragmatic acceptance is more influential indicates, in light of the ongoing agency–structure debate in sociology, that they adopt a strong conception of agency. Indeed, for them, the exaggeration of normative acceptance is equivalent to "relying on the stupidity of the masses" (Turner, 2015: 248–249). Their strong agency perspective allows them to draw on ethnomethodological studies when criticizing the determinacy of ideological structure. This is justified both for practical reasons—there is no other type of data available concerning social groups—and because they regard ideology as residing not in practices but in attitudes and beliefs (Hill, 2015: 6–7).

According to them, when sociologists attempt to explain the cause of something, they invoke the concept of social structure. Yet since social structures are abstractions that cannot be directly observed, this perspective introduces significant difficulties. Such concepts are unverifiable, and because they presuppose the determinacy of structures, they deny human creativity and freedom. For this reason, Abercrombie and others argue that instead of analyzing large-scale structures in sociology, small-scale analyses—such as ethnomethodology, which centres on everyday practices, relations, and culture—are more valid. Through this approach, they aim to show how social order is constructed at the level of everyday social interaction (Abercrombie et al., 2006: 361).

The authors borrow the concept of everyday life from Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. In *The Social Construction of Reality*, the authors seek to show that social reality is constructed through the institutionalization of reciprocal interactions among individuals over time. AHT accepts this explanation in order to demonstrate that social order is maintained not through a dominant ideology but through the constraints generated by everyday life. For, according to Berger and Luckmann, individuals "accept everyday life as a reality sui generis" (1991: 37). As recalled from the Gramsci section, Berger and Luckmann also think that everyday life possesses a kind of commonsense knowledge. Through this commonsense knowledge, the routines of everyday life appear to be naturally unproblematic. Even when these routines are disrupted for some reason, commonsense knowledge tends to treat such disruptions as exceptions within everyday life, perceiving them as external to routine. In other words, everyday life resists change, and behaviors that disrupt routine are perceived as threatening. In *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt*, Barrington Moore Jr. similarly draws attention to the coercive character of everyday life. Even in the midst of a social revolution, the necessities of everyday life—such as finding food or shopping—reassert themselves in cities where individuals depend on others to meet their needs (Moore Jr., 1978: 480). Moore attributes the main reason for this to the distinction between the revolutionary crowd and the revolutionary party, emphasizing the relative discipline of parties and the looseness of crowds. Therefore, revolutionary moments must accomplish the transformations required for a new order within a short time. Consequently, AHT argues that everyday life, due to its constraining structure, poses a significant problem for revolutionaries in societies with a developed division of labour. Completely transforming everyday life is highly costly, especially in the short term (Abercrombie et al., 2015: 167).

In addition to these empirical foundations, Abercrombie and others also maintain on theoretical grounds that late capitalism has no need for ideology. According to them, the development of different ideologies specific to different societies in the early capitalist period shows that the relationship between capitalism and ideology is "entirely contingent." For example, "while individualism was influential in Britain and America during the early phases of capitalism, [...] individualism is not influential in Eastern capitalist societies or in late capitalism; indeed, in their view, capitalism functions more effectively in the absence of individualist culture" (Hill, 2015: 5). The authors argue that a similar claim exists in Weber as well: the relationship between Protestantism and capitalism is not a necessity but a contingency. According to Weber, "modern capitalist economy is an immense cosmos into which the individual is born and which presents itself to him [...] as an unalterable order. Once drawn into

market relations, the individual is compelled to conform to the rules of capitalist conduct" (cited in Abercrombie et al., 2015: 174).

**Debates on '*the Dominant Ideology Thesis*'**

As noted earlier, AHT's central claims maintain that ideological incorporation of the lower classes was not a plausible possibility in either feudalism or early capitalism. Although this situation changes partially in late capitalism, the idea that a dominant ideology functions as a force powerful enough to secure social order remains, for the authors, an unconvincing explanation. Indeed, when the transformations in capitalism and class composition during the late capitalist period are taken into account, even the thesis that dominant ideology unifies fractions of the ruling class requires empirical demonstration.

It is significant that they put forward this argument in the very period when ideological apparatuses had become highly developed. Their core problematic revolves around the question of *how social order is maintained*, and while Marxist theories of ideology attempt to answer this question, AHT consider their solution to be problematic. They identify the source of the problem in Western Marxism's heavy emphasis on ideology and the role of dominant ideology in social reproduction, and in its tendency to exaggerate this role (Anderson, 2007: 123). In contrast, AHT argue that no empirical evidence can demonstrate that dominant ideology, whether in feudalism, early capitalism, or late capitalism, successfully shaped or encompassed the lower classes.

Critiques of overstating the effects of dominant ideology existed before AHT. For instance, Raymond Williams argued in *Marxism and Literature* (1977): "no mode of production, therefore no dominant social order, and therefore no dominant culture, can in reality ever include or exhaust all human practice, human energy, and human intention" (cited in Eagleton, 1996: 78). On the contrary, disagreements shaped by class struggle can be observed in every historical period. In particular, the "functionalist" critique directed at Althusser—namely, that he overlooked intersubjective interaction (or in Marxist terms, class struggle)—had been voiced before 1980, but the number of such criticisms increased significantly after 1980 (Boswell, Kiser, & Baker, 1986; Frow, 1994: 297; Rehmann, 2013: 152–155; Strawbridge, 1982).

