LOUIS ALTHUSSER
1918–1990

One of the most influential and distinctive Marxist thinkers of the second half of the twentieth century, Louis Althusser came to prominence in the volatile 1960s. His work combined the new, scientifically oriented methods of structuralism developed by CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS, JACQUES LACAN, and others with a commitment to political engagement and social transformation, laying the groundwork for a revolution in theory that affected fields ranging from literary criticism and cultural studies to history and politics. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)" (1970), his most influential essay and our second selection, analyzes how dominant social systems enforce their control—subtly molding human subjects through ideology—and how they reproduce themselves. "A Letter on Art in Reply to André Bazin" (1966), though less widely known, succinctly explores the relations of art to ideology.

Born in French-held Algeria, Louis Althusser was educated in Marseilles and at the Lycée du Parc in Lyons. In 1939 he was admitted to the prestigious École Normale Supérieure in Paris, but his academic career was delayed when he was drafted into the military during the early days of World War II. Captured in 1940 and held for five years in a German prisoner-of-war camp, he returned to the École Normale after the war, completing a master's thesis on the philosopher G. W. F. HEGEL (1770–1831) in 1948. He then joined the faculty at the school, also doing doctoral work under the supervision of the celebrated Hegelian philosopher Jean Hyppolite. His membership in the French Communist Party from 1948 on was decisive for his future work. His relations with the Party hierarchy were never easy, and his writings were often attacked by official Communist philosophers—he was almost expelled in 1965 in a dispute over China's Cultural Revolution—but Althusser remained a lifelong member. In For Marx (1965; trans. 1969), he encapsulates his intellectual career and how he became, in a famous phrase, "a Marxist in philosophy," noting three coordinates: the underdevelopment of Marxist theory within French communism, the impoverishment of French philosophy since the Enlightenment, and the political situation of the international communist movement in the post-Stalin era. Also formative were the political events in France during his lifetime, which he called "the terrible education of deeds"; these included the Spanish Civil War, World War II, and the cold war that followed.

Publishing little before the 1960s, Althusser undertook during the 1950s a long march through both the Marxist classics and KARL MARX'S influences (notably Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach, 1804–1872). His research culminated in a series of important texts, gathered in For Marx and Reading Capital (the latter coauthored with his student Étienne Balibar, 1965; trans. 1970), both of which quickly captured the attention of French and later British intellectuals. Althusser's interventions changed the face of Western Marxist theory, shattering the pieties of Stalinist dogmatism and the newer Marxist humanism, which, influenced by Hegel and the twentieth-century philosophers GYÖRGY LUKÁCS and JEAN-PAUL SARTRE, saw Marxism as an effort to recover an alienated humanity. Elevating the individual as its center of concern, humanism generally stresses human freedom and self-determination; in contrast, many structuralist thinkers argue that freedom of thought and action is limited by linguistic, psychological, or socioeconomic systems. Propounding an "antihumanism," Althusser emphasizes the scientific aspects of Marxism, in particular its investigation of how societal structures determine lived experience. His critique of humanism continues to help shape postmodern and poststructuralist theory.

Following Marx and FRIEDRICH ENGELS'S central claim in The Communist Manifesto (1848; see above) that "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history
of class struggles," Althusser held that philosophy was bound by political obligations and that the task of the philosopher was to "represent the class struggle in theory," taking the side of the oppressed in ongoing ideological struggles with representatives of the ruling class. His injunction inspired the participants in the May 1968 student and worker uprising in France; but Althusser himself was absent during the turbulent events of May, recuperating in a sanatorium from a recurrence of the clinical depression that had plagued him following his experiences in World War II. After recovering he embarked on an ambitious new theoretical project addressing two questions: how a society achieves stability over time by reproducing its dominant relations of production and what conditions make social revolution possible. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" stems from this larger project, which was never completed. Althusser would continue to teach and to write throughout the 1970s, but his illness worsened, and in 1980 he murdered his wife in a manic fit of rage. Declared mentally incompetent, he was sentenced to house arrest under psychiatric care and isolated from all but a few friends. At the time of his death a decade later, Althusser's reputation had reached a low point.

