CONSCIOUSNESS: A MISSING LINK IN THE COUPLING OF TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION

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A materialistic approach to conscious-
ness, long ignored in mainstream re-
search but emerging in critical theory,
may help to explain the ideological
impact of media in which dominant cul-
tural meanings are subjectively inter-
nalized.

Une approche matérialistic, longtemps
négligée par les chercheurs, mais
pointant parmi les théoristes, explique
mieux et plus complètement l'influence
idéologique de média sur les individus.

The psychology of consciousness, meaning
the study of the relationships between behavior,
experience and overall patterns of psychological
functioning at any given time, is presently
going through something of a renewal in a wide
arena of discussion, ranging from chapters in
college textbooks and articles in scholarly
journals to the practical applications of teach-
ers, psychiatrists, counsellors and coaches
(1981). Much of this renewal centers on ways to
develop a full range of states of consciousness

(including relaxation, visualization, creative reveries, hypnosis, biofeedback, electrical brain stimulation, dreaming) and to use altered states to enquire deeper into the nature of human intelligence, to accelerate learning, improve memory, speed convalescence and develop other latent abilities which are found more frequently in ethnic groups outside the pale of Western culture. Yet, one of the absences in the literature (for instance, **Brain/Mind Bulletin**; **Revision**; **Journal** of **Consciousness and Change**; **Phoenix**; **Journal of Transpersonal Anthropology**) is exploration of the interactions between consciousness and media, considered either in an individual context or in the collective context of culture, public mind or Zeitgeist.

When one turns to the literature of media studies, it must be concluded that consciousness is hardly a salient notion there either, in considerations of how human beings interact with each other through the technologies of communication. There are historical reasons for this, of course: the same behaviorist paradigm which closed the theoretical gap between stimulus and response in psychology also dominated American media theory since its inception in the 1940s, leaving little room between content analysis and study of the "effects" of that content in which to conceptualize the intervening notion of consciousness. In the copious literature on the effects of violent television programming on viewers' behavior, for instance, the concept of consciousness is rarely taken into account, though it is obviously implied in such contexts as the role of the media in providing fantasies which act as "coping or adaptive mechanisms useful when delays in gratification occur" (Fesh-

bach and Singer, 1971, 63). It is also implied, though not explicitly theorized, in the various approaches to what McGee (1980) calls "symbolist" theories of meaning, for example in the "chaining out" of fantasy themes through a culture (Bormann, 1972 and 1982; Cragan and Shields, 1981; Mohrmann, 1982), or the consolidation of myths through media re-presentations (Breen and Corcoran, 1981), or the cultivation of anxiety and fear in heavy television users (Van Poecke, 1980).

The striking absence of a theory of consciousness within media studies can be seen most clearly with a few examples. Adolph Hitler, it has been said, objectified Germans' self-hatred "in the tropological figure of the magically corrupting Jew" (Geertz, 1964, 72), thus transforming a prevalent personal neurosis into a powerful social force. Winston Churchill too, formulated the mood of Britons by transforming disconnected, private emotions into a public possession in the war against Hitler. More recently, Margaret Thatcher has been credited with uniting much of English public opinion behind the war against argentina by reviving the grandiloquent discourse of Churchill (Hall, 1982). Each of these transformations of public consciousness was achieved through the dissemination of mediated messages. Thus, through the construction of symbolic models of social order we make ourselves political animals. The question remains, however, why people become motivated by public meanings, especially when these are in opposition to their traditional notions of "decency" or are in conflict with their own social interests. Reflections on this question have been spurred by the continuing feminist interest in how sexual ideclogies play a role in

the construction of individual identity, how, for example, the mystique of feminine fulfillment, which was so powerful at one time that "women grew up no longer knowing that they have the desires and capabilities the mystigue forbids" (Friedan, 1963, 56) achieved its effect at the level of individual consciousness. Traditional media theory has been slow to explain how the conditioning of consciousness takes place, slow to develop a political psychology which would supplement the long-standing interest in the behavioral "effects" of the media. While behaviorist research simply ignored the fact that human activity is a blend of conscious and unconscious elements (perceptions, self-images, fantasies, character structure, etc.) symbolist approaches contained untheorized assumptions concerning the connections between mediated social definitions of reality and changes in human consciousness.

The purpose of this essay is to investigate the notion of consciousness as a communication variable which has generally remained implicit or untheorized within the mainstream of media studies, particularly in the United States. The relationship between consciousness and media will be explored as part of the problem of how public meanings, mediated through the technologies of mass communication, enter into the formation of individual consciousness through being subjectively internalized by participants in a particular culture. It will be suggested that consciousness is now being foregrounded for inspection, albeit hesitantly, within European critical media theory in its various attempts to construct a theory of ideology using the framework of psychoanalysis. These attempts will be explored with a view to demarcating a site where

future productive debate may take place between the widely divergent traditions of American and European communication theory which are still substantially insulated from one another (Carey, 1979). It is hoped that this essay will at least make a thrust towards the development of a theory of media and consciousness, indicating how its general features may be mapped out even if its specificity remains to be developed.

