

Ideology and Culture: Notes for a Research

Ideologia e Cultura: Notas para uma Pesquisa

CEL SO FREDERICO^a

Universidade de São Paulo, Escola de Comunicações e Artes. São Paulo – SP, Brazil

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to study the relations between ideology and culture in three theoretical strands that depart from Marxism: the first, influenced by structuralism, was represented by Althusser and Macherey; the second, inspired by Hegel, was expressed in the works by Adorno and Jameson; the third, linked to the historicist tradition, is represented by Gramsci and Raymond Williams.

Keywords: Marxism, Althusser, Adorno, Gramsci, culturalism

^a Retired Senior Professor from the Escola de Comunicações e Artes of the Universidade de São Paulo (ECA-USP). Among others, author of *Ensaio sobre Marxismo e Cultura* (Mórula). Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3627-5378>. E-mail: celsof@usp.br

RESUMO

Este texto visa estudar as relações entre ideologia e cultura em três vertentes teóricas que partem do marxismo: a primeira, influenciada pelo estruturalismo, teve como representantes Althusser e Macherey; a segunda, inspirada em Hegel, expressou-se nos trabalhos de Adorno e Jameson; a terceira, ligada à tradição historicista, é representada por Gramsci e Raymond Williams.

Palavras-chave: Marxismo, Althusser, Adorno, Gramsci, culturalismo

REGARDLESS THEIR HETEROGENEOUS directions, the Marxists have always stated that culture is not an autonomous sphere, and somehow holds links with the society's material basis. This consensus, however, ceases to exist when ideology is related to culture. There are so many concepts of ideology that the links with culture remain an open topic and subject to the most different interpretations.

There are those who bring the two spheres together to the point of identifying them, either immediately (such as the supporters of the *proletkult*), or on a more mediated level (such as Althusser and his disciples). Other authors, however, refuse to dilute culture in the ideological sphere (such as Gramsci and Raymond Williams).

Each branch refers to one or another passage where Marx approached the theme, but these passages do not offer us an unequivocal definition of the term. Moreover, they are often ambiguous and carry meanings that point in opposite directions.

The same can be said of Engels. In a famous letter to Franz Mehring, dated July 14, 1893, two different concepts of ideology are merged. A *negative* one: "Ideology is a process which the so-called thinker actually performs consciously – but with a false consciousness. The real driving forces that move them remain ignored by them – otherwise such a process would not be ideological" (Marx & Engels, 2010, p. 109). Next, a *positive* concept emerges:

Because we denied that the different ideological spheres, which play a part in history, have an independent historical development, we were supposed therewith to have denied that they have *any historical efficacy*. At the basis of this is the ordinary undialectical notion of cause and effect as fixed, mutually opposed, polar relations, and a complete disregard of reciprocity. These gentlemen forget, almost intentionally, that an historical factor, once it has been brought into the world by other – ultimately economic facts – thereupon also reacts upon its surroundings and even affects its own causes. (Marx & Engels, 2010, p. 111)

I would say, resuming a categorization proposed by Terry Eagleton (1997), that Marx has at least three concepts of ideology: one *epistemological*, another *ontological*, and a third, *political*.

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONCEPT

On the pages of *The German Ideology* (Marx & Engels, 1867/2007) we find the epistemological concept that understands ideology as a distorted view of

reality. At the time they wrote the text, the authors were trying to turn away from Feuerbach's ideas, but they could not turn away from the theory of alienation that sticks up to the understanding of ideology as inversion (the *darkroom*). Feuerbach had criticized the Hegelian philosophy for being an alienated philosophy that started from consciousness to infer the real world from it. Feuerbach materializes the proposal of materialist inversion: the creation of a philosophy that had the being as its starting point, rather than consciousness. Marx and Engels moved the project forward, and replicated Feuerbach's critique of Hegel and his disciples. Ideology is now seen as *false consciousness*, to which the authors oppose the *material social process*. For this reason, they state, one should not start from consciousness, from what men think, as the young Hegelians do, but from *active, real men*.

In this register, ideology takes on the air of unreality, of a form of consciousness alien to the world. It would thus be an imaginary representation of the conditions of existence.

I) This definition drives Althusser's criticism (1967) that sees science, rather than real, active men, as the antidote of ideology. Therefore, he challenges the Hegelian dialectic's thesis of the materialist inversion by stating that "a science is not obtained by inverting an ideology" (p. 168). The reference to "active, real men" is understood as a direct influence of Feuerbach's humanist problematic.

