

Economy and Ideology : an
Obstacle in Materialist Analysis

Marxist terminology has, over the last few years, appeared in a number of anthropological publications and there can be little doubt that, even now, it is fashionable to quote avowedly marxist authors. In the process not only has marxism become domesticated but the benefits to social analysis have not, somehow, been as marked as one might have hoped. The academic left, observing an economic recession and political stirrings in the outside world, have produced a number of weighty theoretical tomes in a manner reminiscent of the Jikany Nuer sacrificing in front of advancing smallpox. At the same time, to judge from some recent contributions,¹ social anthropology has not even disentangled itself from the confusions engendered by Godelier's Rationalité et Irrationalité en Economie, despite the fact that the book is now ten years old. The belief is still fostered that historical materialism is something to do with 'economic anthropology'.

That such a 'short circuit' should have occurred in this country is not altogether surprising. Godelier's Objets et Methodes de l'Anthropologie Economique (1965, reprinted in 1966/72) was referred to by two of the contributors to the 1965 ASA conference on economic anthropology and was offered by Godelier himself as a solution to the impasses which economic anthropology had reached. One may reasonably hold that Godelier's position has not undergone any fundamental change since the appearance of that first article. Jonathan Friedman's work, which has attracted considerable attention among the would be "alternative anthropologists", proceeds along similar lines to those laid down in Rationality and Irrationality² although the lines have been extended, as we shall see, in at least one direction. Both these authors offer anthropological analyses hemmed about with a terminology which establishes fictitious kinship with a rather dull facet of the marxist tradition and I suspect that their particular use of this terminology not only misrepresents what they themselves are doing but also obscures much of what is interesting in Marx and, perhaps more important, in marxism. In this paper I wish simply to examine some indications which exist in their work of the directions in which soi-disant "marxist anthropology" must develop if it is to escape its present constriction. To an extent this constriction derives from the close resemblance between much of institutional marxism and "bourgeois" academic analysis. The problems with which we are faced are, therefore, extremely broad, but we can at least approach them through Rationality and Irrationality, a book through which the rhetoric of historical materialism entered the British anthropological debate and was, at the same time, trapped within the limits of economic anthropology.

Economic Anthropology

At least from the moment when Engels³ expounded Marx's ideas, and indeed in the period of gestation where Marx himself was writing, marxism has wrestled with the problem of economism. The theoretical status of "the economy" has changed repeatedly in the course of marxism's development but the edge of the enquiry has, perhaps, been blunted by the fact that the practical importance of economics can hardly be doubted in a society where every day life is moulded and constrained by "economic necessity". The theoretical status of the

economy becomes a pressing question when one encounters situations in which "economic necessity" is not the catchword of everyday life and to this extent the example of economic anthropology is an instructive prologue to the marxist analyses. The state of economic anthropology at the 1965 ASA conference is set out both by Frankenberg and by Cohen in ASA 6 (Firth ed. 1966), and here one need provide only a brief resumé of the major confusions which were agreed to exist at the time.⁴ All of these devolve about the attempt to apply economics (the subject developed to explain and predict the workings of our own 'economy') to the workings of societies which do not recognise an economy.

The broadest division conventionally recognised in the economic anthropology of the time is that between 'formalists' and 'substantivists'. The formalists represented, both for Godelier (1972:253) and for Frankenberg (1966:57), by Robbins Burling, held the proper object of economic analysis to be the allocation of scarce resources (i.e. the maximisation of gain by the individual) no matter what those resources may be. For Burling, of course, the relation of a mother to her baby is as 'economic' as anything else. The formalist approach is akin to that of game-theory and runs the same risk of propounding tautologies in the process of divining the individual's utilities.⁵ The maximisation of gain is certainly one referent of the term "economic" and does after all underpin the classical economic analyses of western societies but, as Dalton suggests;

"The 'economic man' of 19th century economics was not a myth but a succinct expression of this institutional fact; the necessity for each of the atomistic units in an impersonal market exchange system to acquire his livelihood through market sale." (1961:2 cit. Frankenberg 1966:66)

Dalton may be counted a supporter of the 'substantive' position according to which economics concerns material wealth such as land, tools, agricultural produce and so on, but he makes the important point that our market economy complies with both the formal and substantive definitions of what is 'economic'. It was a constant point of reference that western society is distinguished by a defined economy in which production and consumption are supposedly governed by (competitive) market forces⁶ whereas many societies do not ascribe the production and consumption of material goods to a discrete institution. Dalton conceived the problem which this posed for economic anthropology in extreme terms.

"Primitive economy is different from market industrialism not in degree but in kind. The absence of machine technology, pervasive market organisation and all-purpose money, plus the fact that economic transactions cannot be understood apart from social obligation, create, as it were, a non-Euclidean universe to which Western economic theory cannot be fruitfully applied." (1961:20 cit. Frankenberg 1966:65)

The metaphor of non-Euclidean geometry suggests an irreducible opposition between market and non-market but Dalton himself, in company

with Bohannan, collapses it by the insertion of "peripheral market", an ad-hoc construction in which the law of supply and demand operates on some occasions but not on others, encountering inelasticities as the case demands (see Dalton and Bohannan 1962). The collapse of oppositions into typologies seems to be a symptom of theoretical inadequacy in many areas of post-war social anthropology and the economic anthropology of the early sixties produced a number of such collapses. Frankenberg lists the following:

Firth	:	Primitive	Peasant	Industrial
Polanyi	:	Reciprocal	Redistributive	Exchange
Sahlins	:	Generalised reciprocity	Balanced reciprocity	Negative reciprocity

It's not suggested that these map accurately one onto another, but all express a similar discomfort which derives in large part from the fact that the term 'economic' has a double nature. First, it claims an empirical referent; second, it articulates with the other terms of the language from which it comes and it is part of this articulation quietly to englobe the former function. The common sense view of the substantialists was, at the least, deceptive in that this articulation already presents activities related to tangible wealth as an 'obvious' object for analysis.