Althusser's major concepts—"ideological state apparatuses," "interpellation," "imaginary relations," and "overdetermination"—permeate the discourse of contemporary literary and cultural theory, and his theory of ideology has influenced virtually all subsequent serious work on the topic. The problem that Althusser sets out to solve in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"—to determine how a society reproduces its basic social relations, thereby ensuring its continuing existence—is a perennial one in social theory, raised as early as Plato's Republic (ca. 375 B.C.E.). Plato thought that the key to sustaining a just state was controlling the education of its citizens, particularly its ruling class. Althusser concurs, while emphasizing that the dominant values in a society are for the most part endorsed by the majority of its members. Winning their endorsement is the work of ideology, and Althusser employs a structuralist account of the societal mechanisms that inculcate such consent, as well as a psychoanalytic account of how ideology makes individuals "subjects" of the dominant social order. Contrary to its colloquial sense, which suggests a set of ideas or beliefs that one chooses to espouse or reject, ideology for Althusser is not voluntary but the result of structural factors in society; he thus dispenses with the standard humanist notion of free will.

Althusser famously terms the societal mechanisms for creatingpliant, obedient citizens who practice dominant values "ideological state apparatuses" (ISAs). Complex, numerous, and differing from one society to another, they are civil institutions that have legal standing (hence their designation as "state" apparatuses), including churches, schools, the family, courts, political parties, unions, the media, sports, and the arts. ISAs differ from "repressive state apparatuses" (RSAs), such as the police, the military, the prison system, and government, in several key ways: they are not unified, they operate primarily in the private sphere, and they attain their power not by means of explicit coercion or force but through implicit consent realized in accepted "practices." One tacitly learns the practice of obedience to authority, for example, in church, in school, at home, or on sports teams. As Althusser notes, a dominant social order would not survive if it relied only on force, and he traces the rising influence of schools as the dominant ISA in modern society. Schools have supplanted the church in this role, instilling in students the habits that will make them productive workers in modern capitalist societies, so that they show up at the factory or office desk after day without question.

Althusser's theory revises the standard Marxist definition of ideology as "false consciousness," the explanation of why people willingly participate in the capitalist exploitation seen to undergird modern society. Many Marxists argue that we simply misunderstand what is really going on: believing that the economic system is fair and offers equal opportunity, rather than favoring those who control the means of production and capital, we identify with and emulate the owners and capitalists. Althus-
ser retains the classical Marxist stress on economic causes, which he says are decisive "in the last instance," but his concept of the ISAs presents a fuller explanation of the diverse societal processes of ideology. It also allows for more complexity: ISAs operate with "relative autonomy," sometimes for different and contradictory ends (they are "overdetermined"). His theory thus has affinities with the thought a generation earlier of the Italian Marxist ANTONIO GRAMSCI, whose concept of hegemony explains the flexibility of social dominance and its operation through cultural institutions.

Althusser defines ideology as "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence." It is here that he turns to a subtle psychoanalytic account, adopting Jacques Lacan's concepts of the imaginary, mirroring, and subject formation. Revising SIGMUND FREUD's concepts of the unconscious, ego, and superego, Lacan posits a three-part structure—the Imaginary, the Real, and the Symbolic—that forms the individual subject. The Imaginary constitutes the preverbal realm in which human beings exist from earliest years; it is not a false but a primordial structure of consciousness. For Althusser, ideology takes the place of the Imaginary, which one is "born into" and which, like the Freudian unconscious, deeply influences how one acts. But unlike Lacan, he sees an individual's subjectivity as generated through social forces. Using Lacan's ideas of mirroring and recognition, Althusser describes how ISAs "interpellate or hail individuals as subjects." A pivotal stage in character development for Lacan is "the mirror stage," when an infant recognizes him-or herself in a mirror. For Althusser, ideology works through our tacit recognition of being hailed, as when we turn around to answer the call, "Hey, you there!"