AHT argue that dominant ideology has been mistakenly understood as a coherent whole and that it is not shared by all segments of society. If this is the case, what accounts for social order and social cohesion? Their answer is that in class societies it is meaningless to expect cohesion in the first place. Thus, the main factors securing social order are coercive economic and political structures, along with the worker class's pragmatic acceptance of these pressures. Yet how accurate is the sharp

opposition AHT construct between coercion and ideology?

Although Althusserian and Gramscian perspectives both emphasize that ideology and coercion operate together, the functioning of coercive apparatuses is rarely examined in depth—either because ideological apparatuses are foregrounded or because the operation of coercive apparatuses is taken for granted. However, coercion may in fact be becoming increasingly central to suppressing dissent. For instance, Ali Rıza Taşkale (2013) argues that the post-political world is undergoing an intensifying militarization. During the McCarthy era, anti-communism and the "security state" operated in tandem; today, this has been replaced by "neoliberal and militarized post-politics" (2013: 66). At this point, it becomes possible to move beyond AHT's argument: instead of a minimal neoliberal state relying solely on the silent coercion of the market, one can speak of a state that must constantly regulate the market and suppress any social force that might obstruct the flow of capital—a coercive state intolerant of interruptions to market order.

A similar dynamic is discussed by Emery J. Hyslop-Margison and Hugh A. Leonard, who examine the transition from neoliberalism to "post-neoliberalism" and the rising role of police in suppressing democratic opposition on university campuses (Hyslop-Margison & Leonard, 2012). According to them, during the neoliberal era ideology was relatively effective, reducing the need for coercive apparatuses. For example, pointing to the free market as a solution to youth unemployment and insecurity led to restructuring higher education—especially the humanities—according to market needs. Yet in periods of "economic collapse," such as the 2008 crisis, neoliberal ideology suffered a "severe blow," prompting states to resort to increasingly harsh measures, even militarized ones.[18]

AHT are right to argue that the primary factor delineating the limits of possible action and opposition is not dominant ideology but coercive apparatuses. Yet the sharp opposition they construct between coercion and ideology is highly problematic. First, although it is not always emphasized as much as it could be, Marxists generally accept that the state is a coercive apparatus. One may criticize post–Second World War Marxism for insufficiently stressing the role of coercion in maintaining social order, but it remains crucial not to overlook that "coercion and constraints can operate only through the mediation of ideology" (Therborn, 1980: 97). As Althusser proposed, coercive apparatuses possess not only repressive but also ideological functions. In Weberian terms, for the state to operate as a coercive apparatus, it must exist as the

[18] However, one can argue that liberalism carries an inherent tendency toward authoritarianism at its core (Alca, et al., 2015).

sole legitimate institution of violence within society. Thus, as Scott Lash (2015) attempts to show in his analysis of Germany, statolatry—the glorification of the state—can function as a dominant ideology in which coercion and ideology operate together. According to Lash, it is precisely the separation drawn between ideology and coercion that has prevented "state-glorifying ideas" from being understood as ideological, thereby enabling the silent acceptance of state coercive apparatuses (2015: 92).

Another point concerns the fact that individuals, in living their everyday lives, are already continually subjected to coercion. Even when this coercion does not take the form of overt physical violence, the need to secure subsistence forces individuals to submit to the constraints of working life, and this does not mean that they endorse the existing order. On the contrary, according to AHT, individuals accept social order pragmatically because they have no realistic alternatives, because they depend on capitalist employers for their livelihood, and because they view opposition as fruitless in the short term (2015: 166–168). At this point, Marx's emphasis on the inherent coercive character of capitalist societies supports AHT's theses.

In contrast, AHT argue that dominant-ideology theses claim that everyday life cannot be organized through constant coercion and that, instead, the ideas and practices that lead people to accept the social order are transmitted to them. Rejecting this, AHT maintain that dominant ideology is not accepted by workers in capitalist societies; rather, due to their everyday experiences, workers can penetrate and criticize this ideology (2015: 146). In other words, the antithesis of the dominant ideology's articulatory capacity is the realm of directly obtained concrete experience. However, it is also evident that this critique does not produce a revolutionary outcome. For AHT, the acceptance that workers form on the basis of the reality they encounter directly paints a picture more troubling than ideology itself. Dominant-ideology theories, even when they portray workers as "innocent" subjects under the sway of ideology (Hill, 2015: 2), imply that the ideological effect will dissipate once its veil is lifted. Yet what AHT argue is that the practices of capitalism, which normalize economic coercion, and the cynical acceptance of these practices by individuals, eliminate the very ideological consciousness toward which ideological critique might be directed.

Perhaps at this point, as Marx proposed, beginning with concrete human beings is the most appropriate starting point. Human beings, before being ethical-political creatures, are beings with various physical and spiritual needs. Thus, satisfying these needs is essential for living in a healthy manner. If most people must work in order to meet their needs—and even must acquiesce to poor working conditions—can this be

explained solely through ideology? For example, Conrad Lodziak, who values AHT's critique, also argues that the constraints of everyday life take precedence over dominant ideology. According to him, people's everyday concerns are not abstract ideas or political ideals but ordinary matters such as having a home, having a job, protecting what they have, advancing in a career, marrying, divorcing. Institutional, structural, or societal changes that lie beyond their individual lives are perceived as distant and impossible. Therefore, the most significant factor limiting working-class resistance is not macro-social structures but the individual "need for security" (1988). People fear the consequences of opposition, especially unemployment. In capitalist societies, money is the strongest constraint determining what actions we can take; for this reason, the great majority of workers depend on their employers in order to maintain their lives. Within this relationship of dependence, workers become unable even to control their own time—in short, as AHT argue, capitalism already maintains its discipline through silent coercion.