Godelier's Economie

Godelier does little to avoid the problem posed by the term 'economic', and censures Polanyi's distinction between cases where the economy (which neither of them doubts is there) is 'embedded' and those where it is 'disembedded' in the following terms:

"This distinction seems to be a questionable one, since the term 'disembedded' could suggest an absence of internal relation between the economic and the non-economic, whereas this relation exists in every society. Actually the conditions characteristic of the functioning of an industrial commodity economy confer on the economy (during the 19th century at least) a very extensive autonomy in relation to the other structures (the state etc.). (1972:268).

If internal relation between the economic and non-economic is to be found in every society then what are we to make of "autonomy"? Godelier's switch from "the economic" to "the economy" signifies economic anthropology's old confusion between a defined facet of our own society and the fact that people everywhere produce things. "The economic", which might be thought to have cross-cultural validity in so far as people do produce things, is defined as though the substantialist position were fair but incomplete.

"The economic appears as a complex social reality because it is both a particular field of activity, directed toward the production of material goods, and, at the same time, through the mechanism of this production, ...a particular aspect of all non-economic activities." (1972:23)

This willingness to make minor alterations in the original 'problematic', rather than rethink what was recognized at the time as a dubious approach, leads to considerable confusion and Godelier puts himself in very much the same position for which he derides the formalists, i.e.

"Everything becomes economic in principle, while nothing remains economic in fact." (1972:255)

Although we are not concerned here to assess his work as a whole, we should be aware that Godelier pursues two different approaches under the same rubric, talking on the one hand in plainly causal (vulgar materialist) terms (e.g. 1972:IX) and on the other decentralising the economic to the point where it is not the sort of entity which could determine anything (e.g. 1972:102). We shall return to the effects of the more blatant forms of economism but let us, for the moment, examine Godelier's attempt to decentralise the economic and admit it as an integral part of the social formation rather than locate it as an external source of change. The attempt culminates in the following explanation:

"By economic infrastructure is simply meant the totality of the productive forces and of the social relations of human beings with each other and with nature that depend on the level of development of those forces and that program and control the social process of production of the material conditions of existence." (1975:14)

According to this definition, whatever the dominant structure may in fact be it is defined as 'economic' since if a particular set of relations 'programs' the society as a whole as the metaphor of "economic necessity" has our own, it can hardly help but control the swiddening, herding or whatever 'material production' is to be found in the particular case. Our queries as to what exactly determines what are met with a tautology: If it's determinant then it's economic and the economic is, in the last instance, determinant. Moreover, Godelier's definition of the economic infrastructure is exhaustive, i.e. it is difficult to see what the social formation could possibly contain that isn't included in "social relations of human beings with each other and with nature". Certainly the division of society into two parts is difficult to maintain and, while Godelier refers to the whole as infrastructure, the terminology can of course be reversed. Lévi-Strauss refers to the totality of society as superstructure, pushing infrastructures back to the far side of the nature/culture boundary. It would be glib but not untrue to say that, for him, infrastructures are such 'externals' as patterns of rainfall. (see especially 1966: 90-96).

In Godelier's case the totalisation signifies a confusion which he shares with the economic anthropology he sought to correct. Production of (tangible) material goods is governed by (intangible) relations and, when we discuss the respective status of different instances within the social formation, it is the structuring of these relations with respect to one another which is at issue, and not some mysterious property deriving from contact with the soil. Status crops, prohibitions on particular foods, and separated spheres of

exchange for different goods may all mediate between the social and the ecological. If we are to admit them as economic then the economic is everywhere and nowhere, but Godelier wishes to retain it as a separable entity:

"We showed that there is no economic rationality 'in itself', nor any definitive form of economic rationality, that economic rationality is only one aspect of a wider rationality, that of social life, that this aspect plays an ultimately determining role." (1972:102)

Economic values, values pertaining to the production and consumption of material goods, are said to be more basic than other values in that they play some determining role but at the same time they are part of all social values. It seems the contradiction can be resolved only if we resort to a neo-functionalist belief in the ecological adaptiveness of societies, but the anthropological literature offers sufficient examples of value structures which ignore the supposed last instance and grind themselves to destruction.

What of dominant yet apparently non-economic structures such as 'kinship' relations? Godelier's reply is of more importance than the confusions surrounding it.

"[In certain societies] kinship relations dominate social life... they function as production relations just as they function as political, religious etc. relations. Accordingly the correspondence between productive forces and productive relations is, at the same time, correspondence between economy and kinship." (1972:95)

It is this equation of kinship relations, or whatever it may be in a particular society, with the relations of production that I wish to pursue. Where kinship is "both infrastructure and superstructure" (1972:94) for, let us say, the Kamlaroi (see 1975:7-10), is it not the case that economics is both infrastructure and superstructure for us? We live our economic relations much as they live their places in a four-section system. Systems of definition are culture-specific and we can hardly assume that ours is distinguished by a crystal-clear view of the supposed signifies. The assertion that kinship is really 'economics' (but the locals don't realise it?) (is empty and) serves only to perpetuate a confusion which derives from our own society. Lefebvre makes the point very clearly.

