

Anthropology and the Problem of Ideology

If the problem of ideology is essential in current French anthropology, I think this is because it is resolved in two quite different ways by the neo-Nietzschean trend and by the Marxist trend. Unfortunately it is not clear that the Marxists give a very complete answer to the question which Deleuze, following Reich, is asking: Why do people want their repression, why have they desired fascism?

Insofar as these questions have to do with the problem of the efficiency of symbolism and, in a general way, of ideology, we might fear that they will give way to the idealistic trends which are always very strong in France. This fear is at the same time anthropological and political; the idealisation and the nostalgia for primitive societies and the condemnation of history (where the State, whatever its political forms, is presented as the awful but necessary end) involve reactionary political positions.

The Ideo-logic

By ideo-logic I mean the logical relationship arbitrarily established between the different sectors of representation in a given society or the whole set of syntagms expressed by the juxtaposition of numerous partial theories concerning the psyche, heredity, illness, work, etc. These syntagms are neither unlimited in number nor unsystematic. For example, among the Alladian of the Ivory Coast, I can say that the evil power (ãwa) of an individual has attacked the life power (eé) of another individual of his matrilineage (etyoko) and that the malevolent nature of this power is illustrated by the robberies this individual has committed in the treasury of his matrilineage. But the transformation of one of the elements of the syntagm and the substitution of another element endangers the entire structure: I cannot speak of ãwa to qualify a father-to-son relationship, or a son-to-father's heir relationship.

Thus, one can imagine all the possible representations in a given society as being made up of paradigmatic series bearing on the psychological powers of the individual, the components of the person, the different social dimensions, the different kinds of social activity, of economic activity, etc. Any one element of a paradigm cannot enter into relation with any other indiscriminately, and the whole set of syntagmatic relations thus defined, corresponds to the sum of possible interpretations of a given event.

The whole set of possible syntagms seems to me to compose, for each society, a conscious 'ensemble,' but it is always used for some specific purpose, therefore only for parts of the whole. A diagnosis never entails all the elements of the ensemble, but it cannot present the elements it has chosen haphazardly nor group together just any elements indiscriminately.

It is precisely this restriction which I would willingly call a 'syntactic limitation,' because it acknowledges grammatical rules, such as the rule of concordance, which makes my 'ideo-logic' function

as an ideology. The restriction, or limitation, is threefold:

- (a) the ideo-logic imposes interpretations along the lines of power which it has established;
- (b) it imposes conditions for its own application: he who uses it without having the right or without being in a proper situation to do so, will find that it turns against him;
- (c) it imposes social solutions for an individual's most private problems and these are codified according to his status.

With regard to lineage societies (but I think we must say the same of every type of social formation), ideology is never the reflection of the real social structure. For instance, representations touching on witchcraft do not invert the representations of the social order; this is a remark that we have to make in opposition to other analyses, including those of P.P. Rey. This implies that the social order too must itself be considered as an ensemble of representations. It does not need representations of the psyche, of the person, or of the gods to illustrate or justify itself. It is in its own right a representation: choice and idea. One can say the same of all of the orders of order (religious, political...): they all depend upon the initial choice (consensus or 'social contract') which cannot be historically situated, but which one cannot ignore without denying at the same time the coherence of an ideological whole which is not insignificant. The different orders of representations are not hierarchically classified one in relation to another, in the sense that one cannot say that some are simply a reflection of the others.

I would like to make myself clearer and for that purpose take the lagoon societies of the Ivory Coast as an example, and devote a few words to the phenomenon of the lineage as it appears in the local representations. In the language of each of the groups considered, there exists a word to designate an individual's matrilineage; the lineage is the framework within which exploitation takes place and the lineage treasure is the point of encounter of all the most important prestations, eventually by means of certain 'conversions,' in Bohannan's terms. But other relations to the lineage exist, aside from that of incorporation in the strict sense, and other types of prestations than those which come into the lineage treasure along the lines of the lineage. More precisely, all types of relations correspond to a type of prestation. In these conditions, it may be possible to consider the social organization as a coordinated structure and not only as the addition to intra-lineage relations of other types of relations which may be empirically enumerated. The hypothesis set out here is that taking into account the economic reality, and more precisely the distribution of produce (produced goods), engenders a unified structure. Current anthropological literature is trying to rethink the problem of lineage structure, in order to get away from the circular causality built up by functionalism. It is clear, notably, that the notion of bi-lineal descent does not take into account all the aspects of