In Althusser, Marxism becomes a science focused on the study of structures, by breaking with humanism. The category *mode of production* as a building made of the material base and the superstructure will give way to an interpretation that perceives it as a complex structure formed by three instances (economic, juridical-political and ideological). Thus conceived, the mode of production is interpreted as a combination of instances, each with its specific level of historicity. In place of the old simple causality (the superstructure mechanically determined by the base), Althusser proposes the *structural causality* or *metonymic causality* to designate the *absence* of structure – an invisible structure that nevertheless produces *effects*. In the words of François Dosse (1993):

This concept of the efficacy of an absence, this structure defined as an absent cause for its effects insofar as it exceeds each of its elements, just as the signifier exceeds the signified, comes close to this a-spherical structure that defines the Subject in Lacan, being this Subject constructed from the absence, from the loss of the first Signifier. (p. 341)

Scientific analysis would then seek to scrutinize the action of that hidden structure through *symptom lecture* – a technique also taken from Lacan's psychoanalysis.

On this extremely abstract plane, ideology loses its inertia and, in its relative autonomy, gains efficacy by playing in some cases the role of dominance over the other instances of the mode of production. Moreover, it gets free from the monocausal determination of reflex, being driven by overdetermination (another concept taken from Freud and Lacan's psychoanalysis).

Althusser (1980), in his notorious text "Ideology and Ideological Apparatuses of the State," from 1970, departs from the philosophical abstraction that characterized his texts until then, to understand how the relations of production are reproduced. Besides the repressive apparatus, attention is turned to the ideological apparatuses. In this register, he affirms the *materiality* of ideology understood as *practice* (this move from the realm of structures to that of practices was proposed earlier by another author who also influenced Althusser: Michel Foucault). Ideology now dwells in institutional sites such as school, family, unions, parties etc. And, it should be emphasized, in culture.

We will not discuss here Althusser's proposal for a general theory of ideology based on three basic theses (ideology has no history; ideology is a *representation* of the imaginary relationship of individuals with their real conditions of existence; ideology questions individuals as subjects). It is enough for now to point out how this concept causes culture to be reviewed from the standpoint of ideology. Althusser (1995) states that he does not include art among ideologies, because it has a "totally singular and specific relationship with ideology"¹ (p. 560). Art does not know reality, like science it only alludes to it. What the novel shows us is the lived experience of human existence. But this lived experience, says Althusser, is not something given, "given from a pure "reality," but the spontaneous "lived experience" of ideology in its own relation to the real"² (p. 562). Thus, what art shows us in the form of "seeing," "feeling," "perceiving," is "the *ideology* from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it *alludes*"³ (p. 561).

In the text about ideological apparatuses the reduction of art to the ideological sphere is stated in clear opposition to what Marx considered the "cultural heritage of humanity".

the Ideology of the currently ruling class, which includes in its music the great themes of the Humanism of the Great Ancestors, who realized, before Christianity, the Greek Miracle, and then the Greatness of Rome, the Eternal City, and the themes of interest, particular and general etc.). (Althusser, 1980, pp. 72-73)

Here we can perceive echoes of the Cultural Revolution in China.

¹ In the original: "tout à fait particulier et spécifique avec l'idéologie". This and other translations into Portuguese, by the author.

² In the original: "le donné d'une 'réalité' pure, mais le 'vécu' spontané de l'idéologie dans son rapport propre au réel".

³ In the original: "l'idéologie dont il naît, dans laquelle il baigne, dont il se détache en tant qu'art, et laquelle il fait *allusion*".

Althusser's incursions in the field of arts include the following texts: "Lettre à Paolo Grassi"; "Sur Brecht et Marx"; "Lettre Sur la Connaissance de l'Art"; "Devant le Surrealisme: Alvarez-Rios"; "Cremonini, Peintre de l'Abstrait"; "Sur Lucio Fanti"; and "Lam". These texts should be analyzed in our research because, besides their interest in understanding Althusser's thinking, they directly influenced his disciples. This is the case, among others, of Michel Pêcheux's (1985) theory of discourse, and the literary studies of Pierre Macherey (1971).

One of the foremost scholars of Althusser's work, Warren Montag (2011), noted that "Althusser's most productive period coincided with a newfound interest in contemporary painting and literature, especially theater"⁴ (p. 168). He also noted that his critique of humanism had begun with the artistic *avant-garde*. Thanks to this affinity, Althusser, unlike other communist intellectuals, came to value these artistic practices:

it was his commitment to theoretical anti-humanism that made it possible reading into the formal disruption of minimalist theater, abstract expressionism in painting, and the most austere experiments in the cinema of the French *Nouvelle Vague*, not the subjectivist rejection of social reality or elitist formalism . . . but nothing less than an assault on the humanist grounding of bourgeois ideology⁵. (Montag, 2011, p. 168)

II) The dialectic between the said and the unsaid, the fulcrum of the symptomatic lecture brought into the sphere of linguistics and literature a theme dear to psychoanalysis that guides the works of Pierre Macherey (1971), an author who, like Althusser, wants to see Marx away from the Hegelian legacy.

Within Hegel's philosophy, art is read as the first manifestation of the Absolute Spirit. For Hegel, art contains a *meaning*: it is the *truth of the sensible* that makes both Spirit and man self-conscious.

