

IDEOLOGY & CULTURAL IDENTITY



*Modernity
and the
Third World
Presence*

JORGE LARRAIN

IDEOLOGY & CULTURAL IDENTITY



*Modernity
and the
Third World
Presence*

JORGE LARRAIN

Ideology and Cultural Identity

Modernity and the Third World Presence

JORGE LARRAIN

Polity Press

Copyright © Jorge Larrain 1994

The right of Jorge Larrain to be identified as author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published in 1994 by Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers.

Editorial office:
Polity Press
65 Bridge Street
Cambridge CB2 1UR, UK

Marketing and production:
Blackwell Publishers
108 Cowley Road
Oxford OX4 1JF, UK

238 Main Street
Cambridge, MA 02142, USA

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purposes of criticism and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Except in the United States of America, this book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

ISBN 978-0-7456-6749-2 (Multi-user ebook)

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library and the Library of Congress.

Typeset in 10 on 12 pt Palatino
by Graphicraft Typesetters Ltd, Hong Kong

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Marston Lindsay Ross International Ltd, Oxfordshire

Contents

Preface and Acknowledgements

Introduction

1 Ideology, Reason and the Construction of the Other

2 Ideology and the Assault on Reason

3 Structuralism and the Dissolution of Althusserianism

4 Poststructuralism and Postmodernism

5 Habermas and the New Concept of Reason

6 Cultural Identity, Globalization and History

Notes

Index

Preface and Acknowledgements

This book completes the ideas presented in earlier volumes on *The Concept of Ideology* and *Marxism and Ideology* by addressing more contemporary authors and intellectual currents, with especial emphasis on the irrationalist, poststructuralist and postmodernist theories or critiques of ideology. However, one of the objectives of the book is to present these ideas in a wider, global context which, first of all, takes into account the Third World presence and, second, opens itself up to issues of cultural identity. My attempt to deal with these connections has been greatly influenced by the intellectual atmosphere, the teaching and the discussions which take place in the Department of Cultural Studies at Birmingham University. In particular, I think I owe an important intellectual debt to Richard Johnson on issues related to cultural identity, although he may not be aware of it and cannot be made responsible for any shortcomings of my book. I would also like to thank Tony Giddens, not just because as an editor he proposed changes which greatly improved the book, but also because my understanding of modernity and postmodernity has been greatly enhanced by his ideas. I am very grateful to many people at Polity Press and Blackwell Publishers who so efficiently dealt with the problems of producing this book while I was abroad. A special mention must be made of Linden Stafford for her excellent copy-editing, which greatly

improved the text. None the less, I should be held responsible for the remaining oddities of my English.

The author and publishers are grateful for permission to reproduce materials already published by the author: 'Ideology and its Revisions in Contemporary Marxism', in Noel O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Structure of Modern Ideology* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar Publishing, 1989); 'The Postmodern Critique of Ideology', *The Sociological Review*, vol. 42, no. 2 (May 1994); 'Classical Political Economists and Marx on Colonialism and "Backward" Nations', *World Development*, vol. 19, nos 2-3 (February/March 1991), pp. 225-43, with kind permission from Pergamon Press Ltd, UK; 'Stuart Hall and the Marxist Concept of Ideology', *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 8, no. 4 (November 1991), pp. 1-28.

Introduction

This book has several objectives and different dimensions. Generally speaking it seeks to explore the relationships between three important concepts, ideology, reason and cultural identity, which are at the centre of contemporary discussions about modernity and postmodernity. It tries to carry out such an exploration not merely in the context of European thought, but also in a dialogue with the realities of the Third World, especially Latin America. The book also seeks to expound and critically analyse the theories of ideology which inform or derive from currents of thought opposed to modernity, from Schopenhauer to postmodernity. But at the same time it will try to define and use a concept of ideology, derived from but not entirely coincident with Marx's concept, in order to assess both the problems of irrationalist theories of ideology and the shortcomings of the universalistic theories including Marx's. Additionally, the book wants to discuss more specifically some issues concerning the concept of cultural identity and the way in which it stands in relation to personal identity and the process of globalization. Finally, an important aim of the book is to explore some European conceptions of the Third World, particularly Latin America, in order to establish some relationships between both universalistic and historicist theories, and specific manners of constructing the other. A comparison between universalistic and historicist theories leads to different relationships between reason and racism.