"La réflexion éclaire l'histoire à partir du présent. Ainsi le mode de production féodal se découvre comme condition historique du capitalisme en Europe... Dans le mode de production capitaliste prédomine l'économie politique. Loin de tout expliquer par l'économie, loin de formuler un déterminisme économique, Marx veut montrer que la détermination par l'économie date du capitalisme et le caractérise."
(1975:168)

We might hesitate to say exactly what Marx "veut montrer" but Lefebvre's statement is of considerable relevance to our consideration of other

cultures. The "field of activity directed toward the production of material goods" was undoubtedly the form of the dominant structure (i.e. the organising metaphor) in the Britain of which Marx wrote and to an extent it still is. The specific dominance of a structure is, however, a question of ideology before all else and its power within its own society lies precisely in the fact that "the reasonable man" (specific to his own ideology) can, in this case, invoke "economic necessity" while the self evidence of the structure imparts an appearance of irresponsibility to anyone who questions it. As Althusser makes clear (1971), there is no need, in day to day life, for the dominant class to resort to brute force. Where the "necessity" of the dominant structure is protected largely by accusations of irresponsibility or even stupidity in our own society, elsewhere the accusations may be of witchcraft; irreverence to the ancestors or whatever. The concern of marxism with economics in its analysis of bourgeois society is a productive and necessary articulation with das Bestehende, but there is good reason to avoid attributing an economy to a society which tells us it doesn't have one, and it should arouse our suspicion to see marxism and capitalism racing each other through the jungle, like missionaries of rival denominations, each carrying a different version of the same message.

Appearances and Materiality

Friedman's examination of fetishism (1974a) offers a parallel development of the position established by Godelier in his consideration of the relation of kinship relations to the relations of production but is, at the same time, concerned with the very heart of marxist theory. Friedman begins from the 'ambiguity' which he finds throughout Marx's work, from The Manuscripts of 1844 to Capital; alienated life seems to exist in forms which are at the same time real and illusory. With respect to The Manuscripts and Capital respectively, he notes,

"...on the one hand we are told that alienation is a material process or act of separation of the worker from his product, a real estrangement. Simultaneously alienation is the appearance that labor (sic) takes on for the laborer." (1974a:28)

and "...when we consider capitalist relations of production themselves i.e. the material structure which is supposed to generate the fetishised categories, we find ourselves in something of a contradiction, since capital after all is not a second or third order fetish but the principle relation of production in the system. How can the illusion be the material relation which is supposed to have generated it?" (1974a:32)

Friedman pursues this ambiguity through the development of Marx's exposition, from the (mythical) genesis of money-capital to the behaviour of this entity in the 'real' world of capitalism. (Vols. I and III of Capital respectively). The point is established that exchange value cannot be held to misrepresent the amount of social labour embodied in a particular product; it represents it perfectly accurately. Value and exchange value, however, have no empirical existence. As Friedman puts it "they are not the phenomenal forms

of capitalist structure" (1974a:41) and the capitalist world operates in terms of money-capital and commodity prices just as it appears to do, although he retains profit, wage and interest in the 'unreal' world of "truly imaginary forms" (ibid.). The important point for our purposes in his characterisation of money-capital.

"This pure form (M-M') specifies the nature of capitalist relations. It determines the way in which labor is exploited, the specific structure of the capitalist class relation. And yet it is fetish, not because it is a misrepresentation of some other activity but because it is opaque with respect to what it does." (1974a:43, emphasis original)

As was the case with Godelier's discussion of kinship, we are presented with an equation, in some very real sense, of appearance and function. While labour is logically prior to all else, it 'appears' only through value and exchange value which, in turn, 'take the form' of price in the discourse organised by money-capital. Value and exchange value are, if you like, unconscious, with all that that might entail, while the discourse organised by money-capital claims, at the least, the priority due to signifiers.

Friedman opposes attempts to situate the relations of production below the text constituted by their appearance in the real world and on this score criticises Althusser and Balibar's usage of 'structural causality' at some length. It will be remembered that in Reading Capital the economy is determinant in a peculiarly roundabout way; it determines, as structural causality, that some other structure be dominant.

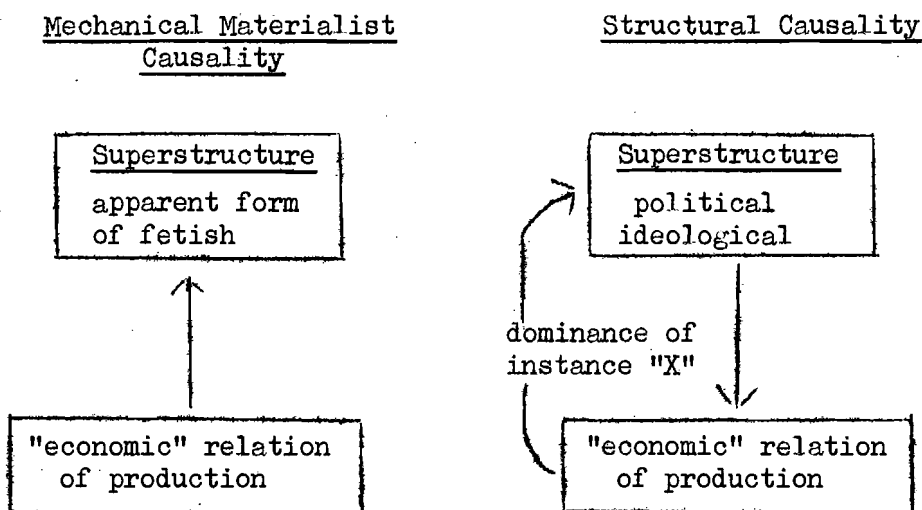
"Dans les structures différents l'économie est déterminante en ce qu'elle détermine celle des instances de la structure sociale qui occupe la place déterminante."

(1968, II:110 cit. Friedman 1974a:49)

It is as though, whatever the content or appearance of social events may be, there is behind them a determining structure which is unknowable or noumenal. Friedman suggests that

"The attempt to reduce production relations to pure materiality, relegating the rest to a number of super-structural instances whose place in production is determined by this materiality becomes a complex elaboration on a mechanical materialist model." (1974a:52 • See diagram over page).