Marxists like Lukács refused to see art as an expression of the Spirit's self-development. Here too they resorted to the materialist inversion, replacing Spirit for social life. However, they retained the Hegelian definition of art piece as a *sensible unity of appearance and essence* (or form and content). It, therefore, is a unified totality (whether Lukács' "intensive totality" or Adorno's "windowless monad"), the result of the *creation* of exceptional personalities.

Macherey (1971) challenges the idea of creation and, along with it, that of subject as pleaded by Humanism. By extension, he also rejects the presence of a collective subject (social classes) as a reference to understand artistic manifestations, as Lucien Goldmann, among others, thinks. Macherey's critique is also against the sociological reductionism that perceives art as a direct

⁴In the original: "el período más productivo de Althusser coincidió con un interés recién descubierto por la pintura y la literatura contemporáneas, en especial el teatro".

⁵In the original: "Fue su compromiso con el anti-humanismo teórico lo que lo permitió leer en la disrupción formal del teatro minimalista, del expresionismo abstracto en pintura y en los más austeros experimentos del cine de la *Nouvelle Vague*, no el rechazo subjetivista de la realidad social o el formalismo elitista . . . sino nada menos que un asalto a la fundamentación humanista de la ideología burguesa".

expression of ideology and, finally, against the empiricism that conceives art as a reflection or representation of reality.

For Macherey (1971), by contrast, art is *work*, a special work of language, “whether this work is a form of language or a form given to language” (p. 57) – and language, he claims, “always speaks of itself” (p. 62). The author can thus speak of the existence of a *mode of production* of literature, of the work of transformation of a given raw material. The literary text is a material practice that aims, in its workmanship, at the transformation of ideological and linguistic raw materials. Here we have a clear analogy with Althusser in his interpretation of the relations of Marx’s *scientific discourse* built from the ideological raw material bequeathed by classical economics. In both cases, the referent – reality – remains outside the horizon, and therefore is not the foundation of scientific knowledge or literary representation.

As such, Balzac’s Paris is not an “expression” of the actual Paris: “it is the result of an activity of fabrication, adapted to the requirements of the work (and not of reality): it does not *reflect* a reality or experience; rather, it reflects an artifice” (Macherey, 1971, p. 59). Literature, therefore, has a *parody function*, it supposes an absence of that to which it refers.

One of the characteristics of the art piece (here, literature) is that it is always *de-centered*. In his words: “we must not, therefore, study the literary work as a self-sufficient totality,” for “the assumptions of unity and independence of the literary work are arbitrary” (Macherey, 1971, p. 56). The critic’s task should not be to decipher the hidden meaning that unifies the narrative and explain it to the audience, for the narrative is not “closed on one sense,” since it comprises “a multiplicity of its senses” (Macherey, 1971, p. 77) and, more than that, “an incompatibility of various senses” (Macherey, 1971, p. 79).

Therefore, it is not a unified totality, for it is always incomplete, a place marked by conflicting meanings. And such meanings coexist due to the ideology that makes the author silence some aspects. And it is toward this silence that the critic directs their attention, because conflicts between meanings within the work are explained by the invisible and unconscious action of ideology. Freud, says Macherey (1971), did not seek to find in conscious discourse a latent meaning, but launched a new form of *rationality* that places meaning elsewhere: “place of structures, to which he gives the name of the unconscious”. The same procedure should be applied to literary criticism, for “*knowing* a literary work would not be to dismantling it, “demystify” it, but to produce a new knowledge: *say what it speaks about without knowing it*” (p. 145).

But, after all, what does the work say? For Macherey (1971),

the work is articulated in relation to the reality on whose background it stands: not to a “natural” reality, an empirical datum, but that complex reality in which men (those who write and those who read) live, and which is *their ideology*. It is on the background of this ideology, original and tacit language, that the work is made: made not to say it, reveal it, translate it, or give it explicit form; made to *make room* for that absence of words without which it would have nothing to say. Therefore, the work should be inquired about what it does not and could not say, since it is made for not saying, for that silence to exist. . . . The order the work assigns to itself is nothing but an imagined order, projected where there is no order, and which serves to fictitiously resolve ideological conflicts. (p. 150)

THE ONTOLOGICAL CONCEPT

There are authors who, differently from Althusser, prefer to study the links between culture and ideology starting from *The Capital* or, to be precise, from the chapter this book devotes to commodity fetishism.

While in *The German Ideology* it was a matter of an inversion (the darkroom) in which false consciousness produced an imaginary, unreal representation of the conditions of existence, the chapter on fetishism displaces the question: in it, it is the *bewitched* reality itself that produces the distorted image. Commodities, forgetting their origin (human labor), seem to rule men’s lives.

This displacement from the *subject* (human consciousness) to the *object*, social reality, is the starting point of authors like Theodor Adorno and Fredric Jameson.

I) Adorno’s position may be briefly summarized in his definition: in capitalist society, merchandise is its own ideology, or else: ideology is society itself.