I shall start in chapter 1 with the idea that the very concept of ideology was born in the context of the emergence of modernity and the triumph of instrumental reason. Thus the most powerful theories of ideology are those developed implicitly or explicitly by the big theories of development such as Marxism, classical political economy and Weberian theories of modernization which believe in reason and progress. The closeness between reason and ideology in the origins of modernity has direct consequences in the construction of the 'other' and the treatment of other cultures. The big representative theories of modernity tend to be universalistic, to disregard difference, to reduce the specific to the general. Thus, although some of these theories bequeath important theoretical contributions such as the very theory of ideology, they have difficulties in understanding other societies where instrumental reason has not entirely triumphed and where the universal schemes of progress seem to work less perfectly. This is the reason why they easily justify colonialism and European tutelage over other parts of the world and sometimes fall into blatant racism. I explore these issues in relation to classical political economy, Marx and Hegel in chapter 1. I also try to go further in order to discover whether there is a sort of a relationship between the most typical philosophy of the Enlightenment, empiricism, and racism.

All this leads me to try to find a concept of ideology which takes into account these other forgotten aspects which have to do with colonialism and the cultural identity of Third World areas. The almost exclusive focus on the capital/labour contradiction in Marx's theory of ideology leaves aside other conflicts which have also been shown to be relevant to the maintenance of the capitalist system, this time in its global dimension. Thus the concept with which I shall operate, although derived from Marx, will be wider in

scope in that it will consider conflicts other than class antagonisms, especially racial and colonial divisions, which are also masked or explained away in the interest of the capitalist system. At the same time, the capitalist system which is at stake will be taken to go beyond the narrow boundaries of nation-states, to constitute an international system in which any of its spatially integrated parts could be affected by events elsewhere.

The opposition to and critique of universalistic theories of modernity have been carried out by historicist and irrationalist theories which attack the Enlightenment's trust in reason, progress and universal truth. Such a critique can be considered as an ideology critique, although many of these authors try to rid themselves of the concept of ideology which they find too closely attached to the rationalistic spirit and epistemological absolutism of modernity. Still, it is my contention that in spite of their formal protest and rejection of the concept of ideology they end up reintroducing it through the back door.

An important part of the book will therefore be concerned with those theories and conceptions of ideology which stem from the overrating of the role of the irrational in human life and society. They tend to doubt the value of rationality in history and society and they are sceptical about the possibility of reaching the truth. Truth becomes relativized, and every institution, epoch, nation or culture is said to have its own regime of truth. Truth acquires a discursive character because it can be constructed in different discourses which are incommensurable. This relativization of truth started with German philosophical historicism and has culminated in contemporary times with postmodernism. Reason is downgraded to being a servant of power, of the struggle for life, and ceases to be a principle which informs history and the organization of society. What characterizes the human being is the predominance of an irrational will

and its drives. Reason becomes subordinate to will. Thus it is not surprising that the concept of power, as an expression of this irrational will, plays a central role in all these theories. If social life is seen as a kind of struggle where the will uses reason for its own purposes, then power becomes central.

The book will try to show that these conceptions tend to use, implicitly or explicitly, a critical notion of ideology; that is to say their aim is to criticize ideology, to expose doubtful values, to unmask traditional principles. But the main ideological culprit is almost always reason itself, or its reduction to instrumental reason. Most irrationalist theories have an acute sense of the connections between knowledge and power and therefore tend to accept that power is usually maintained by knowledge. Machiavelli and Hobbes are the intellectual ancestors of these theories. They tend to have a pessimistic idea about human nature. They criticize dogmas and superstitions, but they still think that they are necessary to keep society in order. Ideas are thus judged by their usefulness to power, not by their truth content. Irrationalist theories accept that human beings inevitably fall into distortions and false beliefs, but because these are prevalent and inevitable they should be taken advantage of, either to keep a strong central power (Pareto) or to prevail in the struggle for life (Nietzsche). So they separate the intellectual value of certain ideas from their usefulness for the exercise of power. Most attacks on reason criticize the rational masks which conceal domination and the exercise of power (Foucault, Adorno, Horkheimer), but some go beyond and tend to glorify the exercise of power as a necessity (Nietzsche, Pareto).