Though Althusser focused largely on political theory, and his writings on art and literature were unsystematic and occasional, "A Letter on Art" briefly investigates the effect of ideology on artworks. In keeping with the Marxist "reflection" theory of art, held by LEON TROTSKY and to some extent Lukács, Althusser observes that art is formed out of and pictures ideological raw materials; but he also reasons that it maintains a certain distance from the ideologies "to which it alludes." He thus grants "authentic" art a special critical status in "making us see" the ideologies "from which it detaches itself," exposing ideology "in some sense from the inside." Other twenty-first-century ideas lurking in the background are defamiliarization, as defined by the Russian formalists BORIS EICHENBAUM and Victor Shklovsky, and especially estrangement, as described by the German Marxist playwright Bertolt Brecht. Although Althusser allows art itself a special value, he also recognizes that the arts are embedded in institutions (museums, publishing houses, media, recording companies, Hollywood studios, and so forth) that function as ISAs, shoring up the ideas and values of the ruling class through imaginative representations.

Provoking sharp reaction as well as a devoted following, Althusser's work has had wide-ranging influence. Some have found his reliance on a structural account of society too deterministic; others, most notably E. P. Thompson, the English historian usually considered a founding father of cultural studies, have criticized his lack of attention to empirical history. Despite Thompson's disavowal, Althusser's concept of ideology has been crucial to cultural studies, as recounted in STUART HALL'S "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies" (1992; see below) and as evidenced in DICK HEBDIDGE'S Subculture: The Meaning of Style (1979; see below). Althusser's concept of ideology has also been foundational for the leading contemporary Marxist literary critics in Britain and in America, TERRY EAGLETON and FREDRIC JAMESON. Eagleton's Criticism and Ideology (1976), for instance, draws heavily on Althusser, though focusing on how art produces ideology rather than how ideology informs art. Jameson's The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (1981; see below), perhaps the most sustained consideration of the ideological implications of the modern novel, both elaborates on and critiques Althusser. Less faithfully, the French sociologist PIERRE BOURDIEU shows the influence of Althusser in his focus on education and its formative effect in producing "distinction" and creating "cultural capital"; Bourdieu swerves, however, from traditional Marxist analyses by stressing the cultural over the economic. Althusser's major essays are collected in Lenin and Philosophy and the State of Marx's Masterwork (1970). Subsequent collections include History and Class Consciousness (1971), L'Essai sur l'idéologie, and L'Althusser, Une Biographie (1981-1995).


Gregory Elliott also edited an extensive collection of essays on Althusser, much of which should be read with care. The Althusserian Legacy, edited b includes several important essay together with a revealing interview Althusser: A Critical Reader includes publications up to 1993.
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 of the Marxist political charge of his social critique, Althusser’s theory of ideology
 remains a touchstone in contemporary criticism.

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publications up to 1993.
say. I am not perhaps speaking about exactly what you want or would like to say, but about what you actually do say. When you counterpose 'rigorous reflection on the concepts of Marxism' to 'something else', in particular to what art gives us, I believe you are establishing a comparison which is either incomplete or illegitimate. Since art in fact provides us with something else other than science, there is not an opposition between them, but a difference. On the contrary, if it is a matter of knowing art, it is absolutely essential to begin with 'rigorous reflection on the basic concepts of Marxism': there is no other way. And when I say, 'it is essential to begin . . . ', it is not enough to say it, it is essential to do it. If not, it is easy to extricate oneself with a passing acknowledgement, like 'Althusser proposes to return to a rigorous study of Marxist theory. I agree that this is indispensable. But I do not believe that it is enough.' My response to this is the only real criticism: there is a way of declaring an exigency 'indispensable' which consists precisely of dispensing with it, dispensing with a careful consideration of all its implications and consequences—by the acknowledgement accorded it in order to move quickly on to 'something else'. Now I believe that the only way we can hope to reach a real knowledge of art, to go deeper into the specificity of the work of art, to know the mechanisms which produce the 'aesthetic effect', is precisely to spend a long time and pay the greatest attention to the 'basic principles of Marxism' and not to be in a hurry to move on to 'something else', for if we move on too quickly to 'something else' we shall arrive not at a knowledge of art, but at an ideology of art: e.g., at the latent humanist ideology which may be induced by what you say about the relations between art and the 'human', and about artistic 'creation', etc.

