

Critical Realism, Cultural Studies and Althusser on Ideology

(Preliminary remarks)

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Introduction

In my paper I first want to give a short outline of Althusser's theory of ideology. I will suggest to divide his contributions to a conception of the ideological into four parts:

- i theoretical ideologies as conditions of science, and science as continually produced and continually threatened *epistemological break* with theoretical ideologies
- ii ideology as lived relation of individuals and groups to their conditions of existence
- iii relatively autonomous Ideological State Apparatuses securing the reproduction of a social formation
- iv ideology (in general) as constitutive mechanism for (each) subjectivity

I did not choose Althusser by chance, I chose Althusser because he was one of the most influential authors both for Roy Bhaskar's Critical Realism and for Cultural Studies (especially in the 1970s and 80s) (cf. Bhaskar 1989; Bhaskar 1997; Grossberg 1993; Barker 2000).

Roughly one could say that Bhaskar has supplemented Althusser's theory of epistemology (which he has adopted) with a new theory of ontology¹ (which possibly is present implicitly in Althusser's texts); while Cultural Studies - though critically - adopted the conceptions of ideology as lived relation of individuals to their conditions of existence and the conception of ideological apparatuses; in the 1990s they increasingly included the question of the constitution of subjectivities, esp. in their research about racism, anti-racist resistance (f.e. Phil Cohen, Paul Gilroy, Les Back) and institutionalized sexist practices and discourses (McDowell 1997).

In the second part of my paper I want to discuss the way Critical Realism and Cultural Studies have further developed certain aspects of Althusser's "notes towards an investigation"² about ideology - Althusser always insisted that what he presented were first of all philosophical reflections but not an elaborate theory of ideology.

Of course I do not intend to give a full exposition of these diverse and comprehensive approaches / theoretical strands - which would be impossible anyway. But I will present

¹ Of course, Bhaskar's and esp. Andrew Sayer's (Sayer 1993) work is not only an elaboration of a critical realist ontology, but also extensive work about criteria of scientificity and methodology of sciences.

² which is the subtitle of his essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (Althusser 1971).

these selected elements of theory which are - starting from but taking a distance from Althusser - related to the issue of ideology.

Here I can make only rather general remarks, not an elaborate representation and critique of all approaches concerned.

In my conclusion I would like to present some suggestions for a possible and productive dialogue between Critical Realism, Cultural Studies and Althusser's texts.

Althusser's aspects of a theory of ideology

Althusser's position as a dissident member of the French Communist Party can be characterised as a strategy of concealed subversion of some theoretical foundations of the politics of the PCF in the 1960s and 70s.

This strategy implied that he used in his texts all key concepts of Marxism-Leninism but gave them a wholly different meaning. And this means that he subverted the whole dogmatized edifice of historical and dialectical materialism.

His intentions were to construct a materialist theory which is adequate to actual society, and, in doing so, to make use of what he saw as the most important insights of non-Marxist theories (Bachelard's philosophy, psychoanalysis, linguistics and semiotics).

One of the core concepts of Marxism which he tried to re-define is that of ideology. The usual definitions were the following:

ideology as false consciousness (although this is an expression never used by Marx himself; cf. Michelle Barrett 1991), as distorted knowledge;

ideology as a set of class-related ideas which reflect and legitimize the dominant position of a certain class; ideas which serve class interests.

Their - traditional - figure of argumentation is to explain sets of ideas and forms of consciousness as derivable from other spheres (esp. from economics - as practised by the 'theory' of commodity fetishism, or reflection theory, or class-reductionism, or standpoint theory, etc.); this means to find the motive force of ideology production exclusively in the 'base' of the society.

Althusser's argument, in contrast to this, is that we have to explain not merely the motive force and the function, the aim of ideologies, but first of all the mechanism of 'ideology in general'. That is to understand the ideological not merely as derived from other social processes but as a phenomenon and a process in its own right, with its own 'logic' and characteristics, with its specific 'generative mechanisms' (to borrow a Bhaskarian term).