To arrive at this definition, Adorno starts from Lukács’ (1974) reading of the chapter on fetishism in *History and Class Consciousness*. Lukács’ aim was “discover in the structure of the mercantile relation the prototype of all forms of objectivity and all corresponding forms of subjectivity in the bourgeois society” (p. 97). Going beyond Marx, who was restricted to the economic sphere, Lukács expanded the discussion to account for the subjective sphere. This universalization of the commodity-form to the subjective sphere was done by bringing together Marx’s theory of fetishism with the rationalization process present in Max Weber’s work. Lukács, thus, according to Merleau-Ponty, would have invented the “Weberian Marxism” (Frederico, 2010).

And speaking of merchandise in this context is speaking of the law of value. Marx, studying the capitalist economy, took up again the law of value previously formulated by Smith and Ricardo to refer not only to the *measure* that makes

possible the exchange of different commodities (the duration of the indifferent *abstract work*) but also to characterize the *sociability* present in a society in which the social labor of men adopts the commodity-form.

The law of value allows us to foresee the themes that Adorno will take from Marx – the *abstract* character of capitalist production (which extends to the whole of social life), and the existence of a *measure* ruling the exchange between men and subjecting the qualities, differences, to the quantitative, mercantile criterion. Here, too, the *hateful* identity, so execrated by *negative dialectics*, is present.

The bourgeois society, according to Adorno and Horkheimer (1985), is “dominated by the equivalent” (p. 23), it “makes the heterogeneous comparable, reducing it to abstract magnitudes” (p. 23). According to Adorno, the leveling domain of abstract, by making all things reproducible, is responsible for the agonizing crisis of culture.

As one can see, the law of value leaves the exclusive plane of political economy, where it was originally discovered, to explain the functioning of mercantile exchange in the society of free competition, to account for the crisis of culture in the *State capitalism* in which monopoly exists.

Instead of the democratization that some assign to the cultural industry, Adorno claims that we are facing the standardization, massification, trivialization of articles conceived as objects of commerce. The argument is focused on the changed function of culture. Before, it had an existence apparently disconnected from material production; later, it became part of the productive process and played a strategic role in the system of domination.

But what is culture, the true culture? According to Adorno’s (1962) well-known definition, it is the “perennial claim of the particular in the face of generality”⁶ (p. 72) – a negative, utopian sphere capable of opposing resistance to the world administered.

Culture and administration are opposing terms. The former is the claim of the particular against the general, of the qualitative against the quantitative, of spontaneity against planning. Administration, on the contrary, “represents the general before the particular”⁷ (Adorno, 1962, p. 72): it is extrinsic, external to the administered. It submits things, ranks them, orders them, puts them in separate compartments, but does not understand them. In an ever more unified world, administration encounters culture and tries to frame it. But its criteria, its norms, have nothing to do with culture, with the *quality of the object*, with its value of use.

Resistance to commodification and the triumph of reification subsists only in critical theory and *avant-garde* art – that which refuses the “*lie of representation*,” which is pure negativity and which adopts a “*second language*” in order, through it, to oppose the prevailing ideology.

⁶In the original: “la reclamación perenne de lo peculiar frente a la generalidad”.

⁷In the original: “lo general frente a lo peculiar”.

Ideology, therefore, is a *thought of identity*. All theories of ideology, says Adorno, “belong to a world in which a developed industrial society did not yet exist” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1973, p. 190). Today, what prevails is “an intrinsically uniform ideology” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1973, p. 200). Therefore, false consciousness “is something scientifically adapted to society,” it is “a duplication and over-rectification of the existing situation” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1973, pp. 201-202), thanks to the presence of the cultural industry.

What would oppose this *false whole* is the irreducible difference, the incomparable quality, the heterogeneity. But here a controversial issue arises: wouldn't the defense of difference have prepared the cult of differences that would later become the banner of postmodernism? Adorno's interpreters are not in agreement on this point.

Divergences are lessened when it comes to one of Adorno's disciples: Fredric Jameson, an author who became famous for critiquing postmodernism without, however, ceasing to be fascinated by the object being critiqued.

II) More than once Adorno observed that the old culture, in its apparent autonomy from capital, offered a point from which it was possible to criticize the harm brought by capital to human life. Jameson (2000), writing several decades after Adorno, noted the vanishing of that supposed autonomy. In today's world, he says, there has been a fusion between economy and culture and, with it, the possibility for culture to criticize the existing order:

With regard to cultural criticism, there is not a single leftist theory today able to rule out the idea . . . of a minimal aesthetic distance, that is, of the possibility of placing the cultural action outside the compact being of capital, and using it as an Archimedean point of support from which to launch an attack on capitalism itself. (p. 74)

The left had become accustomed to granting some autonomy to the sphere of culture, seen since always as a territory of resistance to the logic of capital. More than that: as an “Archimedean point” of privileged support for critique. The expression refers to Archimedes and the use of levers. He said: “give me a point of support, and I will move the world”. Jameson's immediate reference, however, seems to be Lukács. In *Aesthetics*, Lukács advocated for the thesis that art, and literature in particular, was an Archimedean point from which it would be possible to criticize the alienated reality. This is because literature works with human destinies and, in so doing, shows how bourgeois society impedes the fulfillment of individuals. The realist writer, in his craft, spontaneously enters into contradiction with the bourgeois world.

