

## Althusser's Philosophy

This is a preliminary investigation into Althusser's concept of philosophy. Preliminary in that I use several terms that need rethinking, notably that of the 'epistemological break', and I do not criticise the Marxist concept of class or elaborate that of 'class struggle'.

I have chosen Althusser's concept of philosophy as it is central to his more recent work; his reworking of earlier positions concerning ideology, science and philosophy. The wider relevance of such a specialised and narrow study will emerge as we proceed. I would suggest that much of Althusser's work has been misunderstood in England, and that his positive achievements in attempting to think the effects of a totality upon its components in a theory of social formations allows us both to criticize and go beyond certain aspects of his work. The key concepts of overdetermination and the problematic allow us to consider both how Althusser's works are to be seen as arising as specific interventions, which Althusser himself emphasizes, as in the introduction to For Marx, and also how the nature of Althusser's intervention is shaped by his membership of the French Communist Party (P.C.F.) and his class position as an intellectual.<sup>1</sup> The conclusions reached by such an approach justify the route taken.

Althusser's position is that Marx's discovery was the concept and method of the science of history, historical materialism. Much of his thinking derives from the works of the philosopher of science, Bachelard, who attempts to discover the effects in philosophy of the emergence of scientific concepts. We shall therefore start with a brief consideration of Bachelard's epistemology with respect to the sciences, and the philosophical problematic with which it breaks (cf. Jenkins 1974).

### 1. Bachelard: The Philosophical Spectrum

Bachelard saw that the new concepts arising in physics and chemistry in the first thirty years of this century put into question and rendered inadequate, obsolete or even incorrect, previously held concepts, in this sense causing a crisis. He argued that there is not a philosophical solution to this crisis in a 'theory of knowledge', but that the revolution in science had developed without the help of philosophy, indeed against all existing philosophies. Bachelard read Freud, and rigorously thought through the consequences of the 'displacement' of the 'conscious' to the position of only one level in the complex totality of the psyche. This displacement has profound philosophical effects in removing the individual as subject, inducing the elaboration of new categories that separate the domains of the 'psychical' and of 'knowledge'. The 'conscious' (in the philosophical sense) is a fundamental misrecognition, an ideological effect of the structure which denegates (denies) its own position as a particular effect of a complex process.

Thus a science can only be constituted in a break with all theoretical elaborations of social and practical experience: sciences are produced in opposition to philosophies, including those apparently unphilosophical philosophies, empiricism and positivism.

The Philosophical Problematic<sup>2</sup> Philosophy is seen as a 'theory of knowledge' necessarily established on the basis of some variation of the invariant couple of subject and object; philosophy seeks to establish the presence of a subject to an object through a theoretical mechanism.

Thus philosophy seeks to guarantee knowledge of the object; beyond the labours of science a knowledge existent in the 'real' object or 'knowing' subject (and thus a metaphysical knowledge) underlies and secures their validity. This knowledge has always existed (hence problems of origins and ends); and its conditions of existence are identical with the objective or subjective reality of which it is a part.

This poses the problems of correspondence; metaphysics is established to conceive difference as Contradiction in the figure of the Other. The correspondence defines the imaginary object; the first separation of the real object and the thought object is denegated in this reunification. Thus while philosophy is not restricted to identifying the knowing subject with the empirical system, or the object with the perceived object, philosophy still remains within empiricism by 'reproducing' a presence of subject to object, a correspondence which argues an immediacy of knowledge. A 'theory of knowledge', the knowing of an object, is modelled upon the empiricist process of representation of knowledge, that the object is known as if it were a 'reflection' in consciousness. Because knowledge has always existed, and is given directly, only illusion and oversight have barred the path to truth; they must only be torn away to reveal it. This demands the selection of correct elements and the discarding of the false, and correctness or truth invokes a teleology. Philosophy is the posing of the problem of knowledge, of truth; however, in the act of putting to question the character of knowledge the effect of philosophy is to reproduce the terms subject and object.

The philosophical problematic has two poles, corresponding to engagement with the object or the subject. Positivism establishes its guarantee in relation to the 'real object'; it demands that the sciences' hypothesis correspond to aspects of a 'real' object and that these correspondences be demonstrable in experimental proofs (variously conceived). Within this problematic the materialist category of 'matter', the empiricist 'theory of knowledge' and the experimental practice of the natural sciences are systematically conflated; matter is essentially an object of perception. The equation of perception and scientific practice has the theoretical function of guaranteeing the consensus of the epistemological contract; the recognition by individual scientists that certain propositions are true or false by reference to a common standard accessible to all individuals through their natural faculties of sense and reason. Thus positivism moves from an empiricist epistemology to a rationalist psychology/sociology of the sciences.