In fact the case is worse than this since the relations of production in Reading Capital are formless by virtue of their cultural neutrality. The word "noumenal" was meant seriously; we might tentatively suggest that Althusser's distinction between 'knowledge of the real' and 'the real' has more direct links with Kant⁸ than with Marx, and is unavoidably idealist in that it explains determinate historical reality only in terms of an abstraction which cannot be apprehended in "human sensuous activity". As we have already mentioned, Godelier adopts,



as "... the pure form (M-M') specifies the nature of capitalist relations", so the pure form $A \rightarrow B$ or $A \gg B$ (corresponding to Mayu/Dama) specifies the nature of Katchin relations. There seems to be no sound reason to say one is 'infrastructural' but the other is not; the infrastructural status of a set of relations is seen, particularly through Friedman's work, to lie precisely in its given-ness or persistence and not in its, often indirect, relation to the biological.⁹ The given-ness of such relations does not generate a separate lived world but is itself lived, as Friedman stresses.

"Social reproduction takes place through social forms and society lives its reproduction in these forms. It lives its own alienation not as alienated consciousness but as social fetish which both determines the structure of material reproduction and misrepresents it due to its opacity."
(1974a:59)

As he notes, the temptation to fall back into a quasi-Feuerbachian position, where appearance is purely derivative, is part of the very language with which marxism has traditionally operated.

"Fetishism is the dominant structure of social reproduction. The problem with the term, of course, is that a 'fetish' always seems to be the end product of the process of fetishisation, a mis-representation of some other object or situation i.e. a derivative phenomenon. I would suggest that we keep the idea of fetish as misrepresentation but that we drop the corresponding verb form notion as its necessary precondition." (1974a:56)

We can hardly disagree with Friedman's characterisation of the identity 'Fetish/Relation of production' as central to social reproduction. There is, however, a sense in which social phenomena are derivative, in so far as they emerge from the state which historically precedes them. While they are not representations of some other object, we should be aware that to social consciousness all social forms are re-representations.

Ideology and Infrastructures

Friedman is concerned to assert the presence of fetish at the heart of the social formation and concludes that "social relations of production are themselves fetishes" and "... do not adequately represent their material effects not because they are illusions engendered by the material level but because they are opaque with respect to that level." (1974:56) Yet he goes on to say "Thus fetish is not ideology". (ibid. my emphasis). Ideology is certainly superstructural according to the accepted marxist model (see e.g. Friedman 1974b), and, although Friedman fights shy of the terms infrastructure and super-structure, it is not unfair to suggest that we are again presented with a model in which everything is infrastructure. He writes of ideology as though it were illusion and nothing more. e.g.

"... the process of reproduction appears to be controlled by the spirits. All real labor appears as the "work of the gods". This amounts to nothing less than a total inversion of reality... (1974:58)

"It is because the process of production is represented upside down that certain lineages can, by controlling the supernatural, come to dominate the community.

This is not a question of ideology. The chiefly or royal class is entitled to its surplus on no other basis than that it occupies an instrumental place in the imaginary conditions of reproduction of the society. Monopoly over "wealth giving" spirits is of the same order as monopoly over money capital. The control of both fictitious items ensures the domination over material reproduction and the exploitation of the labor of the society."

(1974:59 my emphasis)

Precisely so, but it is hard to see what ideology could be if it does not include that set of apprehensions which men live as their social relations, whether these relations exist in terms of "capital" or in terms of "nats" and "mayu/dama". There is a confusion in many marxist writings which rests upon an uncompromisingly negative valuation of ideology; a negative valuation which all but defines ideology without the need for further reflection. This view seems generally to be associated with a conceptual topography in which both ideology (bad) and knowledge (good) are situated above the text of real events, while whatever is supposed to give events their "meaning" is situated below the text in the form of, for instance, the economic infrastructure. Friedman retains a position, consistent with this scheme, whereby the demonstration that particular fetishes are relations of production, and hence infrastructural, suffices to show that they are not superstructural i.e. ideological; as though we could have one without the other. In marked contrast to such a view, Gramsci wrote:

"[The analysis of Marx's propositions on the force of popular belief] tends, I think, to reinforce the conception of 'historical bloc' in which precisely the material forces are the content and ideologies are the form, though this distinction has purely didactic value since the material forces would be inconceivable without form and the ideologies would be individual fancies without the material forces." (1971:)

Friedman's demonstration that fetish is not simply an illusory image of material relations, but the form of the more resistant of these relations, implies this same indissoluble unity of appearance and process. He is concerned to establish the reality of capitalist relations in the society of which Marx wrote; a society which "lives its own alienation not as alienated consciousness" but, unavoidably, in its specific social forms which are "given" to those within it. Similarly, it is not that the Katchin are subject to or, more precisely, subjects in "nothing less than a total inversion of reality" but that our respective realities are specifically alienated in such a way that their's appears inverted to us. The definitive status of particular worlds for those who live in them is hardly in question unless we wish to return to the sterile 'rationality' debates of the early sixties. These realities are lived in the specific ideologies of the groups in question and the point we wish to make is that the key fetishes which organise each social discourse are no less ideological for being part of the social infrastructure.

It should be clear that we are not denying the place of the social unconscious (traditionally considered in an extremely muddled fashion under the infrastructure/superstructure rubric) and to do so would be to flirt with a dangerous empiricism where the only conceivable mode of action is an ill-founded voluntarism. We are concerned solely to counter the economism, which haunts so many avowedly marxist analyses, whereby society is a more or less mistaken comment on the fact that people produce things.