This belief, says Jameson (2000), is no longer well-founded, for art and capital now form one single block. Art is now stuck to merchandise: it is the design, image, packaging that is definitively stuck to the mercantile artifact, building up one single thing.

Such a merge is the result of a long historical process in which culture and capital have related in different ways. Jameson (2000) then tries to periodize these moments and their artistic expressions, initially taking Ernest Mandel's book *Late Capitalism* (1982) as a reference. Thus, we would have market capitalism (realism), monopoly capitalism (modernism), and multinational capitalism (postmodernism).

In more recent works, such as *The Culture of Money* (2001), Jameson has moved away from Mandel's periodization towards the economic analyses of Giovanni Arrighi. To characterize the new moment – that of postmodernism – Jameson resorts to the concept of globalization, as defined by Arrighi. It is no longer a matter, now, of Mandel's three phases, but of the three progressive moments of *abstraction* posed by money.

Money has always been abstract, but it used to have a content: it was the money of cotton, wheat etc. In this first moment, an interest in the physical properties of objects arises and

a more realistic interest in the physical aspects of the world and in the new, more intense human relations of trade. Marketers and their consumers need to take a greater interest in the sensory nature of their products, and also in the psychological and character characteristics of their interlocutors. (Jameson, 2001, p. 155)

This is the moment of realism in literature.

Next, the intensification of reification, and the visible presence of exchange value and monetary equivalence between different objects put an end to the “old notions of stable substances and their unitary identifications” (Jameson, 2001, p. 161). The general equivalence established by money made it possible to

now buy, so to speak, its various perceptual qualities or characteristics, henceforth semi-autonomous, and both color and form are freed from their former means, and come to enjoy an independent existence as fields of perception, and as raw materials of art. (Jameson, 2001, p. 161)

This is the moment of abstraction of aesthetic modernism.

Finally, the third moment, that of postmodernism, was created by globalization, when money-capital reached its *ultimate dematerialization*: it no longer dwells in

the factory or in the old places of production and extraction, *but on the floor of the stock exchange*. Floating money now waives its referent, any material content, and values itself. Jameson (2001) speaks of deterritorialization (an expression taken from Deleuze and Guattari) to classify this moment when content has been suppressed by form and

the inherent nature of the product becomes insignificant, a mere marketing pretext, insofar as the goal of production is no longer aimed at any specific market, at any specific set of consumers or individual or social needs, but rather at its transformation into that element which, by definition, has no content or territory and, indeed, no value of use. (p. 161)

The brutal dematerialization of the world produced by the hegemony of finance capital, has as its artistic reflection the celebration of pastiche and mass culture, just as postmodernism wants.

Jameson seems to accept without criticism the thesis of dematerialization of the real. Whether relying on Mandel or Arrighi, the postmodernist theses have been partially accepted.

THE POLITICAL CONCEPT

I) Unlike Althusser, Gramsci did not know *The German Ideology*, which had not been published until 1932, nor did he give centrality to the chapter on commodity fetishism, as Adorno did. Gramsci's constant reference to the subject of ideology is the preface to *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. In this text, Marx (1977) states that social revolutions arise from the contradiction between productive forces and relations of production, and also that men become aware of it in the superstructure or, in his words, in the "juridical, political, religious, artistic or philosophical forms, in short, the ideological forms through which men become aware of this conflict, carrying it to its ultimate consequences" (p. 25).

Therefore, Gramsci (2000b) says that ideology is not a mechanical reflection of the material base, as Bukhárin would have it; one should not "conceive 'ideology', doctrine, as something artificial and mechanically overlapped (like a garment on the skin, as opposed to skin, which is organically produced by the animal biological organism), but historically, as an endless struggle" (p. 199).

But neither should one conceive of ideology, in Croce's manner, as *appearance and illusion*. According to Croce (2007, p. 77), Marx's materialist inversion consisted in replacing Hegel's Absolute Spirit with matter. The latter would act

behind the scenes as a “hidden God,” driving the historical process in which the superstructure would be a mere appearance.

Gramsci (1999), in contrast to these authors, understands ideology as “an objective . . . and operative reality” (p. 388), *an instrument of political action*. This positive concept of ideology, as can be seen, also differs from the Althusser’s interpretation of representation of the *imaginary relation* of individuals to their actual conditions of existence; and it also steps away from Adorno’s homogenizing view.