the structure of kinship relations in the societies of patrilineal or matrilineal type. In Rethinking Anthropology, E. Leach criticizes Meyer Fortes for his empirism and tries to substitute an opposition of incorporation/affinity for the pair descent/complementary filiation. According to him the former distinction would be more general and could be found at other levels, for instance in the notion of the person or in the characteristics of the political system. He tries to delineate an object which is proper for anthropological research, to define a problem of which the local oppositions between certain types of descent, certain types of alliance and certain types of residence, would only be particular expressions. It is not very different from Rey who, speaking as a Marxist and drawing from Congolese examples, thinks that he has found more fundamental relations underlying what he calls the 'language' of kinship relations, which would be those of men living together and working on the same piece of land, and which would express the dominant relation of production in the lineage system. However, independently of other criticisms that we could formulate concerning these two attempts, we must state that Leach does not reject the notion of a purely specular relation between 'vertical' levels (the distribution of 'mystical' influences reflects on the one hand, the definition of relations of descent and affinity, and on the other, relations of authority), and Rey sees in the theory of malevolent powers an inverse projection of social relations of production.

Speaking of the theory of psychic power as a metaphysical expression of economic relations, among lagoon people, I have tried to establish a correlation between the economic categories ('reciprocity' - 'exploitation') and the 'mystical' categories ('beneficent' and 'malevolent'), thus underlining the structured character of the economic-metaphysical relations in the lagoon people's representations. But, in the same way that the 'malevolent' and the 'beneficent' categories can be decomposed, in the discourses which are in fact pronounced, into different 'powers' (beneficent or malevolent, positive or negative) which act on the different components of the person (the shadow, the blood and the flesh) in the framework of certain social relations (matrilineage, paternal matrilineage, patrilineage), the categories of 'exploitations' and even 'reciprocity' are detailed in different forms of distribution (direct prestations, indirect prestations, exchanges) corresponding to distinct activities (individual fishing in the sea, fishing in the lagoon fisheries, manufacture of salt, farming...) which themselves refer to social relations. These social relations may thus be considered from two points of view, according to whether one considers them as units of production or as channels of distribution. As soon as one considers the means of production (objects of work and means of work), one can in fact envisage different forms of production, but these forms are not unlimited since they are derived from the natural conditions of production, from the local ecology. Thus at the same time, forms of production, insofar as they depend on natural constraints, are a part of the material infrastructure and insofar as they depend on an intellectual choice, they are as arbitrary as all representation which accompanies the institutions and rules of a given society. Two series may be taken into consideration: the first (natural conditions - ecology - means of

production - forms of production) corresponds to the totality of the material conditions of production; the second (forms of production - forms of social organisation - metaphysical and religious forms) defines a coherent system of representations which includes forms of production. It is the expression of a tripartite problem in the sense that it confronts three types of relations: a relation to matter (the relation of men and nature), a human relation (the relation of a man to nature and to other men), and a social relation (the relation of men to each other). These relationships are related to one another by a syntactic logic of representations of the person and the society, but which integrate economic relations as well. Once it is admitted that the material conditions of production in the lagoon country require the use of individual techniques (sea fishing and fishing in the lagoon) or collective techniques (lagoon fisheries, or the exploitation of palm tree plantations) the choice of matrilineage, of the paternal compound or of the age grade as units of production is as arbitrary as the definition of these same social units. The case is the same with the modes of distribution: direct exploitation may be characteristic of an intralineage relationship, and not of an interlineage relationship. Individual exploitation, inversely, characterises the father-son relation as a relationship of affinity; the exchange (in different forms) characterises only the father-son relationship.

If one admits that the coherence of the different systems of representation is not of a specular order, but that it is of a syntactic order - the possible agreements, in the grammatical sense of the term, among the different elements of the various systems define and set out the limits of what is possible or probable - one can take into consideration the economic factor while defining the social structure and defining all the individuals (or status) in relation to a given lineage as a differential whole of categories of prestation.

Such an analysis introduces doubt as to the idea of the dominance of kinship in a lineage society. To affirm this dominance has no more sense than to affirm that of any of the other orders of representation within the ideology. The kinship relations function as relations of production, as Maurice Godelier says, but the reverse is also true: kinship relations and relations of production enter into the same syntactic logic which integrates all the other elements of representation too. Nevertheless what is important is that Godelier says that the distinction between infra-structure and superstructure has nothing to do with a distinction between institutions but applies to different functions which every institution can assume in turn, according to the particular social and historical conjuncture.