The fact that we are concerned with (intangible) relations obliges us to consider what is meant by materialism. Marx was not concerned to elaborate a system in which mind is derived from matter, in the way that analyses of ideology as a purely derivative phenomenon might suggest, but was asserting the primacy of human practice; the human practice which Godelier and Friedman analyse in terms of the development of structures through time. A dominant structure may in one case be referred to as "the economy", in another it may be a marriage rule and in general there is no reason why it should be named at all. To confuse material production, in the pre-Marxian philosophical sense, with such structures is to attempt to explain the social in terms of the physical and, unavoidably to relapse into ecological determinism. We might draw a parallel with a psychoanalytic formulation; needs have no place in the unconscious. Probably the only cross-culturally valid statement we can make about the role of material production in this sense is that the appropriation of the (socially defined) surplus is political, and even that's a dubious formulation since our ability sensibly to discuss politics apart from the classical 'state' is so questionable. In this light the continuing concern with the effects of infrastructure on superstructure and vice-versa is surely mistaken. The object of our analyses must be the process of social reproduction; by no means a homogeneous process and in every instance fraught with contradiction but one which collapses that accepted usage of infrastructure and superstructure which is effectively pre-marxist. Friedman's appreciation of fetish as a unity of appearance and process at the level of the lived world confirms the presence of 'mind' at the heart of social reproduction. However, he seems to believe semantics, however broadly conceived, to be purely derivative or even epiphenomenal. In this respect he is open to precisely the criticism he himself directs at Althusser and Balibar for their commitment to a clandestinely causal model. Althusser himself has clearly recognized the problem with which we are concerned and, in Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses, has gone so far as to assert the importance of reproduction as distinct from the 'edifice' of infrastructure and superstructure.

"I believe that it is possible and necessary to think what characteristises the essential of the existence and nature of the superstructure on the basis of reproduction. Once one takes the point of view of reproduction, many of the questions whose existence was indicated by the spatial metaphore of the edifice, but to which it could not give a conceptual answer, are immediately illuminated."

(1971:131)

It is, however, Friedman's demonstration that the importance of fetishism extends beyond the works of "the young Marx", and his

concentration on the place of fetishism in what has consistently been referred to as infrastructural, which puts Althusser's work on ideology in perspective. Althusser's interest in the reproduction of the relations of production is highly profitable but his pretence that he is dealing only with the superstructure is, in the end, dishonest.

Analysis and Ideology

Althusser correctly holds that the image of infrastructure and superstructure is by no means empty.

"Like every metaphor, this metaphor suggests something, makes something visible. What? Precisely this: that the upper floors could not 'stay up' (in the air) alone if they did not rest precisely on their base." (1971:129)

"It now seems to me that it is possible and desirable to represent things differently. NB, I do not mean by this that I want to reject the classical metaphor, for that metaphor itself requires that we go beyond it."
(ibid.:130)

Presumably Althusser feels it necessary to pre-empt accusations of heresy and we should be aware that, behind his interest in reproduction of the relations of production, he retains the model in which "determination in the last instance by the economic base" is both ubiquitous and clandestine. He says that

"The effect of (the) spatial metaphor is to endow the base with an index of effectivity known by the famous terms: the determination in the last instance of what happens in the upper 'floors'by what happens in the economic base." (ibid.:130)

We must now go on to examine what it is that is "made visible" by this further metaphor of "an index of effectivity". The argument developed in the earlier sections of this paper already suggests that the lived world is by no means homogeneous and that it is in terms of priority among the elements of the lived world that the metaphor might be recast.

Marc Augé's article in the last issue of JASO deals with this structuring of the lived world and has the merit of treating ideology as a practice rather than as a powerless commentary. However, he posits a coherence of the lived world which is "...not of a specular order, but... of a syntactic order..." and which rests upon an "ideologic". By ideo-logic is meant,

"... the logical relationship arbitrarily established between the different sectors of representation in a given society or the whole set of syntagms expressed by the juxtaposition of numerous partial theories concerning the psyche, heredity, illness, work etc. These syntagms are neither unlimited in number nor unsystematic." (1976:1)

In fact there is no a-priori limitation on the number of possible syntagms and one presumes that what is meant here is that, at any particular time, only a limited range of such syntagms is recognised as "well-formed". Augé poses the question,

"What is the relation between the marxist notion of ideological domination and the anthropological notion of the identity or diversity of culture? A first answer would place culture alongside of homogeneity and 'primitive' societies, reserving ideology for class societies." (1976:6)

That homogeneity and 'primitive' societies cannot be placed alongside each other is evident from any number of ethnographies in which it is reported that, in effect, some people 'count' while others do not. An obvious example would be Meggitt's report that, despite the Mae-Enga's affirmation of clan exogamy,

"...intra-clan marriages occasionally occur between families whose members are so poor and obscure that they cannot attract extra-clan spouses. Nobody else in the clan is much interested in whom they marry." (1965:97)

Such heterogeneity is important in all cases of re-articulation of the ideal kinship system with the demographic 'facts on the ground' whether among, for example, the Nuer or among prescriptive marriers such as the Katchin. Augé answers this evident heterogeneity with the assurance that "The coherence of the ideo-logic does not correspond to any social homogeneity." (1976:8) It is worth quoting him at some length to be clear what "the coherence of the ideo-logic" does in fact correspond to:

"The ideologic furnishes all possible commentaries for all events and types of conduct... At this point one could be tempted to admit, along with Poulantzas, the equivalence of the notions of ideology and culture (or to state that the first embodies the other), and to say that culture as well as ideology has the function of 'obscuring the real contradictions, of reconstituting, on an imaginary basis, a relatively coherent discourse, which serves as a guide line for men to live by.'

But this imaginary is in fact real: the coherence of the ideo-logic discourse is defined by the coherence of those discourses which can be pronounced." (ibid.)