In chapter 2 I shall deal with some of these theories, especially Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Pareto, Adorno and Horkheimer, trying to establish how they carried out ideology critique and assessing their contributions and

problems. However, my interest in them is also instrumental in that they constitute the antecedents of more contemporary developments to be found in poststructuralism and postmodernism which are the topic of chapter 4. However, in order to get to the analysis of poststructuralism and postmodernism, in chapter 3 I take a detour through Althusserianism and its most important strands. This may seem strange but it is justified by my belief that postmodernism and poststructuralism are as much related to the development and dissolution of the Althusserian school as they are to the historicist tradition and Nietzsche. Foucault, Baudrillard and Lyotard, not to speak of Laclau and Mouffe, and Hindess and Hirst in Britain, were all originally Marxists of an Althusserian persuasion, and in order to understand them it is necessary to explore the way in which the Althusserian problematic, radicalized and with some Nietzschean inputs, became poststructuralist and postmodernist.

It will be my contention that the theories opposed to modernity right down to postmodernism are themselves ideological because in criticizing the role of reason they displace the focus of attention from, and thus tend to conceal the main problems of, capitalism. And yet, as Lukács has argued, such theories usually emerge as a reaction to some major crisis related to the emergence or progress of the capitalist system. Thus, for instance, the French Revolution, the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution, the Second World War and, I would add, the revolt in France in 1968 constitute important events around which the thought of some irrationalist thinkers has crystallized. The first early forms of irrationalism were a reaction against the new capitalist system while socialism and the class struggle were not yet well developed. Other forms of irrationalism mirror the irrationalities which creep in during the phases of crisis in the development of

capitalism, but constitute a reaction against the perceived threat of socialism which challenges the survival of capitalism. Once socialism is no longer seen as an international threat, there still subsists a potential revolutionary charge which threatens a system that is inevitably contradictory.

I shall argue that these theories may also become ideological in the sense that under the cover of respect for cultural differences, pluralism and relativism they sometimes construct the 'other' as having so little to do with the European mainstream culture as to be inferior, or at least regard it as sufficiently different to make it necessary to take some protective measures against it in order to safeguard a supposedly threatened cultural identity.

Chapter 5 is devoted to the critical analysis of perhaps the only all-encompassing and strikingly original contemporary social theory which consciously explores the issues arising in the tension between universalistic pro-modern and historicist anti-modern theories and proposes an original synthesis based on a new concept of rationality and ideology reformulated in terms of a theory of communicative action. I refer, of course, to Habermas. This chapter examines Habermas's theory of ideology and his proposal of a new, more encompassing, communicative rationality which allows both the critique of modernity and the defence of its positive sides. Habermas's notion of communicative rationality, coupled with an epistemologically universalistic stand, has important consequences for understanding some issues relating to ethnocentrism and cultural identity. Of particular relevance is his proposal for a post-national and more universalistic type of cultural identity. And this sets the stage for the last chapter.

The book ends with a more specific analysis of the concept of cultural identity in chapter 6. This exploration

combines a brief historical account of the evolution of the concept of personal identity during modern times with some discussion of various positions which define such an identity in particular ways and which connect with some of the theories analysed in previous chapters. More specifically, the issue of globalization becomes a crucial point in the discussion, which shows how it has shaped cultural identities from the beginning of modernity. The distinction between centre and periphery plays an important role here.