The *positive* concept of ideology led Gramsci (1999) to refer to the passages in which Marx speaks of the “solidity of popular beliefs” (p. 238) and of ideas that when incorporated by the masses become a material force. Based on these, he concludes:

The analysis of these statements, I believe, leads to the strengthening of the concept of the “historical bloc” in which, precisely, material forces are the content while ideologies are the form, a distinction between form and content that is purely didactic, since material forces would not be historically conceivable without form, and ideologies would be individual fantasies without the material forces. (p. 238)

Therefore, it has a material substrate – it is neither reflection nor appearance. Gramsci (2000a) thus turns to the study of the *ideological structure* that the many classes create to sustain and spread ideology. The press, for example,

is the most dynamic part of this ideological structure, but not the only one: everything that influences or can influence public opinion, directly or indirectly, is part of this structure. The libraries, schools, circles and clubs of various kinds, even architecture, layout and the name of streets, are part of it. (p. 78)

This materiality of ideology, which is present in these many spheres, is one of the sources of Althusser’s theory of the *ideological apparatuses of the State*. In Gramsci (1999), it is the way to think about the central theme of his work: hegemony. Hegemony is the “originator of ideology which lends the innermost cement to civil society” (p. 375). A factor of cohesion (cement), ideology is the source of a *collective will*, a *concept of the world*, a *cultural movement*:

But at this point arises the fundamental problem of every concept of the world, of every philosophy that has become a cultural movement, a “religion,” a “faith,” that is, that has produced a practical activity and a will in which it is contained as an implicit theoretical “premise” (an “ideology,” one might say, provided we

give the term “ideology” the highest meaning of a concept of the world, which is implicitly manifested in art, law, economic activity, in all manifestations of individual and collective life). In other words, the problem of preserving ideological unity throughout the social bloc that is cemented and unified precisely by that particular ideology. (Gramsci, 1999, pp. 98-99)

But this is not the only meaning of ideology that appears in the *Prison Notebooks*. Gramsci (1999) also speaks of the existence, alongside a *necessary* and *organic ideology*, of an ideology that is “pure arbitrary elucubration of certain individuals” (p. 237), and also of a *diffuse ideology*. With this new concept, the author refers to the residual or not yet self-conscious classes, certain forms of philosophical thought, arts, literary production, literary criticism, questions of linguistics, Americanism and Fordism etc. In this regard, Guido Liguori (2010) noted that “Gramsci’s concept of ideology, in fact, may only be reconstructed if one also takes into consideration other words, such as worldview, philosophy, conformism, religion, faith, common sense, folklore etc.” (p. 140).

The polysemic character of Gramsci’s conception of ideology will also follow his conception of culture. Both concepts should be managed within the larger problematic of hegemony and the struggle for the *moral reform of society* – a divided society that expresses its division also in the superstructure.

Every cultural manifestation contains ideological elements, but this does not lead Gramsci (2002) to dilute culture in ideology. The reference to Shakespeare, criticized by several authors (Tolstoy, Shaw, Ernest Crosby) because of his aristocratic positions, is significant:

in all of Shakespeare’s work there is hardly a word of sympathy for the people and the working masses . . . his drama is essentially aristocratic. Almost every time he introduces into the scene bourgeois or common people, he presents them in a derogatory or disgusting way, making them the object or subject of laughter. (p. 121)

These comments, says Gramsci (2002), are directed “against Shakespeare the ‘thinker’, and not Shakespeare the ‘artist’” (p. 121). Gramsci criticizes the “moralistic bias” (p. 121) of these interpreters and thus does not reduce art to mere ideological expression.

The inclusion of culture in the discussion of hegemony, in turn, refers to Gramsci’s efforts to develop a *cultural politics*. Therefore, when analyzing a work, he seeks to separate *artistic value* from *cultural value*. A literary work may have little artistic value, but an important cultural value (it can express, for example, the way of life of the subaltern classes). Gramsci thus shifts the

focus of literary criticism from aesthetic theories to the study of culture. In this register, he suggests that literature is not a branch of linguistics, as structuralism would later affirm. Art is not only language: language is the *material*, the vehicle of literature. Therefore, Gramsci does not propose a new language, a new art, as the various *avant-garde* currents claim, but a *new culture*. This project of *culture renewal*, of the struggle for a new hegemony, nods to the defense of a *national-popular* art.

It is important to point out that the national-popular is primarily a claim, not an existing reality in Italy. The late unification of the country, and the cosmopolitanism of the church created a divorce between artists and the people – a divorce that did not exist in France and Russia. The term national-popular has unfortunately been misunderstood – it has nothing to do with *nationalism* or *populism* that would have been superseded today by globalization and by the *international-popular* culture. When Gramsci uses this expression, he models it on the Greek Tragedies, and Shakespeare (Frederico, 2016).

By opposing the image of society as a building composed of two floors – the material base and the superstructure – putting in its place the monist concept of historical block, Gramsci stayed away from theories that saw the superstructure as *reflection* or *appearance* and, by making the distinction between aesthetic value and cultural value, paved the way for cultural studies aimed at the popular classes.

The main critic to appropriate the innovations launched by Gramsci is Raymond Williams.

II) The division between infra and superstructure is emphatically rejected by Williams. Although Marx crystallized this separation, Williams reminds us that he was the great scholar of *material processes*. Against the idealist historiography that read history as the progressive victory of reason over superstition, Marx studied the material production of men, labor, industry. In Marx's view, man is a being who made himself through work. The building metaphor, however, reproduces the separation between material and spiritual spheres. To integrate both, Williams proposes a new concept which he calls *cultural materialism*.