If we must turn (and this demands slow and arduous work) to the 'basic principles of Marxism' in order to be able to pose correctly, in concepts which are not the ideological concepts of aesthetic spontaneity, but scientific concepts adequate to their object, and thus necessarily new concepts, it is not in order to pass art silently by or to sacrifice it to science: it is quite simply in order to know it, and to give it its due.

From Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)
formula which will enable us to invert the order of the notional schema of ideology. Pascal says more or less: 'Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe.' He thus scandalously inverts the order of things, bringing, like Christ, not peace but strife, and in addition something hardly Christian (for woe to him who brings scandal into the world)—scandal itself. A fortunate scandal which makes him stick with Jansenist defiance to a language that directly names the reality.

I will be allowed to leave Pascal to the arguments of his ideological struggle with the religious ideological State apparatus of his day. And I shall be expected to use a more directly Marxist vocabulary, if that is possible, for we are advancing in still poorly explored domains.

I shall therefore say that, where only a single subject (such and such an individual) is concerned, the existence of the ideas of his belief is material in that his ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject. Naturally, the four inscriptions of the adjective 'material' in my proposition must be affected by different modalities: the materialities of a displacement for going to mass, of kneeling down, of the gesture of the sign of the cross, or of the mea culpa, of a sentence, of a prayer, of an act of contrition, of a penitence, of a gaze, of a hand-shake, of an external verbal discourse or an 'internal' verbal discourse (consciousness), are not one and the same materiality. I shall leave on one side the problem of the theory of the differences between the modalities of materiality.

It remains that in this inverted presentation of things, we are not dealing with an 'inversion' at all, since it is clear that certain notions have purely and simply disappeared from our presentation, whereas others on the contrary survive, and new terms appear.

Disappeared: the term ideas.
Survive: the terms subject, consciousness, belief, actions.
Appear: the terms practices, rituals, ideological apparatus.

But this very presentation reveals that we have retained the following notions: subject, consciousness, belief, actions. From this series I shall immediately extract the decisive central term on which everything else depends: the notion of the subject.

And I shall immediately set down two conjoint theses:
1. there is no practice except by and in an ideology;
2. there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects.

I can now come to my central thesis.

Ideology Interpellates Individuals as Subjects

This thesis is simply a matter of making my last proposition explicit: there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects. Meaning, there is no ideology except for concrete subjects, and this destination for ideology is only made possible by the subject: meaning, by the category of the subject and its functioning.

By this I mean that, even if it only appears under this name (the subject)
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At work in this reaction is the ideological recognition function which is
one of the two functions of ideology as such (its inverse being the function
of misrecognition—méconnaissance).

To take a highly 'concrete' example, we all have friends who, when they
knock on our door and we ask, through the door, the question 'Who's there?'
answer (since 'it's obvious') 'It's me'. And we recognize that 'it is him', or
'her'. We open the door, and 'it's true, it really was she who was there'. To
take another example, when we recognize somebody of our (previous)
acquaintance ((re)-connaissance) in the street, we show him that we have
recognized him (and have recognized that he has recognized us) by saying
to him 'Hello, my friend', and shaking his hand (a material ritual practice of
ideological recognition in everyday life—in France, at least; elsewhere, there
are other rituals).

In this preliminary remark and these concrete illustrations, I only wish to
point out that you and I are always already subjects, and as such constantly
practice the rituals of ideological recognition, which guarantee for us that
we are indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and (naturally) irreplace-
able subjects. The writing I am currently executing and the reading you are
currently performing are also in this respect rituals of ideological recogni-
tion, including the 'obviousness' with which the 'truth' or 'error' of my reflec-
tions may impose itself on you.