The more or less complementary themes of culture and ideologies constitute at the present time a place of convergence, with more or less unclear boundaries, for reflections are being carried out in social anthropology, ethnopsychiatry and political sociology. This convergence poses problems of definition with theoretical implications (concerning for example the terms of 'ideology' and 'culture', 'model' and structure'). The question is for me to define as precisely as possible the theoretical status of the notion

of ideo-logic and, beyond that (but this is another problem), to understand the significance or the possible directions of the actual transformations of the different systems that make it up - transformations which are not all equally a simple expression of the conjuncture, but of which some appear as the product of a deliberate will. Even though they may be products of an historical situation, certain men may be tempted to create their history with lucidity; in the Ivory Coast for instance the constitution of a class of great landed proprietors is systematic. But the changing of men's souls is also currently on the programme.

* * *

If one pays some attention to the manner in which the questions concerning the realm of representations and values are approached from different theoretical points of view, one realizes that they have resulted in three types of formulation: the first corresponds to the question of homogeneity or of heterogeneity, of the coherence or diversity of the body of representations in a given society. It concerns notably the relation between the Marxist conception of ideology and the anthropological conception of culture. The second opposes two types of comprehension of ideological phenomena: the first is concerned with their structure and considers them as instruments of knowledge and communication, the second takes into account their economic and social functions. This type of comprehension concerns in particular the opposition of the Durkheimian analysis and the Marxist analysis of religious phenomena. The third formulation concerns the question of the totality of the system of representation of a given society, and is interested in its exact nature: is it an 'empirical' structure (an arrangement of the facts themselves), an indigenous model or the model of the observer making manifest an unconscious structure? I shall deal here only with the first two formulations, in relation to which I shall try to situate the notion of ideo-logic.

The problem of ideology is studied by N. Poulantzas when he deals with the relation between the capitalist state and ideologies. In the introduction to his attempt to define a Marxist conception of ideologies, he criticizes the conception which is centred on a subject: those of the young Marx and of Lukacs, which insofar as they attempt to define a 'conception of the world' are close to Weber's theories and those of functionalism. For them 'the overall social structure is, in the last analysis, considered as the product of a subject-society, creator, in a very finalist way, of certain values or social aims...' With Lukacs, as with Gramsci, who believes that a 'hegemonic' class can become the 'subject-class' of history and, by a phenomenon of ideological impregnation, provokes the 'active consent' of the dominated classes, the relative coherence of the ideological universe is possible. Poulantzas does not radically contest this coherence but objects that 'the dominant ideology not only reflects the conditions of life of the dominating class as a pure subject, but also the concrete political relation, in a social formation, between dominating classes and dominated classes.' Thus the dominant ideology can be impregnated with elements 'deriving' from the 'way of life' of classes or fractions other than the dominant class or fraction. This aspect of things

can be related to structural discrepancies on the chronological plane - a dominant ideology imbued with the way of life of a dominant class is capable of remaining dominant even when the class itself no longer dominates. Poulantzas finally refuses all conceptions of ideology which relate it to an historical subject class and he disputes the notion of hegemony (Gramsci) in which the problem of the political organization of a class 'appears to be related to the constitution of a conception of the world, which this class imposes upon the whole of the society.' For Poulantzas, one can interpret the structure of the dominant ideology by looking not at 'its relations with a class conscience,' but at the 'unique field of class struggle.'

Thus Poulantzas proposes a conception of ideology very near to that of Althusser in For Marx, where he states that the relation which theories constitute is both real and imaginary, or rather that it is a real relation of the men to their life conditions transmuted into an imaginary one.

One can see that the question of the coherence of ideology is at the very heart of Marxist thinking, but the nature of this coherence (sometimes related to that of a class, sometimes related to the real/imaginary continuum typical of one given society) is in itself problematic. In the analyses of Althusser and Poulantzas it is, more precisely, the nature of the 'social/imaginary' which is the problem.