Lodziak, additionally drawing on Habermas's theory of privatism, argues that "needs are manipulated." According to this view, individuals are trapped between familial-occupational privatism and public privatism. A life centered on family and career, combined with the privatization of public life, channels people—seeking comfort, consumption, entertainment, and career advancement—into political indifference. In other words, the legitimacy of the social system rests less on ideology and more on satisfying these needs. For Lodziak, understanding the consciousness of lower classes—who show little interest in ideology—requires examining such need-based motivations. Yet the EIT, by downplaying economic needs and state coercion, becomes insensitive to the everyday experiences of subordinate classes.

However, unlike AHT, Lodziak does not claim that ideology is entirely functionless. On the contrary, ideology is effective in unifying dominant groups. Precisely for this reason, the lower classes experience the material consequences of this ideological unity. Thus, ideology critique does not offer direct help to the lower classes. From the outset, the idea that subordinate classes fight for ideas is misguided; their primary struggles center on "earning material gains to improve their living standards and secure their children's future" (1988). In short, for Lodziak, anyone who needs the support of the lower classes for social change must approach these mundane (banal) experiences with greater sympathy.

In fact, AHT later abandon their earlier claim that ruling classes do not believe in dominant ideology. Stephen Hill (2015), examining Britain a decade later, again investigates the traces of dominant ideology, especially under the influence of Thatcherism. In his study of the class consciousness

of elites—businesspeople, Conservative Party members, and major Thatcherite media institutions—Hill concludes that the ruling classes largely endorse the dominant ideology (capital accumulation, managerialism, individualism). Yet he maintains that the general population has become "increasingly oppositional" (Hill, 2015: 32–33). Oppositional to what? Given that British workers "rationally" accept capitalism because they experience its benefits (Hill, 2015: 24–25), the point becomes clearer. As examined in Section 2.2.4, workers are aware of the problems of capitalist society, but their mutual dependence on the system renders revolutionary strategies useless in the short term, making reformism the most rational course of action. In other words, AHT's rational individual has no reason—or possibility—to endorse dominant ideology.

However, AHT's criticisms appear at least as inconsistent as the content of the dominant ideology they propose. For the fact that workers see capitalism as an oppressive force on the one hand while approaching it as a utilitarian on the other cannot be explained solely through pragmatic acceptance. If pragmatic acceptance is to be explained merely through everyday life, which becomes a constraining force by its very existence, or through the functioning of the capitalist economy, then it becomes impossible to understand why precisely those ideology theories that allow us to criticize these two should be dismissed as useless by AHT. Accordingly, Therborn argues that AHT make a fundamental mistake by construing ideology as "the correctness or incorrectness of normative ideas," thereby missing the subtleties of ideology theory (1994: 177). Similarly, Eagleton thinks that although AHT are right in many of their criticisms and offer "a crucial opportunity to correct the error of left idealism," which exaggerates the influence of ideology, the claim that late capitalism operates without ideology is again overstated (1996: 63–64). Repeating for AHT the criticism Rehmann directs at Habermas is appropriate here:

"To declare ideology obsolete by defining it from the outset in a way that does not fit 'late capitalism' is a tautological procedure. Instead of equating ideology with universalizing and totalizing worldviews, understanding class society as something reproduced from above through the combination of ideological apparatuses, practices, and discourses shows that the era of ideologies (and their critique) has not ended." (Rehmann, 2013: 109).

First of all, reformism itself was already advanced by Lenin and Gramsci as a result of the influence of bourgeois ideology on working-class consciousness. Reformist trade unionism, which seeks better conditions and rights through reforms within capitalism without transcending it, may

provide partial improvements. Yet from a Marxist point of view, such activity presupposes capitalism from the outset, thereby expressing a deeper underlying ideology. Thus, the real problem lies in the sharp distinction AHT draw between everyday life and dominant ideology. For them, workers' giving responses appropriate to their lived experience means that they do not accept the dominant ideology. This distinction resembles Gramsci's differentiation between systematic philosophies and inconsistent common sense. However, it must be added that Gramsci thought ideology need not be coherent; it may be derived directly from lived experience in the form of common sense. Once ideology is conceptualized at the level of common sense, AHT's expectation of high internal coherence from dominant ideology can be overcome, and everyday life itself can be seen as the source of dominant ideology. After all, "Gramsci did not consider ideology to be a simple illusion"; rather, he regarded it as a form of common sense derived from popular consciousness on which organic intellectuals work, constructed in a manner consistent with the everyday life experienced by the working class (Rootes, 1981). For this reason, according to Stuart Hall, including Gramsci within the "Dominant Ideology Thesis" is mistaken from the outset. Dominant ideology is not a monolithic bloc of "dominant ideas" to which all must conform; on the contrary, because it contains "different discursive currents, points of convergence and fragmentation, and the power relations among them," it cannot possess a fully coherent, unified structure (Hall, 1986). That is, ideology is a cultural resource containing different and even contradictory themes, not belonging to a single group but used by everyone. However, it must not be overlooked that some groups are "in a more advantageous position" in using this resource (Howe, 1994).