The mirror-image of the positivist engagement with the object is the philosophy of the subject, in its various forms - gestaltist, phenomenological, neoKantian etc. It is the act of cognition of this hypostasized 'subject' which structures the incoherent - once that logic is known through a radical inner cognition, stripping from thought all illusions stemming from its own externalization or alienation in the world. This subjectivist philosophy appropriates the real (thus conflating the thought object and the real object), in this case the objective knowledge of the sciences, in the only way open to it, through the ingestion of knowledge into subjectivity in the coincidence of subject and object in thought's knowledge of

itself. This 'cogito' is a necessary and prior act of internal cognition which guarantees the subject its balance in consciousness, which prevents the vertigo of an unconscious externalization in the world. The subject embarks upon an endless spiral of reflection and reflection upon reflection to forestall its own appropriation in the unconscious facticity of nature. This guarantee leads to a 'philosophy of nature'; a philosophy in which the order of nature can only mirror the known internal laws of reason, or stand opposed to them in essence as their negation.

The Concept of Production. Bachelard breaks with this problematic by posing science as a process of production of its own concepts. The process of production, the practice of the sciences, is described as a phenomeno-technique, that is, the inscription of the sciences' theories in experimental form. This practice is then characterized by a dialogue between these two aspects of scientific practice - the rational formulation of hypotheses and their technical application in experiments. A dialogue because experiments are the materialization of invented phenomena, not mere sensory observation, and would be impossible without the prior mathematical formulation of the possibility of such phenomena, while experimental failure is the precondition of theoretical reconstruction, whether correction or recasting of the theory.

A number of consequences follow. That science produces its own concepts denies the possibility of a philosophical guarantee of the 'truths' of that practice; further, the process of phenomeno-technique means that the science constitutes its own means of production of its object, so that there is no philosophically defined world to be appropriated. The materiality of the real world, its existence independent of thought and the possibility of its appropriation by the sciences as the primary categories of materialism, are sufficiently confirmed by the practice of the sciences themselves. Therefore sciences do not explain the regularities in the natural world available to the senses, they themselves produce their objects and phenomena in their theories and their materialization in experimental proofs. They cannot then be immediately given to consciousness.

What then is the role of philosophy? Bachelard suggests that a science comes into being by a break with pre-existing ideologies; breaking from common-sense experience and the theoretical modes of thought anchored in common-sense. Once it has come into being the science progresses by the dialectic of reason and application; it is completely open, not the exhaustive investigation of a closed domain, defined a priori by sensory experience, philosophical fiat or scientific hypothesis.

The progress of the science is discontinuous, by breaks and recastings, each of which redefines the basic concepts used by the science. Progress is achieved by the overcoming of epistemological obstacles secreted by these modes of thought; obstacles arise from the resorption of new concepts by traditional modes of thought. Bachelard saw such modes of thought as expressions of the anti-scientific nature of the mind,<sup>3</sup> hence obstacles continue to arise once a science has been constituted. The most characteristic epistemological obstacles, Idealism and Empiricism, are also the two poles of the philosophical spectrum. The psychological power of the obstacles gives a foothold to the philosophies which claim to guarantee the knowledge produced by the sciences, whilst really only batten- ing onto and supporting the epistemological obstacles produced at

each stage of scientific development. Philosophies are produced as a result of scientific advance (thus lagging behind the science); with the aim of reuniting the world of knowledge and the world of experience which each new science and each new scientific advance shatters. Hence philosophies can be defined in a spectrum around ongoing science in terms of their displacement from science.

The New Philosophy. The place of the new philosophy is defined by its function, that of assisting the development of the science; it is therefore an intervention in the area of the science, to neutralize the effects of ideologies, epistemological obstacles. This "Anabaptist philosophy", forswearing all the beliefs and dogmas of traditional philosophy, has a changing existence, in the science's rejection of the claims of ideology. The new discipline is an 'open' philosophy; as the science progresses the footholds it gives ideology may shift. Philosophy itself then has no history, it is a wake left behind by the development of the sciences.

Despite the claims for this philosophy Bachelard lapses into psychologism to explain individual error, thus reintroducing the subject/object couple. He does this because, lacking a theory of epistemological obstacles as a part of a theory of the ideological instance of the social formation, he does not site the obstacles historically. Instead, considering the epistemologist and the historian of the sciences only with respect to the development of the science in question, he locates epistemological obstacles in the anti-scientific nature of the human mind, and the progress of sciences in an epistemological profile.

For Althusser, the constitution of Marx's science of history, historical materialism, involved the rejection of the philosophical tradition in which Marx was educated. The new philosophy of dialectical materialism could only emerge later as a result of the emergence of the new science, thus the concepts of the new science emerged in terms borrowed from the old philosophy or other disciplines, and hence the need for a symptomatic reading, as the effects in discourse of a new practice of history. Thus Althusser's work is parallel to Bachelard's.

Further, it allows the nature of epistemological obstacles to be thought as a part of the ideological instance of the social formation, for the new concept of the object of history is the theory of the social formation as a process without a subject. In this the scientific revolution has to have philosophical effects, because the ideology it replaces stipulates and founds a certain general epistemological problematic (subject/object). Necessarily, historical materialism removes the ground from under this problematic, posing a new non-empiricist, non-speculative epistemology for the science of history, and redefining the historical instance.