In 'For Marx', a collection of philosophical essays, Althusser concentrates on two aspects of the issue of ideology: the relation between ideology and science, and the conception of ideology as 'lived relation of men to the world'.

In order to reject all idealist theories and philosophies of knowledge, Althusser conceived the progress of knowledge production analogous to the economic process of production.

A given raw material (i.e. representations, concepts, 'facts', ...; called 'Generality I' by Althusser) is transformed into scientific knowledge (the product; Generality III) by scientific theoretical practice (called Generality II) - the later is mostly a contradictory unified theoretical system, including theoretical concepts, methods of inquiry and measurement, etc. (FM 185; cf. also RC)

A central criterion of distinction between scientific and ideological knowledge is - according to Althusser - the openness or closure of the process of knowledge production. This especially means: sciences produce *new* knowledge, they *really* transform previous knowledge (in Critical Realist terms: sciences *emerge* from ideological contexts) while ideologies merely reproduce and elaborate premises which are already present at the beginning of the research and knowledge process (in Generality I). An example would be Hegel's philosophy of history.³

A qualitative opposition, an "epistemological break", separates a new science in process of self-constitution from the pre-scientific theoretical ideologies that occupy the 'terrain' in which it is establishing itself" (FM 12). Against critiques of his presumed 'rationalism' and 'formalism' Althusser points out that "this 'break' leaves intact the objective social dimension occupied by (non-theoretical) ideologies (religion, ethics, legal and political ideologies, etc.)" (FM 13). This does not mean that sciences have no impact on non-scientific social realities but that these impacts only occur if sciences are combined with political forces and social movements.

Furthermore, such a transformation, such an epistemological break, is not achieved once and for all, it is rather that theoretical ideologies constantly threaten and besiege science (FM 29).

Empiricism, philosophies of history (with their central features: teleology, metaphysical guarantees of historical or even of anthropological tendencies and processes), pragmatism, theoretical humanism are the central theoretical ideologies criticised by Althusser.⁴

((Althusser here is arguing explicitly against (bourgeois) idealist ideologies, but implicitly, however, he thereby also attacked central philosophical premises of the French Communist Party - and the Party understood his theoretical strategy, so Althusser had

³ Other examples would be authors who implicitly presuppose that great men - or technological progress, or market anthropology, etc. - would be the central moving force of history, and then their analyses, e.g. of the transformation process in the Soviet Union, result in the 'explanation' that M. Gorbacev (or technological backwardness, or oppression of market principles, etc.) would be the ultimate cause of these changes.

⁴ Althusser applies Gaston Bachelard's philosophical practice to social sciences, to the 'continent' of the science of history (Althusser's preferred term for historical materialism). Bachelard had distinguished between philosophies that hinder the progress of sciences and other ones that support scientific progress. Central principles of a supporting philosophy: no philosophical (metaphysical) guarantees (be it for the process of history, be it for the problem of knowledge), no philosophical imperialism (Kant), no intervention in analytical questions.

always been at the margins in the PCF, it even refused to publish his texts in the party press.))

He claims that only through an absolute break with the Hegelian dialectic Marx had been able to develop - or at least to give important hints for - a new materialist non-ideological theory of society, of history, of ideology and of science.

For example the rejection of a Hegelian conception of a relation between an essence and its phenomena, sublimated in the concept of the 'truth of ...', enabled him to think "the relative autonomy of the superstructure and their effectivity" (FM 111); a theory of this "largely remains to be elaborated", he says.

The next step in Althusser's conception of a new theory of ideology was the rejection of the paradigm (in Althusser's terms: the problematic) of ideology as part of the realm of consciousness. He suggests that ideology is "profoundly unconscious", by which he means: "Ideology is a system of representations which in the majority of cases have nothing to do with 'consciousness': they are usually images and occasionally concepts, they are perceived-accepted-suffered cultural objects and they act functionally on men via a process that escapes them" (FM 233). -- Ideology is an objective social reality, the ideological struggle is an organic part of the class struggle (FM 12).