But to recognize that we are subjects and that we function in the practical
rituals of the most elementary everyday life (the hand-shake, the fact of
calling you by your name, the fact of knowing, even if I do not know what it
is, that you 'have' a name of your own, which means that you are recognized
as a unique subject, etc.)—this recognition only gives us the 'consciousness'
of our incessant (eternal) practice of ideological recognition—its conscious-
ness, i.e. its recognition—but in no sense does it give us the (scientific)
knowledge of the mechanism of this recognition. Now it is this knowledge
that we have to reach, if you will, while speaking in ideology, and from within

with the rise of bourgeois ideology, above all with the rise of legal ideology, the
category of the subject (which may function under other names: e.g., as the
soul in Plato, as God, etc.) is the constitutive category of all ideology,
whatever its determination (regional or class) and whatever its historical
date—since ideology has no history.

I say: the category of the subject is constitutive of all ideology, but at the
same time and immediately I add that the category of the subject is only
constitutive of all ideology insofar as all ideology has the function (which
defines it) of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects. In the interaction
of this double constitution exists the functioning of all ideology, ideology
being nothing but its functioning in the material forms of existence of that
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8. Which borrowed the legal category of 'subject
in law' to make an ideological notion: man is by
nature a subject [Althusser's note].
9. In discussing the structure of the ideal city in
his Republic, the Greek philosopher Plato (ca.
427—ca. 347 B.C.E.) analyzed the structure of the
inhabitants' souls.

1. NB: this double 'currently' is one more proof
of the fact that ideology is 'eternal,' since these
two 'currentlys' are separated by an indefinite
interval; I am writing these lines on April 6, 1969,
you may read them at any subsequent time
[Althusser's note].
ideology we have to outline a discourse which tries to break with ideology, in order to dare to be the beginning of a scientific (i.e. subjectless) discourse on ideology.

Thus in order to represent why the category of the ‘subject’ is constitutive of ideology, which only exists by constituting concrete subjects as subjects, I shall employ a special mode of exposition: ‘concrete’ enough to be recognized, but abstract enough to be thinkable and thought, giving rise to a knowledge.

As a first formulation I shall say: all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of the subject.

This is a proposition which entails that we distinguish for the moment between concrete individuals on the one hand and concrete subjects on the other, although at this level concrete subjects only exist insofar as they are supported by a concrete individual.

I shall then suggest that ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: ‘Hey, you there!’

Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was ‘really’ addressed to him, and that ‘it was really him who was hailed’ (and not someone else). Experience shows that the practial telecommunication of hailings is such that they hardly ever miss their man: verbal call or whistle, the one hailed always recognizes that it is really him who is being hailed. And yet it is a strange phenomenon, and one which cannot be explained solely by ‘guilty feelings’, despite the large numbers who ‘have something on their consciences’.

Naturally for the convenience and clarity of my little theoretical theatre I have had to present things in the form of a sequence, with a before and an after, and thus in the form of a temporal succession. There are individuals walking along. Somewhere (usually behind them) the hail rings out: ‘Hey, you there!’ One individual (nine times out of ten it is the right one) turns round, believing/suspecting/knowing that it is for him, i.e. recognizing that ‘it really is he’ who is meant by the hailing. But in reality these things happen without any succession. The existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing.

Thus ideology hails or interpellates individuals as subjects. As ideology is eternal, I must now suppress the temporal form in which I have presented the functioning of ideology, and say: ideology has always-already interpellated individuals as subjects, which amounts to making it clear that individuals are always-already interp

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jects only exist insofar as they are

or ‘functions’ in such a way that it
it recruits them all), or ‘transforms’
ms them all) by that very precise
ion or hailing, and which can be
onplace everyday police (or other)

have imagined takes place in the

id. By this mere one-hundred-and-
comes a subject. Why? Because he
ressed to him, and that ‘it was
eience (or hailing) or, and which can be
nonplace everyday police (or other)

ed into the gap: ‘Hey, it of ten it is the right one) turns
: it is for him, i.e. recognizing that
But in reality these things happen
ideology and the hailing or inter-
and the same thing.

iduals as subjects. As ideology is
form in which I have presented
ecology has always-already inter-
ments to making it clear that

I take a quite “special” form in the policeman’s
s” [Althusser’s note].

individuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects, which
ecessarily leads us to one last proposition: individuals are always-already
bjects. Hence individuals are ‘abstract’ with respect to the subjects which
they-already are. This proposition might seem paradoxical.