This is precisely the problem with which we are faced and Augé's account is, from a certain perspective, an empiricism which sanctions rather than analyses the status quo. We are all familiar with the figure by which "all possible commentaries for all events" are already provided for us, operating as we do in an academic milieu which provides daily examples of instant recuperation, assimilation of novelty to the prevailing "truth", and reinterpretation of one's every utterance. Elsewhere the results of this 'know-all' quality are horrific; thus, anti-social statements are "really" symptoms of medical disorders which can be cured by scorching out portions of one's hypothalamus. Nevertheless it remains the case that many syntagmata are "not well-

formed" according to the prevailing "truth" and must be re-written by the ideo-logic. The imaginary is indeed real, but when Augé speaks of "coherence of those discourses which can be pronounced" we must insist that the last three words be glossed "are allowed" and not "are logically possible".

Although the world is very often as Augé depicts it, the very possibility of inadmissible utterances is ruled out by attributing coherence to a generative syntax when novelties do occur and their approval or disavowal is post-hoc. Not surprisingly, he disagrees with Rancière's objection to Althusser - i.e. that he "excludes thinking of ideology as the locus of contradiction". Rancière himself distinguishes between bourgeois ideology and proletarian ideology.

"Bourgeois ideology (the dominant ideology) is a system of power relations reproduced daily by the ideological apparatuses of the bourgeois state. Proletarian ideology is a system of power relations established by the struggle of the proletariat and other subordinate classes against all forms of bourgeois exploitation and domination. It is a system of power relations that is always fragmentary because it defines a certain number of conquests, always provisional because it is not produced by apparatuses but by the development of the struggle." (Jenkins 1975:10). Augé holds that there is no more than one ideology in one social formation and, if the proletariat is to be admitted to the same social formation as the bourgeoisie, then he attributes to the proletariat "...a complicity ...all the more deep (and tacit) as the relation is more hostile and apparent." (1976:9). The theory is certainly of its time; a time in which whatever happens is rapidly rendered banal by the colour supplements and safely ingested by the middle class.¹⁰ Rancière's thesis includes the 'class struggle' from the beginning and, while removing the reactionary notion of a transcendent ahistorical ideology, confirms Althusser's analysis of the concrete importance of ideological apparatuses. It is here that the question of "why...people want their repression" (Augé 1976:1) finds its answer.

We have already suggested that denoting the economy as 'infrastructure' may point to the priority of certain terms which function, as key signifiers, to organise the discourse of bourgeois society and that, by extension, Godelier's equation of kinship relations with relations of production points to a similar priority of different terms in certain other societies. Augé objects that "to affirm this dominance has no more sense than to affirm that of any of the other orders of representation within the ideology...kinship relations and relations of production enter into the same syntactic logic which integrates all the other elements of representation too." (1976:4) Certainly at any given time all the elements of representation may be related to the 'know-all' ideo-logic but let us consider what has happened in our own society to the "...partial theories concerning the psyche, heredity, illness, work etc." In the last century every one of these changed radically and we may mark the changes with the names Freud, Mendel, Pasteur, Marx. Over the same period the partial theory which asserts the necessity and transparency of the relation M-M' remained the power which organised the social field in which the former changes had effect. We have already quoted Lefebvre to the effect that one partial theory,

that the economy is determinant, dates from capitalism and characterises it. He also notes that

"...la société capitaliste dès le début est opaque et contradictoire jusque dans ce qui fait sa cohérence."

(1971:)

Where this is so, as it is for any society, then the unique structuring of a particular social formation can only be approached through its own terms, terms which control and define their context. The key elements which are, at the same time, power and signs ensure their own reproduction to a greater or lesser extent in so far as they organise their neighbours but the nature of opacity and contradiction should be made clear since it radically affects the possibility of 'correct' analysis. In his discussion of Capital and capitalism, Friedman points out that

"Over production is not caused in the production sphere itself but in the sphere of the realisation of value. ...Money and money-capital are not the inverted representation of real processes... On the contrary it is the forms through which capital passes in social reproduction - specifically as money and as real production, which are mutually contradictory." (1974a:40/41)

Opacity cannot, then, refer to concealment of some entity which is empirically there and would be visible if only... The materiality which is so often conceived in terms of a 'material level' is seen to lie in the effects of the developing structure and at its own level, that of human practice in which the distinction between 'mind' and 'matter' is collapsed. It is precisely the immanence of contradiction at this one (and only) level which obliges us to resist the temptation to empiricism. We have already loosely cast value and exchange-value as unconscious where the discourse organised by money-capital is conscious.

"Now if money=value i.e. corresponds to social labour, then price=exchange value. This is the Ricardian view rejected by Marx. It is not the case in capitalism... Capital is money that can exploit labour in order to reproduce itself on an expanded scale - there is no deeper aspect to this relation." (Friedman 1974a:42)

The recourse to what is not empirically given is essential if the contradictions of the phenomenal world are to be apprehended and this "guess at the programme" (Ardener 1971) is unavoidably a commitment to a particular view. At the same time, the structure of the 'unconscious' is only given to knowledge through the meticulous consideration of the specific forms of the conscious. It would be useless to analyse Britain in terms of a prescriptive marriage system and it is equally absurd to suppose that anything politically useful would emerge from analysing, say, the Wikmunkan in terms of economics.

Friedman's discussion shows clearly that the relation of infrastructure to superstructure is not one of 'levels', nor may it usefully be approached in terms of causality. Althusser's concept of structural

causality is widely recognised as suspect but the idea of 'over-determination', which accompanies it in Reading Capital, may be the baby in the causal bathwater. Althusser himself is unhappy with lifting a term from psychoanalysis and claims to use it "both as an index and as a problem" (1970:101); as he makes clear in chapter four of Reading Capital, the problem is precisely that of the 'index of effectivity' with which we began this section. We might approach the potential usefulness of the term, in clarifying that problem, through the worries voiced by Martin Thom in his discussion of Lacan.