This leads Althusser to the formulation of a second aspect of ideology: "Ideology is the 'lived' relation between men and the world" (FM 233) resp. "in ideology ... men express ... the way they live the relation between them and their conditions of existence: this presupposes both a real relation and an 'imaginary', 'lived' relation" (FM 233). This concept of ideology, partly borrowed from Gramsci, is similar to Raymond Williams' concept of culture as lived experience (not confined to 'high' art), and as a 'structure of feeling'.

Ideology is a complex, overdetermined relation between relations: for in ideology people express not only the relation between them and their conditions of existence (a 'real' relation) but also the way they live that relation (an 'imaginary' relation).

The other aspects of his theory of ideology Althusser explained in his essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (ISA) (Althusser 1971). In the first part of 'ISA' he argued the thesis that for any issue of social theory it is necessary to think this from the view of 'reproduction' and in particular the way a social formation must reproduce itself over time (cf Althusser 1971, 128ff; Barrett 1991, 96). A central force - and object - of this process of reproduction is the state. But while Marx and Lenin had equated the state with repression⁵ (esp. police, army, prisons, administration, censorship), Althusser claims that in modern states the production of voluntary agreement of the (majority of the) population is necessary for the reproduction of class domination. The central mechanisms to ensure this consent are relatively autonomous Ideological State Apparatuses (churches, schools, law, political system, corporations, media, culture, family) (Althusser 1971, 143).

⁵ in their *theories* - in political texts they also write about other functions, but without having systematized it in a theoretical form (Althusser 1971, 142).

Althusser was fiercely criticised, by Bhaskar, Hall and many others, for not having left any room for resistance, contestation, counter-hegemony and struggle in this part of his theory. The power of ideological incorporation seems to function without remainder. In a short postscript, he did mention the struggles of resisting people⁶, but he did not integrate it in the core of his theory.

Another point of critique is that Althusser obviously is only talking about class relations and completely ignoring other relations of power and dominance and their intersection with (not: derivation of) class relations - for example gender relations, ethnic relations, ... (it seems to me that a large part of Critical Realist texts is following Althusser's class reductionism in this point).

One of the most excellent 'Althusserian' elaboration of the issues of state, ideology and class relations in capitalist social formations is certainly the work of Nicos Poulantzas. In the chapter 'The Ideological Apparatuses: Does the State equal Repression plus Ideology?' in his last book Poulantzas makes an important critical contribution to Althusser's conception: "the relation of the masses to power and the State ... always possesses a material substratum. ... in working for class hegemony, the State acts within an unstable equilibrium of compromises between the dominant classes and the dominated. The State therefore continually adopts material measures which are of positive significance for the popular masses, even though these measures represent so many concessions imposed by the struggle of the subordinate classes. This essential material aspect cannot be explained if the relationship between State and popular masses is reduced to the couplet repression-ideology." (Poulantzas 2000/1980, 30f)⁷

In the second part of his ISA-essay Althusser elaborates a preliminary theory of 'ideology in general'. One of the core mechanisms of ideology is to constitute human subjects via interpellation (by a Great Subject, be it God, or the nation, patriarchy, universalism, ...; de facto by an intersection of these Subjects): "Ideology interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects" (Althusser 1971, 173): the action of ideology is to enable and ensure the subject's recognition of itself as a subject and it is a process that works through securing the obvious. In one sense, ideology works by making the subject recognise itself in a certain specific way, and simultaneously by construing that specific nature as the obvious or natural one for itself (in French: re-connaissance/ mé-connaissance). Essential for this mechanism of interpellation is the category of the subject and its functioning, esp. the ambiguity of the term subject. Subject on the one hand means a free subjectivity, a centre of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions", on the other hand "a

⁶ "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" (ISA 171).