For Althusser and Poulantzas, recourse to a real/imaginary determination does not exclude the fact that different elements of the ideology of a social formation may be related to distinct classes - the concepts of displacement and domination, in a given situation, of one part of the ideology over the other are, in this case, very clear. For cultural anthropology, each society is marked by its own cultural particularity; ethno-psychiatry vigorously opposes the idea of reducing humanity to absolute cultural diversity. But even as it asserts the existence of a culture and a psyche, it recognizes the structural diversity of each culture. What is the relation between the Marxist notion of ideological domination and the anthropological notion of the identity or diversity of culture? A first answer would place culture along side of homogeneity and 'primitive' societies, reserving ideology for class societies. A specific type of society would distinguish itself from others by its ideological harmony (its 'culture'). One could think of this harmony as reflecting another and as referring to a characteristic social homogeneity of less differentiated societies. Only the representation of these societies (in particular their religions) would merit an analysis of the Durkheimian type which treats religion as a language and considers the sociology of religion as a branch of the sociology of knowledge, without posing the problem of the social or economic functions of ritual and religious systems.

Pierre Bourdieu is not far from adopting such a view in a very interesting article on the genesis and structure of the field of religion. His beginning argument nonetheless situates him in a perspective opposite to Durkheim's, whose efforts to

give an empirical foundation to Kantian a-priorism appear to him as the forerunner of the structuralist endeavour. Bourdieu underlines the fact that the interest in myths and collective representation as 'structured structures' leads one to ignore their power to organize (give structure to) the world. Semiology, he says, deals implicitly with all symbolic systems as simple instruments of communication and knowledge (a postulate which is not legitimate except at the phonological level of language). This sciences also proposes to treat as most important in each object the theory of consensus which is implied in the prime importance conferred on the question of meaning and which Durkheim states explicitly in the form of a theory of the function of logical and social integration of 'collective representations' and, in particular, of the 'forms of religious classification...'

In fact, Durkheim insists in the Elementary Forms of Religious Life on the simultaneous need of moral and intellectual conformism of all societies.

Giving prime importance to the question of meaning is to run the risk of eliminating the importance of social, political or economic functions of the religious systems, says Bourdieu. It is at the price of a radical doubt as to the existence of a relation between symbolic systems and social structures that Levi-Strauss, according to Bourdieu, can approach religious discourse as an intellectual system - at the same time leaving out its function as protector of social order. Bourdieu, who asserts the necessity of a double interpretation of the religious fact, finds in Weber (in agreement with Marx in establishing that religion serves this end of conservation), the means of conciliating the two points of view which both forget the existence of religious work performed by specialists who meet the demands of social groups by elaborating discourses and practices. It is in this 'historical genesis of a group of specialized agents,' among other, that Weber finds 'the foundation of the relative autonomy which Marxist tradition grants to religion without drawing all the conclusions.' Bourdieu is not far from thinking that this interpretation is valid only for societies where the specialists of religion are tied to one or several social classes.

However, is there not a paradox in treating the 'least differentiated' societies in a special manner, when it is precisely in this type of society that one finds systems of representation where scientific theory, moral and civil codes, politics, and economy are the most interrelated? It is truly a case of interrelation of explicit and manifest relations, not only of implication of latent functions. Is it not also in the 'least differentiated' societies, as Bourdieu says, that the products of the 'anonymous and collective work of successive generations' have a definite tendency to complexity and differentiation? A word, hardly uttered, is full of meaning, and this meaning is conveyed in psychological, social, political, and economic discourse, united by the demands of a unique syntax. But meaning also accompanies silence; the spoken word, in its context, takes charge of the unspoken words for which it is a kind of metaphorical equivalent. It is because there are words which cannot be spoken (except in a

crisis) that everything can be significant. The law of silence is the art of the spoken word. Prudence imposes the use of metaphorical or metonymic detours; prudence, but also a sense of efficiency: no discourse is better heard than that which is not spoken, which underlines the words actually spoken. And the complicity is all the more deep (and tacit) as the relation is more hostile and apparent. If Levi-Strauss in Tristes Tropiques describes writing as a source of enslavement, it does not follow that the spoken word is a source of equality. The coherence of the ideologic does not correspond to any social homogeneity.

The ambivalence is in the discourse as well as in the social practice. Thus the theory of powers, developed in lineage societies, addresses itself to those of whom it does not speak, since it speaks from 'the eldest' to 'the junior', but it means in this way that the standards of some are not those of all. Its message is implicit, sometimes allusive, but it is perceived. The image of the father, as we have already mentioned, is simultaneously given and perceived as gratifying and menacing; but this ambivalence is perceived and is related to the double role of the father. One can say the same, mutatis mutandis, of the image of the witch, powerful and feared, or marginal and condemned. The ideologic furnishes all possible commentaries for all events and types of conduct. In this regard it reminds one of the 'silent discourse,' pronounced 'on the same level as the practices' which defines culture according to R. Establet. At this point, one could be tempted to admit, along with Poulantzas, the equivalence of the notions of ideology and culture (or to state that the first embodies the other), and to say that culture as well as ideology has the function of 'obscuring the real contradictions, of reconstituting, on an imaginary basis, a relatively coherent discourse, which serves as a guide line for men to live by.'