The problem with AHT's conceptualization of the "Dominant Ideology Thesis" lies in their belief that this advantage is overstated. Yet neither Gramsci nor Poulantzas argue that dominant ideology consists solely of the ruling class's ideas. Poulantzas aims to show that dominant ideology can conceal social conflict precisely because the lower classes can find within it values, norms, and beliefs appropriate to themselves; otherwise, its function in securing social cohesion would be inexplicable. Eagleton explains how dominant ideology can contain such inconsistency as follows:

"The reason why ideologies are not as 'pure' and unified as they imagine themselves to be lies partly in the fact that they can exist only in relation to other ideologies. A dominant ideology must constantly negotiate with the ideologies of subordinate groups, and this crucial open-endedness prevents it from being simply self-identical. Indeed, what makes a dominant ideology powerful—its ability to enter the consciousness of

those under its sway, to intervene in their experience, to rearticulate and appropriate it—is at the same time what makes it internally heterogeneous and inconsistent." (Eagleton, 1996: 75).

According to Oskay, the idea that dominant ideologies must form a coherent whole is also incorrect. Because dominant ideologies are linked to both the past and the future, they contain elements drawn from both (1980). Therefore, in order to argue, as AHT do, that the influence of dominant ideology is weak among the ruling classes and ineffective across society as a whole, one must conceptualize the "Dominant Ideology Thesis" in an extremely rigid manner. Offering a more comprehensive criticism of AHT, Christopher A. Rootes finds it peculiar that the authors readily accept the coherence of dominant ideology in feudalism and early capitalism, yet approach it with great skepticism in late capitalism. First, although there may be differences of opinion among factions within the ruling class, their "belief in the sanctity of private property" remains unshaken. In addition, AHT make no mention of "ideology-like" phenomena emphasized by critical theorists, such as science, technology, and technical rationality. Their discussion of the educational system and the media is weak and superficial, and beyond this, it stems from an extremely rigid and one-dimensional definition of dominant ideology that aligns with no Marxist thinker except Miliband. For this reason, powerful ideologies operating at the level of common sense—such as nationalism, which not only fractures workers but also secures the coherence of the political order—are not discussed in the book at all (Rootes, 1981). Thus, in order to make use of the concept of ideology again, it is necessary "to identify legitimation at different levels of reality" (Gamble, 1982).

This, of course, opens the question of whether common sense, everyday life—in short, the very reality people experience directly—may itself have ideological effects. In other words, to speak of the "ideological character of what appears non-ideological," it is more appropriate to turn our attention to our most basic assumptions. As we have seen above, although Lodziak agrees with AHT on certain points, when the four components they propose as the content of dominant ideology—property, capital accumulation, income inequality, and the liberal democratic state—are examined, he objects to treating these "four elements as if they possessed equal ideological value." For example, even if "capital accumulation is superficially rejected," the "acceptance of the wage concept" demonstrates the acceptance of capital's domination over labour and of the distinction between worker and employer (Lodziak, 1988). That is, since capitalism is not rejected at the level of its most fundamental assumptions, its other principles accordingly appear legitimate. For this reason, the situation AHT portray is in fact precisely one in which the

working class accepts the dominant ideology.

Doesn't this precisely correspond to what Marx describes as commodity fetishism? The moment we perceive things that are in fact social relations as self-subsistent entities, we witness their sudden immortalization (or rather, we struggle to witness it because this process feels entirely natural to us). As AHT argues, everyday life is subject to various constraints, and their coercive effects compel us to behave in particular ways. Yet we can see the state, money, capital, and other entities that we reify—though they are in fact social relations—not as eternal necessities but as contingent constructs that emerged historically and also generate necessities, only if we situate them within a dialectical historicity. This enables us to critique their ideological character—their universality, timelessness, and naturalness. However, AHT claims that fetishism has no validity in contemporary capitalist societies. According to them, it cannot be explained how commodity fetishism spreads from production to the entire society. They even argue that "it is unclear how it applies to workers who sell their labor power to an employer in modern capitalist society" (Abercrombie et al., 2015: 27). Yet Leo Howe's study on the unemployed shows precisely the opposite. According to Howe, even if people are not articulated by ideology, they are still affected by it. His explanation is that the unemployed interpret the effects of economic pressure as personal problems: feeling worthless, feeling like a burden on others, feeling useless. The source of these feelings, however, stems not only from the ideological dominance of the ruling classes but also from within the working class itself. According to Howe, the reason is that (1) attributing one's earnings to one's own hard work—even at the expense of others—and (2) blaming "flesh-and-blood people" rather than "abstract economic forces" is more compatible with common sense. In other words, the feeling of inferiority created by economic relations—relations that are oppressive yet accepted as unchangeable—leads Howe to conclude that a strict separation between ideology and the economy is mistaken (1994).

At this point, the word "impossible" needs to be questioned, because according to AHT, workers pragmatically accept capitalism when they cannot find a realistic alternative. What exactly is realistic or impossible? AHT argues that the fundamental mistake of revolutionaries arises from the illusion that they can transform everyday life all at once, which amounts to proposing a highly impossible project. Yet everyday life at the level of common sense possesses a self-subsistent power. Therefore, rejecting ideological theories such as Althusserian ideological practices and structural ideology, as well as commodity fetishism, which operate within everyday life and thus aim to critique it from its most fundamental point, does not produce very useful results. It is possible to see that these theories,

which do not fit the basic assumptions of AHT's empiricism, in fact point to a more fundamental debate: the structure–agency problem. Yet for this debate to be valid, the superiority of the coercive economic structure over the subject—as proposed by AHT—must also be questioned. If the subject is in a position to grasp the coercive conditions in which they exist and produce rational solutions against them, why do they not choose to change these conditions from the very beginning? The same question can be asked for political oppression as well. In short, it can be argued that AHT's subject-centered approach is far from being consistent and explanatory.