⁷ Furthermore Poulantzas is an example of a differentiated reception of non-Marxist theories. In 'State, Power, Socialism' he criticises Foucault's "failure to provide a basis for resistance to power" (p. 79) but at the same time he takes up Foucault's "indisputable merits" for a materialist theory of various forms of power strategies (p. 44).

subjected being, who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission" (Althusser 1971, 182). So if ideological interpellation functions without resistance, without problems, individuals believe to act 'freely' when they 'live' religious, sexist, racist etc. ideologies; they recognize that they are "a subject through the Subject and subjected to the Subject" (Althusser 1971, 179).

A central capacity of ideology is to represent to human beings an imaginary conception of their own subjectivity. Although Althusser does not here mention Lacan by name, both his understanding of Freud and his comments on the imaginary construction of human subjects are heavily indebted to Lacan's paper on 'The Mirror Phase'" (Payne 1997, 41).⁸

The ISA essay is divided into two parts - a division which is not only pertinent to the subject matter but which marks a problem too: Althusser did not manage to connect them in a consistent theory. "Althusser's failure to reconcile these two perspectives, in what has become an extraordinarily influential essay, has contributed in no small measures to a continuing divide between two traditions of work on ideology: those who see ideology as functional to the reproduction of capitalism and those who see ideology as a key to the understanding of subjectivity as an important question in its own right." (Barrett 1991, 97)

I think one should extend this statement to the question of a combination of all four aspects of Althusser's theory.

When Althusser claims that ideology in general is "omni-historical" (Althusser 1971), that ideology will exist in all societies (FM 232, 235), he wants to say that firstly that we can never become the fully individuated, autonomous subject projected by rationalist philosophies (cf. Payne 1997, 41), and secondly, that no social formation can exist without a social organization of production, and corresponding ideological forms, that "ideology is indispensable in any society if men are to be formed, transformed and equipped to respond to the demands of their conditions of existence". Therefore "historical materialism cannot conceive that even a communist society could ever do without ideology, be it ethics, art, or 'world outlook'" (FM 234). But of course he did in no way maintain that there would also necessarily exist certain ideologies as racism, sexism, class ideologies, etc.

Critical Realism on ideology

The most important contribution of Critical Realism to the debate on ideology concerns the science-ideology-relation: as I have mentioned at the beginning, Bhaskar adopted much of Althusser's epistemological theses: the concept of the knowledge process as a process of production; the critique of empiricism, pragmatism, individualism; etc.

But while Althusser did not talk very much about questions of ontology, Roy Bhaskar presented a highly differentiated edifice of reflections on ontological questions (RTS;

⁸ A different version of Althusser's relation to Lacan was recently offered by Henry Krips (1999).

PON; SRHE; DPF). In doing so Bhaskar developed a series of concepts⁹: transitive and intransitive dimension, stratification of being, ontological realism, justificational rationalism, epistemological relativism, emergence, explanatory critique, transformational model of social activity, etc.

Critical Realists define ideology as a "system of errors", as a configuration of fallacies (ontic fallacy, epistemic fallacy, naturalistic fallacy,) and conflations (upward, downward and central conflation; cf. Archer 1996). These fallacies and conflations can be described as "ideology in the sense that they are not just mistakes, but ones which function in the interest of a particular social system" (Collier 1994, 104).

Theoretical ideologies are seen as reflecting and rationalizing the practical consciousness which is itself a mystifying reflection of the social reality of which it is a necessary element" (Collier 1994, 188; Bhaskar SRHE, 180-211).

In this kind of explanation ideology is conceived as a *simple* (functional) relation between institutions and beliefs about them (cf. Collier 1994, 172, on ideology and wage-form) - and not as a *double* relation as in Althusser's concept. Therefore Critical Realism is lacking both a concept of ideology as lived relation of people to their conditions of existence and a concept of the (necessary?) contribution of ideology in the constitution of subjects.