The single element in current work which expresses the displacement our thinking must undergo may be termed the 'radical decentering of Man'. This displacement, achieved both in psychoanalysis and history, and constituting their claim to scientificity, has the profound philosophical consequences Bachelard noted. In this early stage of constituting a science of subjectivity, which involves the recasting of what are known as the human sciences,<sup>4</sup> a major task is the constitution of the philosophy that defends the science against the ideologies with which it breaks. Hence the wider interest of Althusser's investigations in this region.

## 2. Althusser and Ideology

In his earlier works - For Marx and Reading Capital - Althusser postulates a general theory of ideology, that constitutes the ideological instance of the social formation. In all societies, classless or with classes, there is a level of ideological disguise that results from the necessary opacity of the social formation to its agents; it has the function of regulating the relation of individuals to their tasks, and, in so doing, ensuring the cohesion of the social whole.

This theory is presented (1964c) to counteract ideologies of dealienation produced in post-Stalin Russia under the theme of socialist humanism. The notion Althusser is combatting is that in a classless state the social formation would not 'misrepresent' itself to those within it, so that the end of capitalism would include the end of mystification of consciousness.

The general theory of ideology is therefore posed to deny the idealism of the notions of consciousness, alienation and so on. However, Althusser does not consider the conjuncture that this socialist humanism arises from; the notion that the USSR is a classless society and hence must face up to the problems of being stateless conceals the nature of the relation between classes in Russia, and hence has a political function. He points only to the non-scientificity of such an ideological discourse, and does not seek the reason for this denegation, the political function of the effect of this concealment. In this way Althusser himself effects a concealment, one that is in line with the PCF's position on the USSR, that the USSR is a classless society. A theory of ideology is posed without that which deals with the exercise of class rule. Against such ideologies of transparency Althusser sets the necessary opacity of every social structure to its agents. Ideology is present in every social totality by virtue of the determination of this totality by its structure; this has a general function of allowing social cohesion.

A general theory of ideology, with a function of social cohesion, denies any form of dialectic, and hence of history. Such a theory has two consequences: most importantly Althusser, by taking a general theory of ideology before conceiving the class struggle leads to the traditional (metaphysical) analysis of society in general. More specifically, this discourse of sociology arises from a distinct conjuncture; the formation of the general (classless) theory is the product of a specific (class) situation, and thus is mystificatory. Althusser in using it imports this mystificatory function, as we have seen above, in a specific conjuncture; in this theory of ideology he allows the placing of science outside the social structure, as we shall see.

Ideology in Class Societies. However, superimposed upon this general theory of ideology there is a more specific theory: seen as a second level of ideological 'disguise' in addition to the first, in class societies there is ideological distortion arising from the requirements of class domination. Ideology is necessarily a false representation of the real, a mystification to keep men in their 'place' in the system of class exploitation. This function dominates the first; the class struggle 'overdetermines' (1964a, pp.30-31) opacity of society determined by the structure.

This superimposition allows the coexistence of two heterogeneous problematics, of historical materialism and of Durkheimian sociology. However, as they are articulated, the Marxist theory, although 'overdetermining', overdetermines a concept of ideology derived from this 'classless' sociology. But this is then reversed, for the general theory of ideology is seen only as a level of the Marxist theory of ideology, thus the former is defined in terms derived from a theory of class societies.

Althusser imports this sociological problematic through making a distinction of level between the 'structure' of society and the existence of class divisions - hence opacity derives from the general 'structure', and distortion arises from class divisions (*ibid.*, p.31). Yet class divisions are a part of the structure: the determination of a social totality is by the relations of production characterizing a dominant mode of production - that is, the social (i.e. class) forms of appropriation of the means of production.

This double subversion by a separation of class relations and structure removes contradiction from the latter, and in this way the effects of the class relations, the specific forms of the relations of production are excluded from this concept of structure. But one of these effects is opacity; opacity is not a function of the 'social structure in general', but a specific effectivity of the relations of production. Thus Althusser, having started with a theory of ideology in general, cannot reimport the class struggle, as it is present in a disguised form in the exclusion of contradiction.

The Double Theory of Ideology. This double theory of ideology re-introduces an idealist philosophy, the myth of an ideological state of nature: ideology is not seen from the outset as the site of a struggle, it is related to a totality of which it forms a natural element. Althusser states (1965a, p.232): "It is as if human societies could not survive without these specific formations, these systems of representations (at various levels), their ideologies, Human societies secrete ideology as the very element and atmosphere indispensable to their historical respiration". Here the 'as if' introduces the myths of origins or ends, which have the function of concealing division. By posing ideology as a totality unified by its relation to its referent Althusser excludes thinking ideology as the site of contradiction. This is the spontaneous discourse of metaphysics.

A second consequence follows. Since the analysis of the second level of ideology is not that of class struggle, but of the 'over-determination' of ideology by class divisions, one speaks of the ideology (singular) of a class society.