A different level at which we can conceptualize ideology is the discourse-theoretical approach that examines how hegemony, as proposed by Gramsci, is established. In this sense, ideology can be understood not only as the acceptance of capitalist principles, but as encompassing everything that reduces the impact of class antagonism. Accordingly, principles such as sexism, racism, nationalism, and anti-communism, which fracture the unity of the working class, can also be included in the content of ideology (Lodziak, 1988). At this point, the issue of nationalism, which AHT avoids discussing or does not sufficiently examine, becomes significant. As Gramsci suggests and Poulantzas reiterates, in order for hegemony to be established on a national-popular scale, there is a need for a "cement" that provides the link between different groups, interests, and classes. One of the words that troubles AHT is precisely this cement. In their view, emphasising the capacity of the dominant ideology to successfully articulate the lower classes is exaggerated and is repeatedly grounded in the success of 'ideological hegemony'. How, then, should we understand this cement metaphor?

At this point, it is striking that there is something AHT fails to see, or does not wish to see, when quoting Michael Mann. While Mann, in explaining the "lack of consensus" within the working class, points to "both pragmatic acceptance and manipulative socialization", AHT does not consider the latter to provide an adequate explanation. Yet what Mann means by manipulative socialization is the dissemination of "values of the liberal democratic state which, rather than changing [existing] values, do not help the working class to correctly interpret the reality it experiences among these values", and he argues that this is carried out precisely by means of national values (Mann, 1970). AHT rightly claims that nationalism may not be the direct ideology of the ruling class, and that it even contains elements that the lower classes can mobilize. However, there is something they overlook here. Nationalism is an ideology not because it directly defends capitalist interests, but because it constitutes the entire society as a whole in such a way as to ignore class and interest differences. The similarity between Poulantzas and Mann is noteworthy at this point.

Poulantzas likewise argues that no genetic link can be established between the dominant ideology and the dominant class precisely because dominant ideology is able to conceal social conflict.

Malešević, who finds AHT overly economistic on the question of nationalism, seeks to demonstrate in his book *Identity as Ideology: Understanding Ethnicity and Nationalism* (2006) that nationalism is a dominant ideology, particularly in the context of state legitimacy. According to Malešević, AHT's economism is problematic in three respects: an inadequate understanding of culture, the neglect of politics, and macro-structural determinism. Although AHT claims to construct ideology within a broad framework by equating it with culture, it simultaneously narrows it by equating ideology with class interest. For this reason, culture is reduced to an epiphenomenon in both senses (the first functionalist and the second materialist), becoming a tool required either by the system or by the mode of production to secure normative acceptance. Through a similar instrumentalist understanding, AHT reduces bonds of citizenship, elites, and the autonomy of the state to the economy; and it ignores the role of military apparatuses, political parties, scientific institutions, the media, and education as ideological apparatuses in producing and disseminating ideology. Consequently, AHT becomes trapped between a subject-centred analysis and the rigid, macro-structural form in which it conceptualizes EIT, failing to account for the nuances of ideology and its already inconsistent functioning. For Malešević, AHT's conceptualization of dominant ideology lacks the subtlety required for internalization. Rather than analysing ideology according to criteria such as "true/false" or "scientific/non-scientific", it is more accurate to conceptualize it as a "complex, multidimensional process" and to take actions as well as ideas into account (Malešević, 2006: 87–89).

Thus, according to Gramsci's distinction, nationalism should not be understood as a systematic philosophy. Like hegemony, nationalism is not an uncontested totality that secures social cohesion; rather, it is an unending struggle over the articulation of what counts as national-popular, shaped by social, political, and historical contingencies. For Malešević, "the common feature of almost all socio-political orders (liberal-democratic, state socialist, Islamist, Buddhist, authoritarian, or bureaucratic) is that they legitimate their existence in nationalist terms" (2006: 106). What matters here is that nationalism does not create a homogeneous community; instead, different groups shape their political discourses within a national rhetoric. While AHT interprets the absence of such homogeneity as evidence for the lack of a dominant ideology (1994: 163–164), for Malešević, the most fundamental point is that the ideas of nation and nation-state are treated as normal and natural, thereby setting the limits

of common sense and political debate. For this reason, even if nationalism is not a tool that fully reflects the interests of the dominant class or can be used by it at will, it nonetheless has a concrete effect through social "mechanisms, institutionalized routines, and geopolitical arrangements" (2006: 107–108). When ideology is examined on such a discursive plane, AHT's criticisms of Miliband cannot be said to be entirely justified. Although Miliband, by combining Parsons's political socialization with hegemony theory, offers a functionalist explanatory framework, he can at most be criticized for providing a one-sided explanation. Ultimately, Miliband's aim can be understood not as reflecting every aspect of social totality, but as offering a regional analysis within the political sphere concerning the relationships among the state, political parties, and capitalists.