In DPF (Bhaskar 1993) Bhaskar discriminates between a general and a narrow concept of ideology: in the most general sense ideology is "generated and reproduced and/or transformed at the intersection of power, discursive and normative social, material, inter- and intrasubjective relations", the narrower concept relates to misconceptions of reality, examples of which would be: "to see war as a game, to think of women as inferior to men, or Marx' justly famous analyses of the value and wage forms" (DPF 119f).

And he does - like Althusser - stress that explanatory critique is not sufficient to defeat ideologies. "Insofar as they are causally efficacious, the social relations and interests underpinning them (and thus also the ideologies themselves) will not bend to explanatory critique alone. Rather this will depend on a type of agency called "transformed, transformative, totalizing (all-inclusive and auto-reflexive) and transformist (oriented to structural change, informed by explanatory critique, concrete utopianism and participatory-animating/activating research) praxis/politics" (DPF 120). But even if such Big Concepts seem to include everything, I still cannot see that the aspects of ideology mentioned above (constitution of subjectivity, lived experience) are consistently theorized in DPF - but may be I am blind.

Such a '4-t-praxis' should lead to a "eudaimonistic pluriverse that would consist in a plurality of processes in which heterology was minimized to a level in which it would be said that each was true to, of and for themselves and each other and the trans-specific contexts which they both contain and are contained by." (DPF 120) This utopian image

⁹ I think that many of these concepts are compatible with Althusser's philosophy because they are present implicitly but not elaborated in his texts.

starts from the premise that transparency of all social relations and all individuals would be the ultimate goal of a free resp. communist society, a concept developed by Hegel and the young Marx (cf. The German Ideology: in its Hegelian language: science wouldn't be necessary any longer because there would be no more difference between essence and appearances, this means everyone would be identical to herself and to the others) (for a critique of further Hegelian-idealist topoi in DPF and FEW cf Hostettler/Norrie in 'Alethia' November 2000).

Cultural Studies on ideology

The field of Cultural Studies is very heterogenous, so it is impossible to make assertions about the whole thing, about Cultural Studies 'as such'. One can only discuss about specific parts related to certain topics. In relation to questions of critical realist epistemology and ontology one could roughly divide Cultural Studies - into four categories:

a: authors explicitly receiving critical realist insights, b: authors implicitly practising critical realist insights, c: authors explicitly rejecting any form of realism, and, finally, d: authors implicitly practising irrealist positions.¹⁰

ad a:) A Cultural Studies researcher explicitly using critical realist argumentation in his debate with colleagues is David Morley.

Morley has done much research in the production and consumption of culture, especially on topics such as broadcasting about industrial and labour conflicts and the reception of various TV-reports. The question of communication studies, or media studies, is not only what meaning the producer intended to convey, or what the 'objective meaning' of a media message would be, but what meaning was actually conveyed. In other words, the audience is not a passive recipient but an active participant in the creation/production of meaning; because "symbolic work" is a necessary and constitutive part of each human action (Willis 1990). The politico-strategical intention of this Cultural Studies view is to argue that if we want to organize opposition to or subversion of the prevailing social structures we have to know - and therefore we have to analyse - how people produce the meanings they live, we have to attempt "to capture people's lived experience and how they make sense of it" (Barrett 1999, 163). It is not sufficient to analyse merely the structure and function of commodity fetishism, of ideological institutions and so on.

Morley's critique - inside the field of Cultural Studies - is focused on certain ethnographic approaches "which add up only to a set of micro-narratives, outside any effective macro-political or cultural frame" (Morley 1997, 126); these theories "leave one, in the end, able only to tell individual stories of (logically) infinite differences" (Morley 1997, 127). In Morley's perspective, the "objective must not be to substitute one (micro or macro) level of

¹⁰ And, of course, various mixtures of a, b and d in one and the same text.

analysis for the other, but rather to attempt to integrate the analysis of the broader questions of ideology, power and politics with the analysis of the consumption, use and functions of television in everyday life".