That an individual is always-already a subject, even before he is born, is
ethoven the plain reality, accessible to everyone and not a paradox at
Freud shows that individuals are always ‘abstract’ with respect to the
jects they always-already are, simply by noting the ideological ritual that
ounds the expectation of a ‘birth’, that ‘happy event’. Everyone knows
ow much and in what way an unborn child is expected. Which amounts to
aying, very prosaically, if we agree to drop the ‘sentiments’, i.e. the forms of
amily ideology (paternal/maternal/conjugal/fraternal) in which the unborn
ild is expected: it is certain in advance that it will bear its Father’s Name,
will therefore have an identity and be irreplaceable. Before its birth, the
ild is therefore always-already a subject, appointed as a subject in and by
he specific familial ideological configuration in which it is ‘expected’ once
it has been conceived. I hardly need add that this familial ideological
figuration is, in its uniqueness, highly structured, and that it is in this implac-
able and more or less ‘pathological’ (presupposing that any meaning can be
nigned to that term) structure that the former subject-to-be will have to
ind ‘its’ place, i.e. ‘become’ the sexual subject (boy or girl) which it already
s in advance. It is clear that this ideological constraint and pre-appointment,
nd all the rituals of rearing and then education in the family, have some
nship with what Freud studied in the forms of the pre-genital and
enital ‘stages’ of sexuality, i.e. in the ‘grip’ of what Freud registered by its
effects as being the unconscious. But let us leave this point, too, on one side.

Let me go one step further. What I shall now turn my attention to is the
ay the ‘actors’ in this mise en scène of interpellation, and their respective
les, are reflected in the very structure of all ideology.

An Example: The Christian Religious Ideology

As the formal structure of all ideology is always the same, I shall restrict my
alysis to a single example, one accessible to everyone, that of religious
ology, with the proviso that the same demonstration can be produced for
thical, legal, political, aesthetic ideology, etc.

Let us therefore consider the Christian religious ideology. I shall use a
hetorical figure and ‘make it speak’, i.e. collect into a fictional discourse
what it ‘says’ not only in its two Testaments, its Theologians, Sermons, but
so in its practices, its rituals, its ceremonies and its sacraments. The Chris-
religious ideology says something like this:

It says: I address myself to you, a human individual called Peter (every
idual is called by his name, in the passive sense, it is never he who
vides his own name), in order to tell you that God exists and that you are
swearable to Him. It adds: God addresses himself to you through my voice
(Scripture having collected the Word of God, Tradition having transmitted
Papal Infallibility fixing it for ever on ‘nice’ points). It says: this is who you
are: you are Peter! This is your origin, you were created by God for all et-
ity, although you were born in the 1920th year of Our Lord! This is your
place in the world! This is what you must do! By these means, if you observe the 'law of love' you will be saved, you, Peter, and will become part of the Glorious Body of Christ! Etc. . . .

Now this is quite a familiar and banal discourse, but at the same time quite a surprising one.

Surprising because if we consider that religious ideology is indeed addressed to individuals, in order to transform them into subjects, by interpelling the individual, Peter, in order to make him a subject, free to obey or disobey the appeal, i.e. God's commandments; if it calls these individuals by their names, thus recognizing that they are always already interpelled as subjects with a personal identity (to the extent that Pascal's Christ says: 'It is for you that I have shed this drop of my blood!'); if it interpells them in such a way that the subject responds: 'Yes, it really is me!' if it obtains from them the recognition that they really do occupy the place it designates for them as theirs in the world, a fixed residence: 'It really is me, I am here, a worker, a boss or a soldier!' in this vale of tears; if it obtains from them the recognition of a destination (eternal life or damnation) according to the respect or contempt they show to 'God's Commandments'. Law becomes Love;—if everything does happen in this way (in the practices of the well-known rituals of baptism, confirmation, communion, confession and extreme unction, etc. . . .), we should note that all this 'procedure' to set up Christian religious subjects is dominated by a strange phenomenon: the fact that there can only be such a multitude of possible religious subjects on the absolute condition that there is a Unique, Absolute, Other Subject, i.e. God.