Malešević, whose approach is similar to this, is followed by David Chant, John Knight, and Richard Smith, who argue in their article measuring the influence of the New Right—defined as a neo-conservative ideology in Australia—that AHT conceptualizes dominant ideology incorrectly. Adopting a discourse-theoretical perspective, the authors claim that the New Right constructs a dominant discourse by establishing an equivalential chain among the free market, the family, religion, and traditional morality, making it possible for one term to imply the others when invoked. Thus, both the differences in interest among dominant-class fractions and the ideological differences between dominant and subordinate classes can be bridged through such a chain produced by organic intellectuals. In other words, the content of dominant ideology contains, albeit in a limited way, the political, cultural, and power interests of different groups. Another point emphasized by the discourse-theoretical approach is that the discursive reconstruction of language "defines not only what can be said but also the limits of what can be done" (Chant, Knight & Smith, 1989).

At this point, it is necessary to note that discourse-theoretical analyses tend to exaggerate the impact of ideology. To examine this through a case study, the debate between Stuart Hall and Bob Jessop and others (hereafter simply Jessop) on Thatcherism offers important insights for the debate on the *Dominant Ideology Thesis*. For Hall, the electoral success of Thatcherism lies in its ability to construct hegemony through ideological struggle. According to this explanation, the left remained overly economistic and voluntaristic, failed to build a national-popular hegemony, and thereby allowed Thatcherism to succeed by bringing together those dissatisfied with the post-war welfare consensus and forming an authoritarian-right historical bloc (what Hall calls "authoritarian populism"), in other words, by taking ideological struggle more seriously

than the left (1979).

In response, Jessop (Jessop, Bonnett, Bromley & Ling, 1984) objects to the uncritical use of Gramsci's concept of hegemony and to the granting of excessive autonomy to politics and ideology. This approach risks defining the entire social field—including Thatcherism—solely in terms of ideological struggle and overlooking the effects of economic and political crises within social totality. Jessop's criticisms can be summarised as follows:

(1) It is essential to identify the difference between the ideological message sent and the message received/interpreted. Failing to distinguish this difference can lead to exaggerating the power of top-down ideological messages.

(2) Focusing only on the ideological message renders Thatcherism a monolithic structure. This obscures the political divisions within Thatcherism. Instead, Thatcherism must be understood as an alliance composed of different forces.

(3) It is necessary to correctly interpret what changed and what did not change during the Thatcher period. If the "socialist character" of the Keynesian welfare state prior to Thatcher is overstated, one may mistakenly conclude that a sharp break occurred. For Jessop, the opposite is true: the welfare state was, from the beginning, a settlement led by finance capital and supported by conservatives and liberals.

In this framework, Jessop challenges Hall's tendency to attribute Thatcherism's success almost entirely to ideological struggle and underscores the structural continuity of state–economy relations.

There are significant similarities between these criticisms and those directed by AHT at the *Dominant Ideology Thesis*. Jessop's propositions regarding the success of Thatcherism may therefore complement what is missing in AHT. According to Jessop, two different segments of the working class supported Thatcher: the first consisted of conservatives who already saw themselves as supporters of the Conservative Party; the second consisted of those who, as AHT also emphasises, supported Thatcher pragmatically in line with their own interests. Workers who fit neither category were weakly positioned in terms of economic and political organisation. In other words, there was no unity within the working class itself. Jessop's second point is that electoral success is often confused with the construction of hegemony. When the election period in which Thatcher won is examined, it becomes clear that the Labour Party was already internally divided, and that the SDP–Liberal Party alliance altered the electoral balance. Thus, Thatcher's victories can also be explained by more "simple" reasons. Jessop's final emphasis is on

the shift within the Conservative Party from "One Nation Conservatism" to a "two nations strategy" (1984).

"One Nation Conservatism," as Jessop describes it, is a paternalist political ideology based on cross-class cooperation and an organic understanding of society. In contrast, the "two nations strategy," which became dominant within the Party under Thatcherism, divides society into a privileged nation and a parasitic nation. The first group consists of hard-working citizens who, without state support, participate in profitable and efficient sectors within the market order. The parasitic nation consists of the unemployed, the disabled, and anyone deemed unprofitable. According to Jessop (1984), this strategy of dividing society into two opposing nations accounts for Thatcherism's electoral successes.[19]

Two conclusions can be drawn for the dominant ideology debate. The first is that electoral success should not be overstated. Thatcher came to power with 43.9 percent of the vote. Although this represented a substantial increase in the Conservative Party's share compared with earlier elections, it does not justify speaking of full hegemony or a dominant ideology. It can instead be interpreted as the success of the two-nations strategy. The second conclusion is that, as AHT suggests, dominance should first be sought in simpler factors. Recognising disorganisation, workers' pursuit of their own subjective interests, or, as Jessop shows, the continuity beneath seemingly major historical ruptures, directs attention toward more concrete causes rather than highly elaborate ideological theories (1984).

[19] Comparable political strategies recur internationally during phases of neoconservative hegemonic formation. Turkey illustrates this pattern through its distinctive Thatcherite variant, Özalism (Alca, 2021; Çelikçi, 2023), and through the civil society–state cleavages that crystallized into a dominant discursive framework (Çelikçi, 2015).

# CONCLUSION

Since the stage of primitive accumulation, the capitalist mode of production has involved an unequal relation. This inequality between those who own the means of production and those who do not manifests itself both in the planning of production and in the wage relation between capitalist and worker. In the planning of production—deciding what is to be produced, in what quantity, for what purpose, and how—workers employed in a firm have no say. In other words, the worker who provides labour-power, one of the most fundamental elements of the labour process, cannot decide what will be done with their own labour. The worker sells labour-power for a wage under a contract with the capitalist but cannot possess or control the means of production. Although this relationship is a legal one carried out between equals under the rules of the free market, it cannot be said to be economically equal. At the end of the production process, the worker produces for the capitalist more value than the wage received, namely surplus-value. What makes this possible is the capitalist's ownership of the means of production, that is, the more advantageous position they occupy within this relation. The question, then, is whether a worker, by entering into capitalist production relations, accepts all this as a natural, good, and necessary arrangement, or whether they are compelled into this relation. Alternatively, do they resign themselves to this fate, either fully aware of or indifferent to the entire process?