The class struggle in ideology is reintroduced in a fetishized form as a class struggle between this ideology (singular), seen as the weapon of the ruling class, and science, weapon of the ruled class. These are introduced as 'tendencies' (1964a, p.32).

By being articulated with a theory of ideology as mystification of class relations, the theory of ideology has ceased to be a necessary system of representation of social relations, that is, other than science, and has become opposed as the Other of science. Ideology is a false representation (of social relations) because it is in the service of the ruling class.

The result of articulating a general theory of ideology with that of overdetermination by class domination is the exclusion of class struggle; what is then defined as the domination of ideology is in fact a function of the dominant ideology. In Althusser's work the general function of ideology is said to be exercised to the profit of class domination, and so the (revolutionary) function of undermining the domination is given to the Other of Ideology - Science.

We are now in the re-established space of metaphysics; the couple science/ideology corresponds to truth/falsity. In the figure of the Other, difference is conceived of as contradiction; the couple science/ideology is no longer of the social formation, but defines and divides the closed universe of discourse between truth and its Other.

Science/Ideology. Earlier we noted that the original suppression that leads to this spontaneous discourse of metaphysics arose from the PCF position. This articulation of revisionist ideology with spontaneous metaphysics may be seen in the development of the science/ideology couple.

The consequence of this idealist true/false, science/ideology couple is to make a static division, to ignore the unity of the dialectic of struggle. Althusser has a misconception of the place of politics, which results in this primary suppression; politics then resurfaces in the hypothetical revolutionary function of science.

Althusser makes use of this in a consideration of the university (1964b). Rather than considering the relation of teacher to taught, he reduces the teaching relation to that of knowledge taught. Thus the division teacher/taught is supported by the couple Knowledge/ignorance, as full to empty. This in turn is justified by the opposition of Marxist academic discourse/bourgeois academic discourse, an opposition of science to ideology.<sup>6</sup> In this way the couple science/ideology is compared to that of knowledge/ignorance, although the original couple science/ideology presents knowledge as determined by the difference between them.

In practice the couple science/ideology, by a focussing on the content of what is taught, acts as a justification for the status of (revolutionary) teachers, and further, for the possessors of knowledge, as representatives of the proletariat. Such a problematic allows for academicism, and the authority of the Central Committee. In opposing Marxist academic discourse to bourgeois academic discourse Althusser confronts 'spontaneous' and 'petty-bourgeois' ideologies with the scientific rigour of Marxism. The division science/ideology serves to reinforce the role of the Party intellectual and the power of the Central Committee. Indeed, any emphasis upon the rigour of scientific knowledge, its correctness, in opposition to 'what is known' is reductive, and in so being leads to elitism and to a reactionary justification for intellectuals.<sup>7</sup>

Science and Philosophy. Althusser has necessarily placed the content of knowledge outside the social formation, and thus outside its conditions and processes of production. In this way while he correctly defends the universality of scientific knowledge against all forms of relativism (Geras 1972), that is, a science is not dependent for its validity on the values and perspectives of a social group or historical epoch, he cannot pass the modes of

appropriation of the knowledge. In rejecting the criteria of validity of knowledge (philosophical theories of knowledge) he poses the question of the mechanism of the relation of the thought-object, the object of knowledge, to its 'absolute reference point', a "raw material provided in the last resort by the practices of real concrete history" (1965b, pp.109-10) in what he terms the knowledge effect. Yet he cannot think through the problem, because of this exclusion of science from the social formation;<sup>8</sup> this exclusion he explicitly recognizes at certain points, as in defining society as comprising three instances - the economy, politics and ideology (1965a, pp.231-2).

This distortion of science leads to a distortion in Althusser's view of philosophy, which is defined as the Theory of practice in general, elaborated on the theory of existing practices (of the sciences), which transform into 'knowledges' (scientific truths) the ideological product of existing 'empirical' practices (the concrete activity of man) (*ibid.*, p.168). Theory is the materialist dialectic, "in which is theoretically expressed the essence of practice in general, and through it the essence of the transformations, of the 'development' of things in general" (*ibid.*, p.169).

This philosophy, a theory of science and of the history of science, has itself to be scientific, producing an objective knowledge of its object (theoretical practice, practice in general); rather than a practice uncovering the dialectic existent 'in the practical state' in a scientific discourse, philosophy is claimed to be a science in its own right. The scientific philosophy specifies the 'essence' of scientific practice; its knowledge is a knowledge of scientificity, of what is within science and what within ideology, of what is true and what is false, an arbiter of what is knowledge. Philosophy as a theory of theoretical practice now constitutes the closed theoretical space of a theory which thinks the space of all knowledge - a metaphysics; philosophy provides a guarantee external to the practice of science of its scientificity: in reflection upon its own knowledge it knows the difference between Science and its Other.

### 3. 'Theoreticism'.

In works after 1967 Althusser recognizes that the definition of dialectical materialism as a 'Theory of theoretical practice' is necessarily 'theoreticist',<sup>9</sup> and he points out that he did not show what it is that constitutes Marxist philosophy in its relation to politics.<sup>10</sup> This 'theoreticism' arises, as we have seen, in thinking the process of the break and subsequent practice of the science in isolation from the social formation, that is, as a theoretical event, removed from its problematic.