It is convenient to designate this new and remarkable Subject by writing Subject with a capital S to distinguish it from ordinary subjects, with a small s.

It then emerges that the interpellation of individuals as subjects presupposes the 'existence' of a Unique and central Other Subject, in whose Name the religious ideology interpelles all individuals as subjects. All this is clearly written in what is rightly called the Scriptures. 'And it came to pass at that time that God the Lord (Yahweh) spoke to Moses in the cloud. And the Lord cried to Moses, "Moses!" And Moses replied "It is (really) I! I am Moses thy servant, speak and I shall listen!" And the Lord spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am that I am".'

God thus defines himself as the Subject par excellence, he who is through himself and for himself ('I am that I am'), and he who interpelles his subject, the individual subjected to him by his very interpellation, i.e. the individual named Moses. And Moses, interpelled-called by his Name, having recognized that it 'really' was he who was called by God, recognizes that he is a subject, a subject of God, a subject subjected to God, a subject through the Subject and subjected to the Subject. The proof: he obeys him, and makes his people obey God's Commandments.

God is thus the Subject, and Moses and the innumerable subjects of God's people, the Subject's interlocutors-Interpellates: his mirrors, his reflections. Were not men made in the image of God? As all theological reflection proves, whereas He 'could' perfectly well have done without men, God needs them, the Subject needs the subjects, just as men need God, the subjects need the Subject. Better: God needs men, the great Subject needs subjects, even in the terrible inversion of his image: debauchery, i.e. sin.

Let us decipher into theoretics the duplication of the Subject into soul Subject.

We observe that the structure of subjects in the name of a Unique mirror-structure, and doubly spec ideology and ensures its function centred, that the Absolute Subject and interpelles around it the infinite mirror-connexion such that it sustains in the Subject in which (present and future) the guarantees and that since everything takes place in Family is in essence Holy), 'God have recognized God, and have re-created.

Let me summarize what we have just said.

The duplicate mirror-structure
1. the interpellation of 'individs',
2. their subjuncion to the Subject,
3. the mutual recognition of subjects, each other, and finally the
4. the absolute guarantee that the subjects recognize whatever will be all right: Amen—'

Result: caught in this quadrupedal subjunction to the Subject, of universal subjects 'work', they 'work b' with the exception of the 'bad invention of one of the detachments, the vast majority of (good) subj ideology (who are concrete forms to subjects). They are inserted into p 'They recognize' the existing state and not otherwise', and that the science, to the priest, to de Gaulle, 'love thy neighbour as thyself' is simply the inscription in life of 'So be it'.

Yes, the subjects 'work by the lies in the first two moments of the' or, if you prefer, in the ambiguity of the term, subject in fact means: author of and responsible for its to a higher authority, and is the freely accepting his submission.
the terrible inversion of his image in them (when the subjects swallow in debauchery, i.e. sin).


Let us decipher into theoretical language this wonderful necessity for the duplication of the Subject into subjects and of the Subject itself into a subject-Subject.

We observe that the structure of all ideology, interpellating individuals as subjects in the name of a Unique and Absolute Subject is specularity, i.e. a mirror-structure, and doubly speculary: this mirror duplication is constitutive of ideology and ensures its functioning. Which means that all ideology is centred, that the Absolute Subject occupies the unique place of the Centre, and interpellates around it the infinity of individuals into subjects in a double mirror-connexion such that it subjects the subjects to the Subject, while giving them in the Subject in which each subject can contemplate its own image (present and future) the guarantee that this really concerns them and Him, and that since everything takes place in the Family (the Holy Family: the Family is in essence Holy), 'God will recognize his own in it', i.e. those who have recognized God, and have recognized themselves in Him, will be saved.