As shown throughout this thesis, these questions can be answered in different ways, and these answers can operate at different levels.

At the most basic level, property relations, the social division of labour, and the pressures and reification operating within the production process both compel workers to enter a particular relation and prevent them from seeing the link between the whole and the part. It is clear that the obligation of a propertyless individual to work in order to survive does not mean a normative acceptance of capitalist ideology. Given a social division of labour based on differences in property, it is difficult to claim that the worker has any option other than to sell labour-power. Once the worker enters the production process, they are obliged to follow the employer's directives, since this is what the contract between them stipulates. Up to this point, whether the worker normatively or pragmatically accepts or does not accept the capitalist system makes little difference—at least in terms of altering the relations experienced. Considering that the capitalist mode of production continually requires labour-power, it is unsurprising that an entire social formation is organised around this need and aims to reproduce these relations.

The other side of this coercive relation is the worker's alienation

from their labour. Alienated labour—labour that has become a commodity—is a condition required by the capitalist mode of production from its very emergence. It is not something later generated through ideological discourse; it arises simultaneously with capitalism. Capital and the free worker call each other onto the historical stage. In its new form, labour becomes something that can be bought and sold like other commodities. This creates the possibility for the worker to freely sell their labour-power to the capitalist. Whereas under feudalism labour was controlled through political means, under capitalism it takes a form controlled by the market's laws of supply and demand. Yet labour-power, unlike other commodities, belongs to a conscious being, a human. As noted, the worker is obliged to follow the employer's directives. What is expected of them is not the transfer of their creative activity into production, but the application of production techniques that allow the capitalist to maximise profit and the completion of the product. Labour thereby becomes a mere factor of production, is reified, and slips out of the worker's control. The entire production process appears, in the worker's mind, as the repetition of certain operations for several hours a day and sometimes for years. The activity that perhaps occupies much of their life amounts to nothing more than this. Since the worker finds no trace of their creative labour in the products and is unable to perceive their central position in the production process, the idea that they possess the capacity to create and transform society cannot develop. Alienation, commodity fetishism, and reification theories describe precisely this.

Economic coercion is undoubtedly important for the formation and continuation of the social order (which, under capitalism, means the dominance of the capitalist class). Yet neglecting the mystifying effects of reified relations on this coercive order leads to an incomplete explanation of how the capitalist mode of production reproduces itself at the most fundamental level. This, in turn, makes it considerably more difficult to adopt a comprehensive stance against the capitalist system.

When we move one level higher—reaching the level of common-sense consciousness—we encounter a different picture. Here, ideology possesses an effect produced by the subordinate classes themselves. They accept the relations of exploitation and domination in which they live both spontaneously and out of necessity. In the first case, this acceptance reflects a conformist relation shaped by material conditions; in the second, it becomes a cynical acceptance. When capitalist society is taken as a given force of "everyday life," a reality assumed to be self-subsistent, a corresponding form of common sense emerges. Thus, behaviours and thoughts consistent with the rationality of capitalist society appear rational, sensible, and prudent because they conform to lived reality. This uncritical

consciousness also generates a discourse in line with the routines of everyday life. Appearing, for example, in various idioms and proverbs, this attitude imagines both the blanket and the foot in "cut your coat according to your cloth" as given, unchanging entities. There is a link between this consciousness and the reifying effect of the capitalist mode of production, for in both cases reality is reduced to a relation among fixed and unchangeable parts. Once thought is severed from the whole, only one position remains from which it can take a critical stance. At this level of consciousness—described as trade-unionist or economic-corporate—the aim is not to change capitalism as a system but to alter one of its parts, such as raising wages. Yet the wage relation itself, one of the foundational elements of capitalist logic, is not questioned and thus continues to operate within capitalist rationality. This situation involves, on the one hand, the acceptance of capitalism as a system out of necessity (lack of alternatives or powerlessness against the system), and on the other, the possibility of adopting a critical stance due to economic hardship. However, one important point must be noted: realising that capitalism is a relation of domination does not necessarily lead to the emergence of political or revolutionary consciousness. Individuals may recognise the conditions of domination but nonetheless adopt a cynical acceptance, believing that nothing can be done about it. Even if reluctant, this attitude does not create a systemic problem as long as it continues to produce obedience.

These adaptation strategies generated by the subordinate classes themselves show us that they feel compelled to adapt because some force obstructs them. These strategies, consisting of the subordinate class's self-persuasion, correspond to the human need to rationalise one's circumstances, no matter how dire they may be. Otherwise, the idea that the entire structure conditions and forces them—put more dramatically, enslaves them—would lead to anti-social and deviant behaviours. Yet these adaptation strategies can be not only psychological and social responses but also a compulsory choice imposed by economic and political power—that is, poverty, police power, and legal authority. Pragmatic and cynical forms of acceptance are adaptation strategies formed by the awareness of this compulsory choice.