"Whatever one may think of the Lacanian Symbolic...it is...defined as a tissue of meaning and not as a mechanism that determines. When I refer to determination here I do not mean that fatal determination...of which Lacan writes so often. I mean determination issuing from the (Marxist) real, a determination present in the real and in its productions, and one that underlies the overdetermination present in the Symbolic...The Lacanian dialectic must be inverted, and each moment of the Symbolic must be reckoned as being in the last instance determined by the infrastructure" (1975:83)

The last sentence here signifies a confusion in so far as the structuring of the social formation is problematic in every case and the 'infrastructure' can only be identified (through its apparent determination) by a consideration of what is given (the structural equivalent of the Symbolic). The 'unpacking' of this structuring necessarily begins from an overdetermined element of the 'real' and "interpretation is never final" (ibid:81) "Hegelian and idealist as Lacan finally is", his position has a certain phenomenological rectitude. If we wish to retain the term 'infrastructure' then we must realise that its 'determination' is of very much the sort with which Lacan deals and not a mechanically causal determination, no matter how devious. The 'prologue' of economic anthropology showed clearly the futility of decompositions of an overdetermined element between formalists and substantivists and, a fortiori, the futility of rewriting that opposition in terms of (substantive) reality and (formalist) ideology. The infrastructural quality of the economic in capitalist society is known by the way it confronts analyses of the social with professed (ecological) necessity. Analyses of capitalist society, and of the socialist states which oppose themselves to capitalism in terms of 'socialist economics', do indeed lead, along the paths of apparent determination, to 'the economic', but that this is so is the very structure of their dominant ideologies and not the ontology of 'society in general'.

The misidentification of the economic is not confined to anthropology, and the figure whereby the economic infrastructure automatically produces change while the superstructural instances somehow interfere with history is disappointingly salient in leftist journalism. Where all the instances of a social formation are at the same 'level' this faith in infrastructure is no more than a recourse to external guarantees, producing the blindness which has overtaken the European left at every moment of crisis in the last fifty years.¹²

Conclusions

If the unreflective search for 'economic determinants' in other cultures betrays a certain callow ethnocentrism, we should not forget that it is also an example of failings which are both more widespread and more subtle. Where 'material relations' have figured as the hidden meaning behind the text of real life so have the various structures deployed with such subtlety by non-marxist analysts and we should examine one such deployment in concluding this paper.

If human practices are tautegorical to the extent that thought and action, tangible and intangible, are necessarily united then we can no longer accept the schema whereby non-linguistic, linguistic and meta-linguistic are stacked on top of one another and equated with meaning, text and commentary. We should, perhaps question even such formulations as Ardener's;

"A black box for a metalanguage of the system... the only social phenomenon that is a serious candidate turns out to be real language... If so it shows that the social is not like real language in its detailed structure. In real language the meta-linguistic faculty is expressed in real language, not in an independent system." (1973:13)

The metalanguage of the social is, then, language. Since language is undoubtedly social (although not a superstructure according to Stalin) might it not be more reasonable to say that the social is in this respect like real language. The metalanguage of the social is the social. The rather obvious point that language 'about' language is still language applies equally to the non-linguistic social, as has become clear in the earlier sections of this paper, and carries implications for any proposed analysis. We have already suggested that, while social events cannot be approached as representations, they are nonetheless representations succeeding one another through time. To ask whether two representations represent "the same thing" is senseless. Benveniste (1971) reminds us that the relation between Saussure's signifiant and signifie is that of two sides of a sheet of paper (between an acoustic chain and a concept; not, as is often supposed, between an acoustic chain and an empirical referent) and is, therefore one of absolute necessity. If we wish to invoke arbitrariness then we should recognise that it may be far more absolute than we had bargained for. Ardener (1973) has pointed out that anthropological accounts generally deal with 'dead stretches' and his observations on this point are of the utmost importance, but I suspect, that the implications are more extensive than might at first be supposed.

Recent analysts have suspended time every bit as much as the much maligned functionalists in so far as they purport to speak 'about' events which are already dead and assume that the 'native account' is 'about' the same thing. The metonymic axis through time is misrepresented as a metaphoric axis of alternative accounts. Where ideology and knowledge are contrasted, as they are by many marxist writers, they are equally 'above the text' and may be presented as alternative accounts of the 'real'; one of them "wrong" and the other one "right". Jenkins (1975) has examined one such schema in the works of Louis Althusser, educing the way in which "...The couple science/ideology becomes equated with

the couple knowledge/ignorance" (1975:9) and hence legitimises the authority of the party intellectual. 'La leçon d'Althusser'¹³ has brought to light a problem the importance of which extends beyond the dealings of the PCF and beyond any specifically French academic debate. The authoritative (and authoritarian) analysis of the lives of others situates itself by the claim to be above the text of everyday life and justifies itself by the claim to reveal something below that text, something which is invisible to the ordinary man. The marxist attempt to demonstrate the 'real meaning' of what other people do, and non-marxist analyses such as the Ardeners' attempt to reconstitute the "dead stretch" which loses its meaning at the moment a record is made, have this much in common. They appeal to an unconscious structure. Speaking of dream analysis, the paradigm case of all such analyses, Collingwood notes that

"The mythological way of stating this fact is to say that the structure was 'in the unconscious'. This is frankly nonsense: but there is no reason why psycho-analysts, so long as they can actually perform miracles, should be grudged the privilege of choosing their own language, even if it is nonsensical, when describing them. It is nonsense because the structure is not in the unconscious but precisely in the dream, for it is the structure of the dream; and the dream is conscious enough." (1924:93)