In this new conception, culture is not superstructure doomed to passively reflect and mirror what goes on in the engine room. Art is *material*, not only because its products are material (books, records, paintings etc.), but also because the means with which it works are material (paper, oil, paint etc.). Extending this view to social life, Williams (1979) observes:

the social and political order that maintains the capitalist market, like the social and political struggles that created it, is necessarily a material production. From castles, palaces and churches to prisons, workshops and schools; from weapons of war to

a controlled press: any ruling class produces a social and political order in many ways, but always materially. These activities are never superstructural. They are the necessary material production within which only an apparently self-sufficient mode of production may be fulfilled. (p. 96)

Because it is material, *culture is a productive force*. In Marx, this expression was aimed exclusively at the material base, at commodity production. Williams says, however, that capitalism not only produces commodities, it also produces “prisons, workshops and schools” etc., without which commodity production is not accomplished, and the capitalist mode of production would not be reproduced. Moreover, in contemporary capitalism there has been an intermingling of the economy with other spheres – not only the political, but also the cultural (as can be seen from the strategic importance of the modern media). Williams does not intend to *correct* Marx, but to *update* his thinking to understand the new facts. That is why he *brought culture into the interior of material production*. Culture is productive force; it is social practice. He thus resumes the original sense of the word: cultivation, gathering, that is, practical activity.

In addition to unifying infra and superstructure, Williams advances a distinction. Culture should not be restricted to the *noble* products of human spirit, for it implies a whole *way of life*. Society is structured on the basis of certain ideas, practices, institutions common to the individuals who inhabit it. This is a clearly anthropological concept of culture, a direct inheritor of Gramsci.

One of Williams’ (2014) essays has the suggestive title “Culture Is Ordinary” (1958), culture is an ordinary thing, it is a present way of living that guides men’s relationship with the world. So culture is everywhere, and not in a noble sphere (the great art) separate from the lives of ordinary men. But culture also includes the more sophisticated artistic cultural products. Great art, however, is born within *ordinary* culture, shared by ordinary mortals, and returns to them. The material and the meaning of art come from collective social life. Studying art is to retrace the links that connect its products to social life. Hence the shift that brings our author closer to Gramsci: art should be studied as a moment in the cultural life of a people.

What should be retained here is that culture is a process that develops within a given way of life. The study of culture turns to institutions and social processes.

The same procedure will accompany Williams’ (1979) reflections on ideology. This should not be understood as an *abstraction* or *illusion*, but as a system of ideas, meanings and values, connected with “the production of material life”. And, when they are realized in products

which we call “art” and “literature,” and which are normal elements of the very general processes we call “culture” and “language,” they may be approached in ways other than reduction, abstraction, or assimilation. This is the argument that should now be brought to cultural and literary studies. (p. 75)

OUTCOMES

As we have seen, there are diverse and conflicting interpretations of the relationship between culture and ideology among the authors studied. The ongoing research has sought to clarify the theoretical contours surrounding divergences. The partial results of the research have been published in several articles on the website *A Terra É Redonda* between 2020 and 2022. These are: “Althusser – A Crítica da Identidade” (Frederico, 2022b); “Althusser e a Ideologia” (Frederico, 2022c); “Theodor Adorno: A Crítica da Totalidade” (Frederico, 2021e); “Adorno, Ideologia, Sociologia” (Frederico, 2021f); “Theodor Adorno e o Jazz” (Frederico, 2022a); “Gramsci e a Cultura” (Frederico, 2021a); “Gramsci e a Ideologia” (Frederico, 2021d); “O Anti-Croce de Gramsci” (Frederico, 2021c); “Marxismo e Sociologia: Gramsci Crítico de Bukhárin” (Frederico, 2020d); “Dialética e Revolução em Gramsci” (Frederico, 2021b); “O Multiculturalismo em Quarentena” (Frederico, 2020a); “Gramsci, a Cultura e as Políticas Identitárias” (Frederico, 2020c); “Estudos Culturais e Crítica Literária” (Frederico, 2020b). I have submitted the essay “Arte, Ideologia: de Althusser a Macherey” (in press) to the journal *Novos Rumos*. ■

REFERENCES

- Adorno, T. (1962). Cultura y administración. In T. Adorno & M. Horkheimer, *Sociologica* (pp. 65-92). Taurus.
- Adorno, T., & Horkheimer, M. (1985). *Dialética do esclarecimento*. Zahar.
- Althusser, L. (1967). *Análise crítica da teoria marxista*. Zahar.
- Althusser, L. (1980). *Posições-2*. Graal.
- Althusser, L. (1995). Lettre sur la connaissance de l’art. In L. Althusser, *Écrits philosophiques et politiques. Tome II*. Stock; Imec.
- Croce, B. (2007). *Materialismo histórico e economia marxista*. Centauro.
- Dosse, F. (1993). *História do estruturalismo* (Vol. I). Ensaio; Ed. Unicamp.
- Eagleton, T. (1997). *Ideologia*. Boitempo; Unesp.
- Frederico, C. (2010). O marxismo-weberiano. In F. Teixeira & C. Frederico, *Marx, Weber e o marxismo-weberiano* (pp. 171-250). Cortez.