A further object of Morley's critique is John Hartley's constructivist account of the television audience as a "fictional object", holding that "in no case the audience is 'real' or external to its discursive construction. There is no 'actual' audience that lies beyond its production as a category ... audiences are only ever encountered as representations" (Hartley). Morley not simply rejects this approach but gives a differentiating critique, based explicitly on Christopher Norris' work on Critical Realism: "This stress on the institutionalized discursive practices through which television audiences are constructed is of considerable value, as a corrective to any simple-minded 'naive realism' in the research process. However, it is possible to recognize the necessarily constructivist dimension of any research process without claiming that audiences only exist discursively. To argue otherwise is to confuse a problem of epistemology with one of ontology." (Morley 1997, 134f) There would be "significant epistemological and political deficiencies" in postmodern relativism.

In his considerations about ideology Morley focuses on the construction of subjectivities and its relation to economic, political and ideological power.

Chris Barker, on the other hand, who has recently published a comprehensive book about Cultural Studies (Barker 2000), is explicitly rejecting both: any form of realism and any concept of ideology.

Barker suggests that "the most significant debate centred on epistemology, on questions about the status of knowledge and truth, has been between representationalist (i.e. realist) and anti-representationalist (poststructuralism, postmodernism and pragmatism) views. ... Those who maintain a realist line, often in its quasi-Marxist guise, argue that a degree of certain knowledge about an independent world (a real world) is possible ... In contrast poststructuralist/ postmodern epistemology adopts Nietzsche's characterisation of truth as a 'mobile army of metaphors and metonyms'." According to this position knowledge is "a question not of true discovery but of the construction of interpretations about the world which are taken to be true. In so far as the idea of truth has an historical purchase, it is the consequence of power, that is, of whose interpretations are to count as truth." (Barker 2000, 26f, 143) ... 'regimes of truth' (146)

Although Barker concedes that "there are critics who feel that a more certain basis of knowledge is required for the political project of Cultural Studies to be maintained", he still is convinced that only an epistemology based on the philosophies of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Richard Rorty is possible and justifiable. In his corresponding argumentation he constructs a binary opposition between postmodern and realist philosophies. The only realism he 'accepts' - following Rorty - being a naive, essentialist, metaphysical realism.

Barker suggests replacing the concept of ideology by Foucault's concept of power/knowledge. It would not be possible, he argues, to compare ideology with science -

by casting the former as 'misrecognition', because "science is a mode of thinking and a set of procedures which produces certain kinds of knowledge; it is not an elevated God-like form of knowledge which produces objective truth beyond dispute" (Barker 2000, 63). Thus Barker again has constructed another binary opposition.

To be clear: the problem with this binary opposition is not only that it is binary; what is problematic in the first place is the kind of construction of the elements of this opposition: especially the realist position is presented in a way that a critical realist position will become unthinkable. Of course, he does not discuss Roy Bhaskar's - or any other - critique of Rorty's philosophy (Bhaskar 1989).

From his epistemological premises Barker concludes that the only concept of ideology is one that is interchangeable with the Foucauldian notion of power/knowledge; so his definition is: ideologies are world views of any social groups which justify their actions but which cannot be counterpoised to truth; however they can be subjected to redescription and thus do not have to be accepted" (Barker 2000, 64)

One of the central figures of British Cultural Studies, Stuart Hall, could be characterized as combining an implicit critical realist philosophy with a Gramscian theory of ideology and hegemony. But it is nearly impossible to give a short description of Hall's approach, because his theoretical activity covers a period of four decades, during which he absorbed all major developments in philosophy and social sciences, ranging from Althusser and Poulantzas to Voloshinov, Foucault, Derrida, feminism and psychoanalysis.