Edwin Ardener clearly answers this point in so far he views his 's-structures' and 'p-structures' as an analytical decomposition of a 'simultaneity' but we might ponder a little on his suggestion that

"With the naive and unreflecting observer, the General Custer and H.M. Stanley, events he records or registers are totally structured by specifications from the p-structures of his own society. There can in such a case be no records of the other society that would yield material for the reconstruction of any p-structures save his own." (1973:8)

The tacit suggestion that the 'true p-structure' of, say, the Sioux can be apprehended more or less correctly must be resisted, for to accept it would be to mistake the unconscious for a quasi-empirical entity as is done by the normative (American) psychoanalysis against which Lacan speaks so forcefully. For our purposes we need only note that Collingwood's statement serves to remind us, if a little waspishly, that, whatever else it may be, the unconscious is primarily the (initially null) term in terms of which the partners in analysis construct a reality. The hypostasis of unconscious structures is as honourable a procedure as most, so long as we are perfectly clear about what it is we are doing. Considering one such hypostasis, of a structure purported to be common to women in this country and in West Africa, Tim Jenkins has hit the nail squarely on the head.

Although femineity is not a biologism, it cannot be generalised; its application to other circumstances shows a political rather than a paradigmatic solidarity."

(1976:41)

Recent debates within marxism have already brought to light the necessity of a revaluation which is more radical than any associated with 'structuralism' in so far as it affects both marxist and non-marxist academicism, and throws doubt on the worth of any 'post-structuralist' replacement. In this area the history of marxism is, at least, "good to think with". Whether marxism itself will take up the problems of authoritarianism, associated with the necessary resort to what is not empirically given, is unclear, although the growing independence of Western communist parties may, perhaps, have effects comparable in extent with those of de-Stalinisation. Whatever the case, the necessity of extensive rethinking has become apparent, not least in areas of anthropology whose pretensions to radicalism are, for the moment, laughable. Anthropology will probably be a casualty of this rethinking and, as Needham says, it has "only a nebulous and unconvincing definition" (1970) in any case, but I would end with the hope that its ramshackle structure still offers temporary accommodation for those who will confront the problem which this paper has, in small part, revealed.

Paul Dresch.

Notes

1. Notably Marxist Analyses and Social Anthropology (Bloch ed. 1975)
This I reviewed in JASO Vol.VI No.3 and the present article is an attempt to develop or at least explore some of the points which were raised in that review.
2. All quotations are taken directly from the English edition.
3. Despite Engels' opposition to the rigid economism which commentators espoused once Marx himself was dead, the power of the more subtle brands of economism rests upon the mechanism of the Second International, philosophy of which is pure Engels. Marx himself often writes as a vulgar materialist of the most naive sort e.g. in The 1857 Introduction. It seems to me no more praiseworthy to organise one's reading of Marx around such 19th century bric-a-brac than to hamstring one's appreciation of Freud by treating the more Victorian sections of The Interpretation of Dreams as scripture.
4. I have limited myself to those quotations used by Frankenberg throughout this section. My account of economic anthropology in this paper is necessarily skeletal and his article in ASA 6 not only provides a fuller account of the matter but furnishes a fairly complete bibliography. As will be seen, I think the moral of the tale is very different from the one he himself draws.
5. For a discussion of formal theory and its limitations see Gledhill 1971.
6. Gledhill describes the way in which perfect competition and the rest have, on occasion, served orthodox economists as a definition of their subject. "...since Hick's 1937 paper (the orthodoxy) had been steadily subsuming Keynes as a special case of the neo-classical model, 'useful in practice but contributing nothing in theory'." (1971:61) The idea of some pristine economic sphere which is distorted by the other aspects of society was not confined to anthropology.
7. The characterisation of the structures in question as "kinship" is, obviously, not at all satisfactory. Writing of precisely the sort of society with which Godelier is here concerned, Needham points out

"...the necessity to study a society such as the Wikmunkan primarily by means of an imaginative apprehension of its system of social categories conceived as the classification which they in fact compose. The moment we reduce this to the trivality of 'kinship' ...we have
L. miscast the indigenous ideology..." (1962:259)

I shall continue to use the term simply as a matter of convenience.
8. While Fichte purported to solve the problem of the "thing-in-itself" by abolishing it and Hegel supposed that it was pure being, Althusser seems to have come across a tertium quid.

9. As this paper was in preparation the BBC broadcast part of a speech by Colonel Gadaffi in which he claimed that marxism was of little relevance to Libya since there "the infrastructure is not economics but religion". He may well be right.
10. It is also part of the neo-Nietzschean trend to which Auge refers in his introduction. If one credits the social formation with only one ideology then the revolutionary function of a particular subordinate class can only be realised through 'slave morality'. This is the mode through which the politically subordinate 'Judea' can triumph over 'Rome' and is not a derogatory term but, based as it is on ressentiment, the mode is necessarily reactionary in the literal sense of that word. I would only point out that On the Genealogy of Morals is a development of Beyond Good and Evil in which it is suggested that one might surpass such a recourse to opposites.
11. "Programme" is not the happiest term that one might have lighted on since what is referred to here is immanent in the level of "output" as Ardener himself makes clear (1973)
12. The classic case of such failure is that of the German C.P. and the 'faith in history' is the product of this group who, having been born into the most advanced of European capitalist states had only to wait to inherit the earth. One might also consider the idolatry toward economic definitions of history which paralysed the Russian 'opposition' at vital junctures. Both cases illustrates the truth of Tillich's perception that idols are not empty but "demonic".
13. Apart from the obvious, there is good reason to retain the French here since the example furnished by the revaluation of Althusser's work is both a lesson and a particular reading which is validated by the worth of the lesson it produces.

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