- Frederico, C. (2016). Os marxistas e a literatura: Roteiro de leituras. In C. Frederico, *Ensaio sobre marxismo e cultura*. Mórula.
- Frederico, C. (2020a, June 22). O multiculturalismo em quarentena. *A Terra É Redonda*. <https://bit.ly/3MUFqXw>
- Frederico, C. (2020b, July 29). Estudos culturais e crítica literária *A Terra É Redonda*. <https://bit.ly/36fNJmV>
- Frederico, C. (2020c, August 24). Gramsci, a cultura e as políticas identitárias. *A Terra É Redonda*. <https://bit.ly/35SPbfn>
- Frederico, C. (2020d, October 9). Marxismo e sociologia – Gramsci crítico de Bukhárin. *A Terra é Redonda*. <https://bit.ly/3JrRXX6>
- Frederico, C. (2021a, September 17). Gramsci e a cultura. *A Terra é Redonda*. <https://bit.ly/3tc3X9x>
- Frederico, C. (2021b, October 17). Dialética e revolução em Gramsci. *A Terra é Redonda*. <https://bit.ly/3w9XYnU>
- Frederico, C. (2021c, October 30). O anti-Croce de Gramsci. *A Terra é Redonda*. <https://bit.ly/3MWTuXI>
- Frederico, C. (2021d, November 20). Gramsci e a ideologia. *A Terra é Redonda*. <https://bit.ly/3i8aE6i>
- Frederico, C. (2021e, December 2). Theodor Adorno e a crítica da totalidade. *A Terra É Redonda*. <https://bit.ly/3qut4mz>
- Frederico, C. (2021f, December 19). Adorno, ideologia, sociologia. *A Terra É Redonda*. <https://bit.ly/3CKjn89>
- Frederico, C. (2022a, January 1). Theodor Adorno e o jazz. *A Terra É Redonda*. <https://bit.ly/34Nj28k>
- Frederico, C. (2022b, January 24). Louis Althusser – a crítica da identidade. *A Terra É Redonda*. <https://bit.ly/36io6Sr>
- Frederico, C. (2022c, February 16). Althusser e a ideologia. *A Terra É Redonda*. <https://bit.ly/3tmUKeZ>
- Frederico, C. (in press). Arte, ideologia: De Althusser a Macherey. *Novos Rumos*.
- Gramsci, A. (1999). *Cadernos do cárcere* (Vol. 1). Civilização Brasileira.
- Gramsci, A. (2000a). *Cadernos do cárcere* (Vol. 2). Civilização Brasileira.
- Gramsci, A. (2000b). *Cadernos do cárcere* (Vol. 3). Civilização Brasileira.
- Gramsci, A. (2002). *Cadernos do cárcere* (Vol. 6.). Civilização Brasileira.
- Horkheimer, M., & Adorno, T. (1973). *Temas básicos de sociologia*. Cultrix; Edusp.
- Jameson, F. (2000). *Pós-modernismo: A lógica cultural do capitalismo tardio*. Ática.
- Jameson, F. (2001). *A cultura do dinheiro: Ensaio sobre a globalização*. Vozes.
- Liguori, G. (2010). Ideologie. In F. Frosini & G. Liguori (Eds.), *Le parole di Gramsci: Per un lessico dei Quaderni del carcere* (pp. 131-149). Carocci.
- Lukács, G. (1974). *História e consciência de classe*. Escorpião.

- Macherey, P. (1971). *Por uma teoria da produção literária*. Estampa.
- Mandel, E. (1982). *O capitalismo tardio*. April.
- Marx, K. (1977). *Contribuição à crítica da economia política*. Martins Fontes.
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (2007). *A ideologia alemã: Crítica da mais recente filosofia alemã em seus representantes Feuerbach, B. Bauer e Stirner, e do socialismo alemão em seus diferentes profetas (1845-1846)*. Boitempo. (Original work published 1867)
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (2010). *Cultura, arte e literatura: Textos escolhidos*. Expressão Popular.
- Montag, W. (2011). Hacia una teoria de la materialidad del arte. In L. Althusser, E. Balibar, P. Macherey & W. Montag, *Escritos sobre el arte* (pp. 165-229). Tierradenadie.
- Pêcheux, M. (1985). *Semântica e discurso: Uma crítica à afirmação do óbvio*. Ed. Unicamp.
- Williams, R. (1979). *Marxismo e literatura*. Zahar.
- Williams, R. (2014). *Raymond Williams on culture and society: Essential writings*. Sage.

Article received on June 18th, 2021 and approved on March 13th, 2022.