Let me summarize what we have discovered about ideology in general:

The duplicate mirror-structure of ideology ensures simultaneously:

1. the interpellation of 'individuals' as subjects;
2. their submission to the Subject;
3. the mutual recognition of subjects and Subject, the subjects' recognition of each other, and finally the subject's recognition of himself;
4. the absolute guarantee that everything really is so, and that on condition that the subjects recognize what they are and behave accordingly, everything will be all right: Amen—So be it.

Result: caught in this quadruple system of interpellation as subjects, of submission to the Subject, of universal recognition and of absolute guarantee, the subjects 'work', they 'work by themselves' in the vast majority of cases, with the exception of the 'bad subjects' who on occasion provoke the intervention of one of the detachments of the (repressive) State apparatus. But the vast majority of (good) subjects work all right 'all by themselves', i.e. by ideology (whose concrete forms are realized in the Ideological State Apparatuses). They are inserted into practices governed by the rituals of the ISAs. They 'recognize' the existing state of affairs, that 'it really is true that it is so and not otherwise', and that they must be obedient to God, to their conscience, to the priest, to de Gaulle, to the boss, to the engineer, that thou shalt 'love thy neighbour as thyself', etc. Their concrete, material behaviour is simply the inscription in life of the admirable words of the prayer: 'Amen—So be it'.

Yes, the subjects 'work by themselves'. The whole mystery of this effect lies in the first two moments of the quadruple system I have just discussed, or, if you prefer, in the ambiguity of the term subject. In the ordinary use of the term, subject in fact means: (1) a free subjectivity, a centre of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions; (2) a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission. This last note gives us the meaning of this
ambiguity, which is merely a reflection of the effect which produces it: the individual is interpelleated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection, i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection 'all by himself'. There are no subjects except by and for their subjection. That is why they 'work all by themselves'.

'So be it! . . . ' This phrase which registers the effect to be obtained proves that it is not 'naturally' so ('naturally': outside the prayer, i.e. outside the ideological intervention). This phrase proves that it has to be so if things are to be what they must be, and let us let the words slip: if the reproduction of the relations of production is to be assured, even in the processes of production and circulation, every day, in the 'consciousness', i.e. in the attitudes of the individual-subjects occupying the posts which the socio-technical division of labour assigns to them in production, exploitation, repression, ideology, scientific practice, etc. Indeed, what is really in question in this mechanism of the mirror recognition of the Subject and of the individuals interpelleated as subjects, and of the guarantee given by the Subject to the subjects if they freely accept their subjection to the Subject's 'commandments'? The reality in question in this mechanism, the reality which is necessarily ignored (méconnue) in the very forms of recognition (ideology = misrecognition/ignorance) is indeed, in the last resort, the reproduction of the relations of production and of the relations deriving from them.

January–April 1969

P.S.

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I have suggested that the ideologies were realized in institutions, in their rituals and their practices, in the ISAs. We have seen that on this basis they contribute to that form of class struggle, vital for the ruling class, the reproduction of the relations of production. But the point of view itself, however real, is still an abstract one.

In fact, the State and its Apparatuses only have meaning from the point of view of the class struggle, as an apparatus of class struggle ensuring class oppression and guaranteeing the conditions of exploitation and its reproduction. But there is no class struggle without antagonistic classes. Whoever says class struggle of the ruling class says resistance, revolt and class struggle of the ruled class.

* * *

It is only from the point of view of the classes, i.e. of the class struggle, that it is possible to explain the ideologies existing in a social formation. Not only is it from this starting-point that it is possible to explain the realization of the ruling ideology in the ISAs and of the forms of class struggle for which the ISAs are the seat and the stake. But it is also and above all from this starting-point that it is possible to understand the provenance of the ideologies which are realized in the ISAs and confront one another there. For if it is true that the ISAs represent the form in which the ideology of the ruling class must necessarily be realized, and the form in which the ideology of the