The book argues against an essentialist and monolithic conception of identity and for a historical version. At the same time it warns against conceiving of identity as having well-demarcated and universally agreed limits, so that instead of one received version of identity there are always various versions, corresponding to the outlook of different social groups, which are highly selective in the features they choose and exclude. In this sense it is argued that, precisely because some versions of identity may conceal the cultural diversity in the interest of a dominant group, they may become ideological. On the other hand, however, they may also serve as forms by means of which oppressed groups or nations resist their cultural assimilation by more powerful groups or nations. In this sense it is crucial to understand identity not just as a construction coming from the past but also, as Habermas proposes, as a project. This allows the process of selection which all versions of cultural identity perform, to decide how to continue with a certain tradition, which ideological elements to root out, which valuable elements to keep and which elements from other traditions to adopt.

1

Ideology, Reason and the Construction of the Other

Introduction

The recent emergence of postmodernism has put at the centre of contemporary philosophical discussions the value of modernity and the problem of instrumental reason. However, it would be a mistake to believe that it is only with postmodernism that a thorough critique of the Enlightenment and its absolute trust in instrumental reason has been developed. From the very beginning, the belief in science and reason has been accompanied by critical theories, sometimes called historicist,¹ which have emphasized the values of cultural relativism and have criticized the many problems created by the blind use of instrumental reason. While the typical theories influenced by the Enlightenment are universal theories of development which emphasize the identity of goals and the similarity of means in the course of history, the theories critical of modernity emphasize cultural differences and historical discontinuities.² Although both types of theories have explicitly or implicitly developed their own critical conceptions of ideology, they do it in different ways. Theories that consciously want to develop the principles of modernity tend to criticize all obstacles – social, economic and philosophical – which stand in the way of reason,

science and progress. Theories that regard modernity with suspicion tend to criticize reason and science themselves as ideological.

It is possible to argue as well that these two types of theories have a different approach to the cultural 'other'. While universalistic total theories have difficulties in understanding otherness and difference and see history as a series of stages through which everybody has to go, historicist theories have difficulties in understanding common problems and the forms of equality which stem from a shared humanity. To them, history is not a universal but a segmented process whose understanding requires empathy with the different cultural essence which each nation develops. Universalistic theories look at the 'other' from the perspective of the European rational subject; they tend to apply a general pattern which postulates its own absolute truth, thus reducing all cultural differences to its own unity. Historicist theories look at the 'other' from the perspective of its unique and specific cultural set-up, thus emphasizing difference and discontinuity. There are dangers implicit in both positions. While the emphasis on absolute truth and historical continuity may lead to reductionism and neglect of the other's specificity, the emphasis on difference and discontinuity may lead to the construction of the other as inferior. Two forms of racism may be the result of these extremes: whereas universalistic theories may not accept the other because they cannot recognize and accept its differences, historicist theories may dismiss the other because it is constructed as a different, inferior being.

These two types of theories have, tendentially, different conceptions of history and cultural identity. Universalistic theories tend to conceive of history as universal, unilineal, teleological progress, whereas the historicist approach conceives of history as a goalless, discontinuous and segmented process which has no universal direction.

Paradoxically, the emphasis on historical specificity leads historicist theories to conceive of cultural identity ahistorically, as an essence, as an immutable spirit which marks an unbridgeable difference between peoples and nations. The emphasis on history as unilineal progress, on the contrary, may disregard historical specificities, but usually accepts a notion of cultural identity as a process of construction and reconstruction which cannot be reduced to an essence.

Some good examples of what I have called the typical universalistic theories of modernity are classical political economy, Marxism, Weberian modernization theory and neo-liberalism. They constitute important totalizing theories of development which possess an underlying theory of history and propose a universal road to progress to all countries. Although some of them go back to the eighteenth or nineteenth century, they have been very influential world-wide until today. In spite of their many differences, some of their essential underlying philosophical assumptions are very similar. These theories take different angles to see and approach the big project of modernity which had its roots in the European Enlightenment. They all start from a firm belief in instrumental reason and in science, in the idea that we can understand reality and transform it, thus improving our lives. Reason for them is no longer autonomous, beyond the power of human beings; it is an instrument of control and domination of nature, an auxiliary means of production, a way of manipulating means to achieve our ends. Common to these theories as well is the assumption that they can diagnose and analyse undesirable social situations and do something about them. Hence the importance of ideology critique for all of them. They believe that it is possible to establish by means of rational argument that certain prevailing ideas are distorted or wrong.