But to what extent does Althusser rethink his position? His class position produced a suppression of class struggle, and its re-emergence in the hypothetical revolutionary function of science. In fact, it cannot be 'science' that is either revolutionary or bourgeois; it is the reality of teaching science that is reactionary - the modes of appropriation of the scientific content. The dominant ideology is not expressed in the content of the knowledge, but in the structure of the environment in which it is transmitted. Science does not stand confronted by its other, ideology; it resides within institutions and in those forms of transmission where the ideological dominance of the bourgeois is manifested. Quite clearly the formulation of non-empiricist theory is in no way radical.



The existence of the dominant ideology is not a collection of discourses or a system of ideas; the dominant ideology is a power organized in a number of institutions. Scientific knowledges are articulated into objects of knowledge; the transmission of scientific knowledges is part of the forms of appropriation of scientific knowledge, and these are class forms, as we have seen in Althusser's own practice. Scientific theories are transmitted through a system of discourses, traditions and institutions which constitute the very existence of the dominant ideology, its materiality.

Science, Ideology and Philosophy. Thus the relation of sciences to ideology is not one of rupture but of articulation; the dominant ideology is the space in which scientific knowledges are inscribed, articulated as elements of a social formation's knowledge. It is in the form of the dominant ideology that a scientific theory becomes an object of knowledges.

Knowledge is then a system in which the 'contents' cannot be conceived outside their forms of appropriation. The system is that of the ideological dominance of a class, in it are articulated the class appropriations of science and the ideology of the ruling class; there is no class division in knowledge, it has no institutional existence other than as an instrument of class rule; it is therefore a stake in the class struggle.<sup>11</sup>

To transform this objective into the neutral site of a division is to conceal the class struggle. Althusser's misconception of the function of knowledge does this; as we have seen, the couple science/ideology becomes equated with the couple knowledge/ignorance. This discourse reproduces the spontaneous discourse of metaphysics, the traditional position of philosophy with respect to knowledge. For knowledge constitutes the system of appropriation of scientific conceptions to the profit of a class. Philosophy has been established and developed in a definite relation to knowledge, but without ever recognizing its class nature. Unable to see knowledge as the system of the ideological dominance of a class, philosophies are reduced to criticising the effects of this system. The criticism of knowledge, failing to recognize its class function, is made in the name of an ideal of science, in a discourse which separates the realm of science from that of false knowledge; the opposition of Science and its Other has the function of misconceiving the class nature of knowledge.

Further, the discourse of metaphysics propagates this misconception in as much as it presents itself as a discourse on science, on what constitutes its scientificity. Philosophy thus, as a critique of knowledge, conceals knowledge of the class struggle, its mainspring. It is a denegation of knowledge, knowledge's concealment of itself. In this denegation knowledge only ironically questions itself to restore itself to its previous status; it can never question its foundations.

The New Philosophy (2). The new philosophy arises after the new science has constituted its open problematic, as an open philosophy, not a closed system. It functions in combatting epistemological obstacles that arise in the development of the science; it thus has no history of its own. The science progresses through its dialectic of reason and application, a phenomeno-technique. The obstacles that arise do so at the particular position in the social formation that the practice of the science is taking place, its conjuncture.

The nature of the new philosophy is then an intervention in a specific conjuncture; in this new practice of philosophy there is no separation of theory and practice, no place for exegesis. It is the thinking of an event in its unity, in its immediacy; thus the new philosophy is not an epistemology; it speaks from the site of the intervention, of that site.

Althusser expresses this in his new definition of philosophy in the seminar on 'Marx's relation to Hegel' (1968a): "There follows from this rejection (of the traditional philosophy of knowledge) a new conception of philosophy - not only a new conception - but a new modality of existence, I shall say a new practice of philosophy; a philosophical discourse that speaks from somewhere else than classical philosophical discourse did. To make this comprehensible, let me invoke the analogy of psychoanalysis.

- (1) The point is to carry out a displacement - to make something move over in the internal disposition of the philosophical categories.
- (2) Such that the philosophical discourse changes its modality - speaks otherwise, which creates the difference between interpreting the world and changing it.
- (3) Without philosophy disappearing nonetheless.

Apparently it is the most conscious discourse there is. In fact it is the discourse of an unconscious. The point is no more to suppress philosophy than it would be to suppress the unconscious in Freud. What is required is, by working on the phantasms of philosophy (which underlie its categories), to make something move over in the disposition of the instances of the philosophical unconscious, so that the unconscious discourse of philosophy finds its site, - and speaks at the top of its voice about the very site assigned to it by the instances that produce it". (1972, p.174.)