Yet Hall has always remained critical to certain strands of "postmodern philosophy, ... because their concept of identity is absolutely free-floating and it suggests (es macht uns vor) that identities would exist isolated of historical and social conditions". But we cannot, in a postmodern amnesia, forget or ignore our past, so Hall. It is impossible to take any position at any time (Hall 1999a, 148f).

In his analysis of Margaret Thatcher's political programme Hall argued that "the ideology of the radical right is less an 'expression' of economic recession than the recession's condition of existence" (Hall 1980; Barrett 1999, 162f).¹¹ Hall theorized thatcherite politics as the building of a new hegemonic project: a project to change the way in which people live out social and political conflict. In this, the popular appeal of an authoritarian language was crucial. Hall concludes that only by understanding the deep nature of the shift towards authoritarianism at a popular level could the left begin to think about challenging the Thatcherist project.

In the 1990s Hall shifted his focus to the question of production and re-production of self and 'other' in various political-cultural fields (films, racism, nationalism, ...). In this he drew

¹¹ In my view it is problematic to simply reverse the usual chain of determinism; it would be more adequate to study the articulation of economic change, political and ideological strategies and mechanisms.

not so much on Lacan than on Foucault's concept of performative practices of self-production.

Lawrence Grossberg, in addition, tries to integrate the question of affects into a theory of ideology resp. culture: "Ideology is always in determinate relations with political and economic practices, but also with desiring-effects, mood effects, etc. These other planes cannot be bracketed out for they determine whether and how meanings and subject-positions are taken up, occupied, invested in, and possessed." (Grossberg 1993, 59)

Conclusion:

I would like to end by drawing two conclusions:

i: a strategical one: Critical Realism on the one hand is absolutely necessary

to criticise relativist and anti-realist tendencies in Cultural Studies, and

to offer elaborate philosophical "underlabouring" (Locke/Bhaskar) reflections for critical research (I think, critical realists could easily agree with the theoretical and political intentions formulated by Lawrence Grossberg: "Cultural Studies investigates how people are empowered and disempowered by the particular structures and forces that organize their (everyday) lives, always in contradictory ways, and how their (everyday) lives are themselves articulated to and by the trajectories of economic and political power. Cultural Studies is about the historical possibilities of transforming people's lived realities and the relations of power within which these realities are constructed and lived, and it is about the absolutely vital contribution of intellectual work to the imagination and realization of such possibilities" (Grossberg 1999, 24).)

However in order to be accepted as a dialogue-partner, it would be useful for Critical Realism to practice a differentiated reception of the various Cultural Studies approaches and theses. Simply disqualifying a whole thing called "Cultural Studies" as 'irrealist' etc. will not encourage productive discussions; and Critical Realism needs this discussion with Cultural Studies - f.e. concerning an up-to-date and politically efficacious conception and theory of culture, ideology and transformation.

ii) a theoretical one: an articulation, a combination of 'Althusser's four aspects' of ideology is necessary for a critical realist or historical-materialist or emancipatory theory of society which can understand 'what's going on' and 'what can be done'.

I think that Althusser has theorized the essential features of ideology - even if there are various problems in his concrete theoretization: functionalism, under-theoretization of possibilities of resistance.

It seems to me that neither Althusser nor anyone else really managed to combine these four aspects of ideology (represented by the two parts of the ISA essays and the epistemological and ideology-theoretical theses of *For Marx* and *Reading Capital*) in a theoretically consistent way. This means that an integrated materialist or realist theory of

the ideological remains a desideratum, an open question - both theoretically and empirically.

Of course, the question of ideology is not the only relevant one. But without a complex elaborate theory of the ideological each theory of society - as critical it may claim to be - tends towards reductionism and technicism, and towards apoliticism¹².

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¹² cf. the critiques of such tendencies in Cultural Studies by Morris 1988 and Kraniuskas 1998

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