Hence, all traditional theories of development typical of modernity adhere to a particular notion of reason and conceive of history in terms of the deployment and progressive success of certain forms of agency which specifically express the progress of reason. From the vantage point of such conceptions of historical reason it is possible to ascertain erroneous forms of action and distorted ideas which represent obstacles to the progress of reason. Thus specific forms of ideology critique are developed. Theories of development entail theories of historical reason and theories of ideology.

For example, classical political economy argued in favour of private property, free trade and the establishment of market forces in all the domains of the economy. The entrepreneur became the main agent of progress as the producer of wealth and development. Historical reason was deployed in the free and continuous advance of productive forces and material wealth achieved by market forces. Hence the remnants of feudalism became the main object of ideological critique. Feudalism encroached upon production, and did not allow free trade and free labour. It had, then, to be dismantled so that reason and science could be applied to the productive process. Marxism in its turn makes a case for the socialization of the means of production and considers the proletariat, the direct producer, as the agent of historical reason which will be fully realized in classless society. From this position Marx develops a concept of ideology with which he criticizes the dominant political ideas of capitalism for concealing forms of inequality and exploitation. However, in proposing socialism as a road to the further development of productive forces, Marxism reaffirms a process of change and instrumental rationalization, but in a more radical manner and by the utilization of different means.

Modernization theory, drawing on the ideas of Max Weber, sees society in transition to modernity, in a process of increasing rationalization, a process whereby the traditional absolute forms of rationality typical of aristocratic and religious ideas must be criticized and set aside. Absolute reason fixed legitimate ends and means without regard to their productive usefulness, thus hindering progress and change. So it had to be replaced by new forms of instrumental rationality which maximized control, adaptation and productivity. However, an important difference between Weber's theory and the post-war modernization theories must be noted. Whereas the latter see in the process of rationalization and secularization not only a necessity but also the fulfilment of human hopes for a better life, the former is aware of the grave risk that human beings will be increasingly dominated by the 'iron cage' of bureaucratized structures and reified relationships. Still, both see the process as ineluctable. Neo-liberalism, in its turn, constitutes a recent revival of Adam Smith's ideas which consider free market and free trade as the panaceas which bring about the wealth of nations. The main historical difference from classical political economy is that the ideological critique has shifted from feudalism to Marxism and socialist ideas of the interventionist state. The problem is no longer seen as mercantilism but the more recent Keynesian policies which, according to neo-liberalism, lead to protectionism, excessive state expenditure on welfare, and the excessive power of trade unions, all of which result in poor economic growth.

Ideology and Reason

The concept of ideology was born in the context of the early bourgeois struggles against feudalism and the traditional aristocratic society. These struggles were very much the

backcloth of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, which is, more precisely, the cultural and philosophical environment within which the concept of ideology was generated for the first time. This historical context helps us understand why the concept of ideology emerged, first, as a science of ideas which entailed a deep trust in reason and, second, as a critical weapon to be used in the struggle against the old regime. Both aspects were inextricably linked. It was precisely the belief that truth could be rationally and scientifically achieved, and that armed with it society could be rationally reconstructed, that provided the Enlightenment with the confidence to criticize irrational, metaphysical and religious ideas. Not only were these forms of knowledge deemed to be distorted and superstitious but by spreading ignorance and error among the masses they worked in the interest of, and buttressed, aristocratic power. As the unhappiness of humankind was believed to be related to ignorance and prejudice, rational and lay education was thought to be the liberating solution. Ideology as a science thus entailed a renewed optimism and confidence in progress, reason and education; it believed in the emancipation of humankind.