This new philosophy constitutes a very different mode of appropriation of knowledge, and we can follow Ranciere in making a distinction between what he terms bourgeois ideology and proletarian ideology. The distinction refers to two modes of production that are profoundly heterogeneous. Bourgeois ideology (the dominant ideology) is a system of power relations reproduced daily by the ideological apparatuses of the bourgeois state. Proletarian ideology is a system of power relations established by the struggle of the proletariat and other subordinate classes against all forms of bourgeois exploitation and domination. It is a system of power relations that is always fragmentary because it defines a certain number of conquests, always provisional because it is not produced by apparatuses, but by the development of the struggle. To try to set up a proletarian philosophy<sup>12</sup> against the bourgeois philosophy, ethics, morality is to miss the point of mass practices produced by the struggle; in my terms, not to speak from the site of the intervention, to denegate its position, and thus to fall into idealism.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4. Althusser's New Definition of Philosophy

To what extent does Althusser rethink his position in his later works? In the early works idealism stems from the original exclusion of class struggle in the theory of ideology, so we will consider Althusser's only recent offering on this subject (1969a).

This theory of ideology is a double one. Ideology in general is trans-historical, a mechanism which represents the imaginary relation of individuals to their real conditions of existence, whatever the mode of production and form of class rule dominant in the social formation. The basic role of this ideology is to constitute individuals as subjects, as supports, for economic and political practice.

Central to this role are the 'practical ideologies' according to which actions of everyday life are experienced, reinforced by the rituals of religion and ethics embodied in the institutions of ideological practice, the ideological apparatus. This trans-historical character of ideology accounts for the predominance of empiricism and idealism as epistemological obstacles, for various forms of this couple are characteristic of the transhistorical structure of ideology in general (see Brewster, 1971).

But ideologies are historical, they change with the other instances of the social formation, and with the emergence and development of the different sciences. As well as subject-constituting practical ideologies, the ideological instance contains theoretical ideologies justifying and reflecting the historically changing economic and political practices and theoretical ideologies of application and education vis-a-vis the emerging scientific practices. In class societies these ideologies are unified by the dominance of the ideology of the ruling class, the dominant ideology. Finally, there are those theoretical ideologies known as philosophies, which arise as a result of the emergence of the sciences in the form of a struggle between materialism and idealism.

In the transhistorical ideology Althusser has introduced the inherent tendency of the mind to be idealist, constituting the individual as subject. This is exactly the same as Bachelard's psychologism: that the emergence of a science is a constant struggle against the non-scientificity of the scientist's mind.<sup>14</sup>

The introduction of ideological apparatuses from another problematic does not serve to set Althusser's problematic to rights; their introduction can only be eclectic, they do not serve to reintroduce the class struggle.

The old science/ideology relation holds in a conceptual multiplicity (sciences, ideologies, the spontaneous philosophy of scientists, conceptions of the world and so on). The correct ideas which the researcher draws from his scientific practice are, by a complex mechanism, interfered with by different systems of representation (a conception of the world, spontaneous philosophies etc.) produced elsewhere. But the complexity of this mechanism conceals the question of this practice itself, of its forms of social existence, and of the class struggle which puts it at stake. The class struggle is relegated to the level of a representation of a practice, in the traditional figure of the dislocation between the production of an object and the production of the consciousness of it.

Science, Philosophy and Politics. Thus, although the development of a science can now be thought in relation to the social formation, it presents a weak argument for the political nature of philosophy.

Sciences arise and develop in this complex space of practical and theoretical ideologies, philosophies and other sciences, which makes the histories of the sciences both more concrete and more

differentiated. The different sciences must develop differently, in response to their different ideological environment (Brewster, 1971); the ideologies most closely linked with a science are those of its technical application and teaching, although each differs in its relation to its ideologies of application and education. This is because of the different places in the social formation and hence in the latter's ideological instance that different sciences occupy; there is a political differential between sciences and between their extra-scientific effects.

Amongst these extra-scientific effects is philosophy. Where practical ideologies constitute individuals as subjects, theoretical ideologies recognize such subjects as constitutive of the world, nature, history and Man. In turn individuals can recognize themselves as the subjects constituting the domains of theoretical ideologies. But the world of which these subjects are recognised to be constitutive in theoretical ideologies is always this world - that is, the world of the contemporary ruling ideology. Hence the necessary and universal character of the subject constituted by the mechanism of practical ideologies is attributed to what Marx calls das Bestehende, the existing state of affairs as defined by ideology. The emergence of a science, whose objects are not the objects of ideological subjects, not the objects of 'this' world, threatens this economy and thus the dominance of the ruling ideology.

Hence the emergence of a science evokes a struggle in a new arena denying (idealism) or affirming (materialism) the possibility of such a practice and such a knowledge. This is in accordance with Bachelard: philosophies are produced as a result of scientific advance with the aim of reuniting the world of knowledge and experience which each new science and each new scientific advance shatters. Hitherto the struggle has always been resolved by 'founding' the new knowledge in the subject of a theory of knowledge.