But this imaginary is in fact real: the coherence of the ideologic discourse is defined by the coherence of those discourses which can be pronounced. The ideologic is not the projection of contradictions, it is in reality their description. We have seen that in relation to the terms of reference chosen in the initial paradigm and in relation to the speaker, all the syntagmatic combinations were not possible. The ideologic sets the boundaries of what is possible in order to indicate what is impossible. In its own logic contradictory things may be possible (one and the same event can be caused 'a priori' by contradictory phenomena) but never at the same time and together: successive and contradictory interpretations are always possible. The ideologic does function as an ideology insofar as one can define it as a practice and not only as a commentary. The event is interpreted and implies a reaction; the decision is made and is executed only on the basis of patterns of interpretation offered and imposed by this logic. The ideology would thus be the ideologic (or the culture) in action.

But from this perspective, is the distinction which Poulantzas, following Establet, suggests between two important meanings of culture, pertinent? I don't think so. Establet calls attention to the fact that 'culture,' according to Linton and Herskovitz, does not have a specific field of application and is distributed

throughout the whole of a social formation. He recommends applying the term culture only to those values which dictate practice. But if we define ideo-logic as at the same time both a language and a practice, functioning for that reason as an ideology, we no longer have to try to distinguish between a field of social structure and a field of ideological representations or between 'relations of power' and 'relations of meaning,' according to Bourdieu and Estabiet.

Insofar as we can define the ideo-logic as a language and a practice we can, I think, disagree with Rancière's objection to Althusser. Rancière argues that Althusser, speaking of ideology as an element indispensable to the historical continuity of human societies, excludes thinking of ideology as the locus of contradiction. I suggest that, in fact, Durkheim's and Marx's points of view are not contradictory. Perhaps it is because we have to think simultaneously of individuals and of society that we need a theory of ideology in general. There is not a dominant ideology; every ideology is dominant but there is no more than one ideology in one social formation. That is not to say that it is impossible to find in the text of ideology all the elements of contradiction that social tensions or class struggle have imported. Even in social anthropology we have means for these kinds of contradictions: rebellion, inversion, ambiguity. We must think of all these notions not only (or not at all) from a functionalist point of view (according to which every negative element is in the end positive) but also from a 'syntactic' one. Where ideology is ambiguous, it means simultaneously a latent opposition and an actual designation of roles. It is not everybody who can speak, but ideology speaks of everybody - from the dominant point of view of course. The dominant must, however, take into account the problem and demand of the dominated, so as to integrate them, or to try to integrate them, eventually to 'situate' them (and admit for instance that some revolutionary ideas are the result of specific jobs or roles). From a revolutionary perspective the problem is to undermine ideology in general, not to create a single ideology.

Marc Augé

Marc Augé is currently the Director of the Area Studies Programme of the École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (Paris), and in recent years has been devoting his attention to the problem of ideology in anthropological theory. His own field work has concentrated upon the coastal peoples of the Ivory Coast, including the Alladian, the Ebré, and the Avikam. His Doctorat d'Etat, dealing with the analysis of ideology and the concept of an 'ideo-logic' has recently been published under the title: Théorie des Pouvoirs et Idéologie: Étude de Cas de la Côte d'Ivoire (Paris, Hermann, 1975).

Bibliography

- Althusser, Louis. Pour Marx. Paris, Maspéro, 1965.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 'Genèse et structure du champs religieux,' Revue Française de Sociologie, LI (1971).
- Deleuze, Giles. L'Anti-Oedipe. Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1972.
- Estabiet, R. 'Culture et Idéologie,' Cahiers Marxistes-Léninistes, Juin 1966.
- Godelier, Maurice. Horizon: Trajets Marxistes. Paris, Maspéro, 1973.
- Leach, Edmund. Rethinking Anthropology. London, 1961.
- Poulantzas, Nicós. Pouvoir politique et classes sociales. Paris, Maspéro, 1971.
- Rancière, Jacques. La leçon d'Althusser. Paris, Gallimard, 1974.
- Rey, Pierre-Philippe. Colonialisme, néo-colonialisme et transition au capitalisme. Paris, Maspéro, 1971.