The belief in reason, especially the belief in instrumental reason, is closely tied up with a critical concept of ideology. Everything that appears traditional or backward, everything that does not lead to progress, is the opposite of reason, is ideology. Ideology is a notion that is used to defend reason, to criticize all those ideas which are not progressive, which do not help control nature to the benefit of human beings. Instrumental reason is anthropocentric and subjective. The human being is the centre, the measure of all things. Instrumental reason is the tool that allows us to control and dominate, the tool that introduces calculability, cost and benefit. Instrumental reason therefore tends to reduce that which is good for humankind to that which increases

productivity. Reason becomes an auxiliary means of production, and ideology becomes its critical weapon.

The spirit of modernity was imbued with these ideas: progress was material progress; it was growth in the production of material goods. In so far as metaphysics, religion and mythology did not help to control nature, to increase production, they had to be attacked as ideological forms. So there is a close relation between the belief in instrumental reason and the critical concept of ideology as the opposite of science or reason. In this sense there is a common thread from the French Enlightenment philosophers of the eighteenth century to the neo-liberal thinkers of today: they all wage battle against ideology as the antithesis of reason. The close historical relationship between reason and ideology makes an implicit reference to agency, that is to say, there are agents of reason and ideology. The former are for progress, the latter oppose it. At the beginning of bourgeois struggles they were synthesized in the bourgeoisie versus the feudal lords but could also be symbolized in the scientist-educator versus the priest.

With the development of bourgeois society and the expansion of capitalism, serious problems, irrationalities and contradictions inherent in the system came to the fore. Two theoretical possibilities emerged to confront them. On the one hand, by taking as a model the bourgeois critique of metaphysics and religion, Marx developed his concept of ideology in order to unmask the new forms of domination and exploitation. Ideology was no longer a science but a kind of distorted consciousness which masked the contradictions of society, thus contributing to the reproduction of the system. Marx strongly believed in reason, but for him the new proletarian class rather than the bourgeoisie was to be its bearer in order to liberate humankind. The agent was changed but the belief in emancipation was kept. Thus Marx accomplished the first

important transposition in the meaning of ideology, from a science to a specific kind of distortion, but maintained the belief in reason and emancipation and the need to criticize those ideas which, by concealing the real problems of society, put obstacles in the way of the emancipatory forces.

Marx and Ideology

Marx's early critique of religion first outlines such a mechanism: religion compensates in the mind for a deficient social reality; it reconstitutes in the imagination a coherent but distorted solution which goes beyond the real world in an attempt to resolve the contradictions and sufferings of the real world. As he put it, '*religious* suffering is at one and the same time the *expression* of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature.'³ Religion appears as an inversion because God, being a creature of the human beings' mind, becomes the creator, and the human beings, who create the idea of God, become the creatures. But this inversion in the mind responds to and derives from a real inversion: 'this state and this society produces religion, which is an *inverted consciousness of the world*, because they are an *inverted world*.'⁴

When Marx criticizes the German philosophers and left Hegelians, the same mechanism of inversion is present. The German ideologists believed that the true problems of humankind were mistaken and religious ideas which they could destroy by criticism. They forget, Marx and Engels aver, that 'to these phrases they themselves are only opposing other phrases, and they are in no way combating the real existing world.'⁵ Their ideological inversion consists in their starting from consciousness rather than material reality; instead of looking at German reality 'they descended

from heavens to earth.’ Again, this mental inversion responds to a real inversion in reality: ‘If the conscious expression of the real relations of these individuals is illusory, if in their imagination they turn reality upside-down, then this in its turn is the result of their limited material mode of activity and their limited social relations arising from it.’⁶

Similarly, when analysing the capitalist mode of production, Marx distinguishes the sphere of appearances (the market) from the sphere of inner relations (production), and argues that there is a basic inversion at the level of production, namely, the fact that past labour dominates living labour (the subject becomes an object and vice versa), and that this inversion ‘necessarily produces certain correspondingly inverted conceptions, a transposed consciousness which is further developed by the metamorphoses and modifications of the actual circulation process’.⁷