The emergence of different sciences have different effects in philosophy. The emergence of historical materialism made impossible the philosophies of history that contain directly a theoretical space for the empiricism/idealism couple. The concept of the social formation as a process without a subject, as a complex structure in dominance, demands a new conception of philosophy as an instance in which ideologies and sciences are represented alongside politics in what Althusser terms a Kampfplatz, not as a general theory of knowledge. The immediate objective of such struggles is the development of the sciences, but the ultimate aim is to ensure or undermine the continuing dominance of the dominant ideology, in that the dominant ideology is exposed as based upon its denegation, the subject/object couple. Hence the emergence of a science is a political event, and the struggle against its ideological resorption is a political struggle - for materialism, against idealism.

Class Struggle. Yet this approach is incomplete, based as it is upon the eclectic taking of elements from a problematic of ideological apparatuses, through which to produce the effects of a metaphysical theory of ideology. The class struggle, excluded, now reappears in a struggle in philosophy, but not in philosophy, between the new schema and the old schema of subject/object.

It is a struggle between materialism and idealism because the new scientific practice, the new dialectic of rational development and phenomeno-technics, has constructed and demonstrated in its practice the existence of a new form of matter, whilst its rejection on

(old) philosophical grounds literally asserts the claims of thought against matter, claiming that the new matter cannot exist if it cannot be thought according to the present criteria of thoughts as laid down by philosophy, and its resorption by the 'philosophical foundation' ensures its reception as a thinkable object that creates no disturbance in the world of respected truths.

This struggle is political: the science materialism defends against idealism threatens the unity of the ideological world which assures the unity of the dominant ideology, and because the struggle against the idealist resorption of the science is a struggle to ensure that these disruptive effects are not neutralized by the domination of idealism.

Here we can see that the problematic of ideological apparatuses explodes that of a general theory of ideology, and that the element missing from Althusser's analysis is his speaking from his site; defining his own (political) conjuncture. Thus ultimately what is missing from Althusser's later works, despite all outward appearances to the contrary, is a class point of view. We have earlier seen reasons for this denegation. It is precisely because of this that Althusser cannot inaugurate the new practice he speaks of. Practical ideologies are penetrated by the contradictions between classes; the same is true for their effects in theoretical ideologies. Only a modification in the established system of contradiction thus permits the passage from ideology to science, and hence the categories Althusser propounds have not undergone the displacement he speaks of.

Lenin and Philosophy.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, as Althusser sees that the displacement must take place, so he names the site of the displacement with great accuracy. Those English commentators (e.g. Cutler and Gane 1973) who have ignored this do Althusser less than justice.

".....I have attempted to prove that Lenin...made a crucial contribution to dialectical materialism.....: Marx's scientific discovery did not lead to a new philosophy (called dialectical materialism), but to a new practice of philosophy, to be precise to the practice of philosophy based on a proletarian class position in philosophy.

This discovery, which I regard as essential, can be formulated in the following theses:

1. Philosophy is not a science, and it has no object, in the sense in which a science has an object.
2. Philosophy is a practice of political intervention carried out in a theoretical form.
3. It intervenes essentially in two privileged domains, the political domain of the effects of the class struggle and the theoretical domain of the effects of scientific practice.
4. In its essence, it is itself produced in the theoretical domain by the conjunction of the effects of the class struggle and the effects of scientific practice.
5. It therefore intervenes politically, in a theoretical form, in the two domains, that of political practice and that of scientific practice: these two domains of intervention being its domain, insofar as it is itself produced by the combination of effects from these two practices.
6. All philosophy expresses a class position, a 'partisanship' in the great debate which dominates the whole history of philosophy, the debate between idealism and materialism.

7. The Marxist-Leninist revolution in philosophy consists of a rejection of the idealist conception of philosophy (philosophy as an 'interpretation of the world') which denies that philosophy expresses a class position, although it always does so itself, and the adoption of the proletarian class position in philosophy, which is materialist, i.e. the inauguration of a new materialist and revolutionary practice of philosophy which induces the effects of class division in theory." (1971, pp. 105-6)

Conclusion. I have attempted to trace Althusser's theories in some detail in their origins and interrelations, both to do justice to Althusser's ideas which are widely misunderstood, and in an effort to supply what is missing in these theories.

Althusser has now invoked philosophy as political intervention. But it is the early (1964) texts which lead, with their theoreticist problematic, to the political effects noted, and the 'new practice of philosophy' has produced no noticeable effect in the class struggle because it turned its back on the political problems in which the Althusserian theoreticisms had been laid bare. This alleged politicization of philosophy is really more of a denegation of the foundations and the political effects of Althusserianism.

In the process we have come upon the outlines of a new mode of discourse, associated fundamentally with the 'decentering of man' with which we started. I would suggest that this new mode goes beyond, and in so doing, subsumes, Marxism.

Tim Jenkins.