Many authors are partly right in claiming that police (state) force is exceptional and used only at the final stage in maintaining class domination or social order. Compared with a system that functions "spontaneously," such methods are more costly and constitute forms of terror that cannot be sustained for long. It is not viable in the long term for people—who must go outside to meet their basic needs—to live in constant paranoia that they may be branded enemies of the regime at any moment, or to lose trust in others, in justice, and in the system as a whole

because of that paranoia and the terror regime.

One of the main reasons for this is the cost of coercive apparatuses. These institutions do not produce surplus-value on their own. The police, courts, and military do not engage in material production. The surplus product (taxes) generated in a society dominated by a particular class must be allocated to these coercive apparatuses. As distribution relations connect the dominant class and the apparatuses materially, class domination becomes embodied within these institutions. As the relationship between class and state becomes more visible, the state loses its identity as an organisation representing the collective interest of society. The more clearly the state's class character appears, the more its legitimacy declines in the eyes of subordinate classes, and class struggle assumes a political form. In short, the exceptional character of state power is important precisely because it allows the state to conceal its role as the organisation of the dominant class.

Although law reflects the ideology of a particular class, the fundamental relation embodied in law is the relation of trust among individuals. Trust that agreements will be honoured is the foundation of law. Yet, for reasons similar to those explained above, law must conceal its class character and construct concrete individuals as equal subjects before the law. Still, the law's capacity to maintain social order derives from interpersonal trust. As historical experiences of authoritarian regimes show, the use of law as an instrument of fear and terror undermines this trust. When no balance of power (i.e., an independent judiciary) exists against the authority of the state, the relationship between individuals and power becomes a bare one. The individual, becoming isolated and weakened, develops a paranoid consciousness in order to avoid the oppression of power, thereby losing trust in others. In such a situation, cooperation based on trust becomes difficult among individuals who are in relations of mutual dependence due to the social division of labour. Maintaining interpersonal relations without trust is also unsustainable in the long run. Thus, authors who argue that political and legal coercion cannot be used over long periods are partly correct. They are partly correct because even if coercion is not applied constantly, it remains effective as long as it persists as a possibility.

It was noted above that common sense is something produced by the subordinate classes themselves and that a system which functions "spontaneously" exists. However, this is not always the case. Since the separation of material labour and mental labour, ideological manipulation by the dominant class over the subordinate classes has also become possible. What made this separation possible was labour's capacity to generate surplus product. The question of how this surplus would be distributed resulted in a particular group appropriating it, thereby

producing a class that did not have to engage in material labour. This class, which became dominant in society, possesses not only the material means of production but also the mental means of production (media, schools, etc.), and thus controls them. As a result, it has the capacity to disseminate its own ideas throughout society. The ideas of this class, which dominates the intellectual activity of society, are repeated for the purpose of sustaining its own rule, leading subordinate classes to perceive the world through the dominant class's ideas. Although subordinate classes do produce their own ideas about the world, they do not possess the mental means of production necessary to reproduce or disseminate those ideas easily. As long as the dominant class's ideas become the dominant ideas within society, they function as common sense. This makes it easier for the dominant class to secure consent.

In the production of consent, material rewards play an important role alongside the influence of dominant ideas. The dominant class can use the distribution mechanism—controlled through the state apparatus—to sustain its power by favouring a particular segment of society, especially by weakening solidarity among subordinate classes. By distributing material rewards to the specific group whose consent it seeks, it separates this group from others and binds it to itself.

Looking back, it becomes clear that AHT overlooks this multilayered structure and becomes confined to a single definition of dominant ideology. Although many of their criticisms are valid, it is difficult to claim that they could identify theorists other than Miliband or Althusser who genuinely fit the "dominant ideology thesis" they criticise. Even these two theorists become understandable when placed within their own historical contexts. For example, when postwar France is examined, the influence of Charles de Gaulle's Gaullism and dirigisme can be detected in Althusser's theories. Similarly, when AHT is situated within its historical context, their conclusions are not difficult to understand. In the United Kingdom between 1970 and 1980, the golden age of the postwar economic boom had come to an end, and economic crises brought class conflict into sharper relief. Thus, AHT's conclusion that the "dominant ideology thesis" does not work in fact points to a hegemonic vacuum. One might even say that their misfortune was their inability to anticipate Thatcher—whose ideological character, as Jessop demonstrates, is itself debatable. One conclusion that follows is the importance of recognising the historical links and rupture points between theory and practice.

For this reason, when using the concept of dominant ideology and drawing on theories of ideology from Marx to Poulantzas, crucial points may be overlooked. The first is the uncritical use of "theory" detached from its historical context and contingencies. There is little value in repeating the

theoreticism into which Althusser fell. Terms such as "hegemony," "ideological state apparatuses," and "dominant ideology" must be used with greater care and always within the concrete analysis of a concrete situation; only in this way do they yield more productive, more capacious, and analytically grounded results.

The second important issue concerns the social position of the social scientist. As Althusser emphasised when criticising intellectuals, analysing society through the lens of "petty-bourgeois ideology"—that is, using abstract, totalising, one-dimensional, top-down accounts of ideology, or ignoring the heterogeneity embedded within social groups—makes understanding and transforming society exceedingly difficult.[20] At most, it becomes a source of self-consolation. It is therefore necessary to incorporate into our analyses the fact that the oppressed can be just as perceptive as intellectuals and can be sufficiently conscious to penetrate dominant ideology.

[20] Many thinkers, from Marx to the first generation of the New Left, have warned against the danger of intellectuals becoming carriers of petty-bourgeois ideology. For a discussion of these, see Yamak, 2023b.

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