These examples, taken from Marx’s analyses at different points in his intellectual evolution, show a consistent pattern in spite of their different nature. In all of them there is a reference to an ‘inverted consciousness of the world’ which corresponds to an ‘inverted world’. This inverted world is practically produced by a ‘limited material mode of activity’ as a contradictory world and is simultaneously projected into distorted forms of consciousness which conceal and misrepresent that contradictory reality. The role of ideology is to help reproduce that contradictory world in the interest of the ruling class. But ideology is not the result of a conspiracy of the ruling class to deceive the dominated classes, nor is it an arbitrary invention of consciousness. It is rather a spontaneous or elaborated discursive attempt to deal with forms of oppression and contradictions which is unable to ascertain the true origin of these problems and

therefore results in the masking and reproduction of those very contradictions and forms of oppression.⁸

The contradictions Marx refers to in his treatment of ideology within capitalism are all derived from or express an aspect of the principal contradiction of capitalism, namely, the contradiction which is constitutive of the very essence of the capitalist mode of production, the contradiction between capital and labour. These two poles relate in a contradictory way because they presuppose and negate each other. As Marx puts it, 'capital presupposes wage labour; wage labour presupposes capital. They reciprocally condition the existence of each other; they reciprocally bring forth each other.'⁹ But this mutual conditioning engenders mutual opposition because 'the working individual *alienates* himself; relates to the conditions brought out of him by his labour as those not of his *own* but of an *alien wealth* and of his own poverty.'¹⁰ Live labour engenders capital (dead labour), but the latter controls the former; capital reproduces itself by reproducing its opposite, wage labour. It is this contradictory process of continuous reproduction whereby capital reproduces itself by reproducing its opposite that explains the origin and function of ideology. The process, in so far as it is contradictory and alienates the worker, needs to be concealed in order to be able to continue to reproduce itself.

The way in which ideology is produced as part of the process of reproduction of the capitalist main contradiction can be ascertained by focusing on the way in which the two poles, capital and labour, relate to each other. Although the production and appropriation of surplus value occur at the level of production, capital and labour first come into contact through the market. This contact through the market appears perfectly fair and equitable, for capital and labour exchange equivalent values. So the process of production and extraction of surplus value is concealed by

the operation of the market, which becomes the source of ideological representations such as the idea of a 'fair wage', equality, freedom, and so on. According to Marx, the labourer's 'economic bondage is both brought about and concealed by the periodic sale of himself, by his change of masters, and by the oscillation in the market-price of labour-power.'¹¹ Because the exchange of equivalents by free individuals in the market is seen on the surface of society and conceals the hidden extraction of surplus value in the process of production, it naturally tends to be reproduced in the minds of both capitalists and labourers as equality and freedom, the linchpins of capitalist ideology.

Ideology, Globalization and Other Forms of Oppression

I have briefly dwelt upon Marx's theory of ideology because it provides the first and most important model of a critical concept of ideology on which I shall draw in order to carry out the analyses and sustain the main theses of this book. This does not mean, however, that I shall use Marx's concept of ideology in exactly the same sense as Marx, without alteration. From the brief account I have given of it is possible to ascertain that Marx's concept was designed to operate, on the one hand, as a critical weapon in the context of class oppression and the main contradiction between capital and labour, and, on the other, as an analytical tool within the boundaries of nation-states, where class domination typically takes place. Although I shall be focusing on the role of ideology in the process of reproduction of the capitalist system, which is, of course, very much a part of Marx's concept, my interest will not be centred mainly and directly on the national ideological processes that sustain class domination, but rather on the transnational ideological processes that sustain other forms

of power and domination, which also have as a result the maintenance of capitalism as a global system.