### Notes

1. This approach is based for the most part upon the information provided and the clear analysis by Ranciere (1974). His article was originally written in 1969, and has an afterword written in 1973.
2. Clearly a brief outline such as follows must in one sense be a travesty, and I recognize that it is philosophically completely inadequate. However, it serves as a presentation of the empiricism/idealism couple, which for Althusser denotes the misrecognition structure of classical bourgeois philosophy, in which ".... the terms presented and their relations only vary within the invariant type structure which constitutes this very problematic: an empiricism of the subject always corresponds to an idealism of the essence (or an empiricism of the essence to an idealism of the subject)". FM p.228 (cf. Hirst, 1972).  
This presentation is (a) schematic, for purposes only of demonstrating where the new philosophy has to break with the old, and (b) as a result a non-philosophical discussion of philosophy.
3. Bachelard considered such misrecognitions as 'consciousness' in the same way as he regarded 'substantialist' notions such as earth, blood, fire - as complexes, definite psychical formations inhibiting the development of knowledge, and as

formations drawing their power from a libidinal source. A psychoanalysis of such formations, the exposing of such psychical elements within knowledge, was an important task of philosophy in aiding the development of science. See La Formation de l'Esprit Scientifique and the Psychoanalysis of Fire.

4. This involves a transformation of the boundaries and contents of the old disciplines, a restructuring of their hierarchy, and, most interestingly, a critique of the previous arrangements, of their hierarchy of functions and effects. As arbiter of the science of semiotics social anthropology will rule supreme.
5. This section is based essentially on Ranciere op. cit.
6. This is supported by an incorrect division between technical and social divisions of labour, which in the end correspond to 'things as they are' in society - necessary posts, and 'things as they seem' corresponding to the function of reproduction of society. This is then applied to the university: "It is in the knowledge taught in the University that the permanent dividing line of the technical and social division of labour exists, the most reliable and profound line of class division". Ibid., p.89.
7. The notion of Politics as such must be incorrect; any abstraction of this sort must be reactionary, a refusal to 'speak' from the conjuncture.
8. It is this inability that allows Glucksmann to misunderstand Althusser and, by reading him from an idealist position, to accuse him of idealism for the wrong reasons. Althusser rightly sees that the question of a correspondence of knowing subject to known object is an 'improper' question, imaginary. For the correspondence is precisely what defines the imaginary object: the first separation of the real object and thought object (specified in the last instance by the former through the knowledge effect) is denegated in the reunification of correspondence.

Yet Glucksmann reads Althusser as if his was an idealist approach. In considering the relation between the real object and the concrete-in-thought, Glucksmann suggests that this relation can only be brought into existence by a more secret, transcendental correspondence: the conditions of the possibility of experience in general are at the same time the conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience. Otherwise the real must be in thought, and therefore there is not a separate practice of theory. This, Glucksmann argues, is the minimal basis for any structuralism: the kinship of thought and being is conceived, not as the immediate relationship of thought (theory) and its object, but as between the categories of thought and the elements of reality. Thus Althusser, like all philosophers, is seeking the correspondence between the real object and the thought object.

But as Glucksmann points out, Althusser refers to this 'correspondence': "we can set out the 'presuppositions' for the theoretical knowledge of (the modes of production), which are quite simply the concepts of the conditions of their historical existence." It is because Althusser does not think this through that he falls into idealism; it is not the 'quite simply' that introduces the transcendental zugleich (at the

same time), as Glucksmann thinks. Glucksmann himself destroys the distinction between the real object and the thought object; he sees idealism in Althusser where there is none except his own; the ventriloquism he detects is his own voice. See André Glucksmann (1972).

9. See Introduction to Italian edition of RC (1968), pp.7-8.
10. Introduction to the English edition of FM (1967), p.15.
11. So although principles of verifiability are apparently above classes, in its practice a science has its forms of existence solely in a system of social relations, of which formal proofs, propositions, experiments are only elements. Rancière (op.cit.) notes that in the Cultural Revolution the questions posed to scientists were as to the social nature of their practice; who practises the sciences and for whom? A proletarian knowledge is not only that which produces new propositions (for the class struggle must also exhibit itself at this level), but also overthrows the masses' age-old relation to knowledge and power.
12. The notion of a systematic proletarian ideology is used (1) as a science to call to order spontaneity, or (2) posed as proletarian characteristics (order, labour, discipline) to curb anarchism. It serves revisionism in its twin aspects of a theory of objective needs (eclecticism, opportunism), and a defense of the hierarchy of skills (the authority of the Central Committee or the Party intellectual); as a science: a symbol of the power of workers' parties and states; as a sum of proletarian characteristics it defines for the workers so many reasons for obeying 'their' power.
13. Here more clearly we can see that any notion such as 'politics' is to be abstract, a denial of the experience of 'ordinary people', and hence reductive: the intellectual, in not speaking from his own position, concealing his position in the social formation and denying his practice, falls into idealism precisely in this process. The notion politics may be described as reactionary.
14. We must therefore suggest that the subject/object couple is historically necessary, a specific effect of the structure; a denegation associated with the presence of the sciences.
15. 'Lenin and Philosophy' was written in February 1968; this quotation is taken from a summary of it made at the beginning of 'Lenin before Hegel', which was written in April 1969, the month when the article on 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' was finished. It is thus in accord with Althusser's new position on ideology.



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