This means taking Marx's concept of ideology beyond the class and national context in which Marx primarily used it, but keeping both its ultimate function, which is the maintenance and survival of the capitalist (international) system and its negative connotation. J. B. Thompson has made one of the first attempts to defend a negative concept of ideology which both owes something to the work of Marx and seeks to widen its scope beyond class domination. For him, to study ideology 'is to study the ways in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination';¹² or, to put it more succinctly, ideology is '*meaning in the service of power*'.¹³ Wherever there are asymmetrical relations of power there is a situation of domination, and therefore ideology helps sustain not only class domination but also a variety of relations of domination between ethnic groups, between nation-states, between sexes, and so forth.

I fully sympathize with Thompson's intention of defending a critical concept of ideology which is able to cover all forms of domination beyond class domination. However, I have two observations to make about his definition. First, although I accept that different situations of domination are ultimately irreducible to one another, I am especially interested in establishing connections between them. My proposition is that ideological forms which sustain types of domination other than class are, or may be, also connected with the survival of capitalism as an international system.

Second, in so far as the negative connotation of ideology is concerned, Thompson seems to assume that to analyse ideology in terms of the relation between meaning and domination is to give the concept an essentially negative and restrictive sense 'which owes something to the work of Marx'.¹⁴ I want to argue that in contrast with Marx's

conception Thompson's notion of ideology does not necessarily entail a negative connotation. In effect, as he himself recognizes, meanings which support domination may well not be inherently distorted at the epistemological level. Furthermore, according to Thompson, the study of ideology does not of itself entail a critique of domination although it may facilitate it. Thus, to show how meanings are mobilized to sustain a form of domination does not necessarily entail that this form of domination is unjust or wrong!¹⁵ Thus Thompson separates from domination all elements which could be epistemologically and morally negative. It is true that Marx did not conceive of ideology as a mere error opposed to truth or as a mere moral mistake, but he certainly did more than link meanings in general to domination in general: he specified a particular kind of distortion – the masking of contradictions – which stems from and conceals an 'inverted' reality in which the real subjects are treated as objects. In this sense Marx did not totally separate the fact of domination from epistemologically and morally negative considerations.

So, although I adopt a concept of ideology which is wider than Marx's in that I take into account forms of domination other than class, I would like to keep both the reference to the international capitalist system and the negative connotation. Ideology thus remains a kind of distorted thought which seeks to mask reality, but it disguises not just forms of class domination but other forms too such as racial, gender and colonial oppressions. This does not mean that such ideological processes are disconnected from or have no bearing upon particular forms of class domination – the colonial ideological construction of colonized peoples as inferior clearly plays an ideological internal role in deceiving the dominated classes of the colonial power – but they can be analytically distinguished. Thus ideology conceals not merely class antagonisms but also forms of gender, racial

and colonial domination which affect women, ethnic minorities and Third World peoples. Because the relationships between all these dimensions are not always articulated, it is possible to find theories which are unmasking and critical in one dimension and ideological in another dimension. I hope to show in the next section that this is true even of Marxism.

It can be argued that in so far as the reproduction of the capitalist system is concerned class contradictions cannot be put on the same level as other conflicts emerging from gender, race and colonial divisions. The contradiction between the two main classes of the mode of production is the only one which is constitutive of and essential to the capitalist system, in the sense that it is the only contradiction without which the capitalist system cannot survive. Gender, racial and colonial forms of oppression are not indispensable to the survival of the capitalist system. I accept that in this sense the concealment of class contradictions constitutes a privileged role of ideology. But this does not mean that the masking and/or justification of other types of conflicts has not had historically a direct bearing on the maintenance of capitalism. Nobody could deny how important colonialism and the slave trade were to the development of Western capitalism. They may not have been indispensable in principle, but they did play an important role in practice.

The other aspect which is necessary to emphasize is that, with the increasing internationalization of capitalism and the widening of the processes of globalization,¹⁶ ideology, even in its original relation to class contradictions, cannot continue to be analysed within the narrow space of national boundaries. Even in the time of Marx and Engels, philosophy was already an international phenomenon which Marx analysed not just in relation to national class struggles, but also in relation to situations in other countries. Thus, for