CRITICAL MEDIA THEORY

There are at least three senses in which the term ideology has been employed. It has been used to designate a coherent set of ideas or beliefs by which people "posit, explain or justify ends and means of organized social action, and specifically political action, irrespective of whether such action aims to preserve, amend, uproot or rebuild a given order" (Seliger, 1976, 14). Examples of this form are usages such as "Socialist Ideology" or "Tory Ideology" or the recent call by Von Kuehnelt-Ceddihn (1983) for an explicit ideology to fill in the "pictures" in the "frame" of the newly-ascendent Right in America. Secondly, the term is used in a derogatory sense, derived from Napoleon's differences with the educational reformers of the French revolution (Larrain, 1979, 28) to signify visionary moonshine, or extremist and unrealistic political policies. In its third meaning, ideology is used in an epistemological sense to refer to the process by which we know the world, that is, to the relationship between "reality" and the various forms of consciousness to which it gives rise. This is the sense that will be pursued here.

Although a concern for demystifying ideological consciousness dominates much of modern European media theory, the concern can be traced in Western philosophy as far back as Plato's criticisms of the apparent obviousness of doxa or common-sense discourses (Plato, 1968), through Machiavelli's (Crick, 1970) attacks on the uses of religion to teach mass passivity in the face of the tyranny of Princes, to Feuerbach's (Barth, 1976) critique of divinity as a creation of alienated human beings. Critical theory builds on the attempts of Marx and Engels in the nineteenth century to discern another form of distorted consciousness, that derived from the social and economic conditions of existence, as the forms of thought and feeling of one particular group within a culture gain adherence among almost all other groups. Ideology in this sense is embedded in general perceptions and explanations of the world which disguise the roots they have in the perspective of one dominant group, whose interests are thus defended and legitimatized (Marx and Engels, 1962, 222-223). The concept of culture implied here represents a sharp attack on traditional notions of cultural (and individual) autonomy. Related, though distinctly different alternatives to cultural autonomy can be found in Whorf's (1956) idea that language fashions culture and in Innis' (1950, 1951) and McLuhan's (1966) assertion that technology shapes culture.

The notion of consciousness has been kept alive in the materialist tradition of accounting for public meanings and political behavior, where "the essential question posed by the fact of society is one of locating precise descriptions of the dialectical tension between a

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'true' and a 'false' consciousness, between reality and ideology" (McGee, 1980, 2). The call to make the world aware of its own consciousness, "to awaken it out of its own dream about itself" (Marx and Engels, 1975, 144) was made by Marx, while Engels, half a century later, coined the familiar phrase "false consciousness" to refer to the successful internalization of class-based illusions and mystifications by subjects who thus lose touch with the real motives impelling them. False consciousness is thus a distorting veil that hangs over the eyes of people, preventing them from seeing the world for what it really is.

From scattered references in the writings of Marx and Engels, then, a notion of ideology emerges which informs contemporary theories of media influence. In so far as ideology presents an illusion as reality, it has an empirical basis in the experience of a specific social group and is normative for the rest of society, turning what is a fact for one group in an "ought" or ideal for all. Since it is built on a narrow social point of view, it is encased within a specific body of unexamined assumptions through which its view of the world is filtered. Universal, eternal, absolute validity is claimed for this partial social point of view, which misperceives and distorts and mystifies as it is universalized. Thus, ideology legitimatizes an existing power structure and becomes indispensable for its reproduction in a non-coercive way. The interests of one group are represented as the common interests of all, as the only rational, universally valid interests. Actual conflicts of interest are hidden in ideology which, as Poulantzas (1971, 207) suggests, "reconstitutes on an imaginary level a relatively coher-

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ent discourse which serves as the horizon of agents' experience." Remote, and therefore fairly obvious examples of "negative" classes which internalized ideological beliefs that originated elsewhere and mystified their exploitation, can be found in medieval serfs who accepted their misery as part of a God-given hierarchical order, or in those Blacks in Southern States who believed in their owners' rights to keep them in slavery.

It is probably the work of Antonio Gramsci in the 1930's, more than any other theorist of culture, that has opened up a theoretical space in which to study mass communication as a social force more complex in its operation that "vulgar Marxist" (Rader, 1979, xx) theories of manipulation by a dominant class would imply. This shift is emphasized in Gramsci's analysis of mass psychology (in his case, Fascism) through the concept of cultural hegenomy, one of the key concepts in his mature writings. The supremacy of a social group can be achieved in two different ways, he argues, through coercion or consent. Besides influencing behavior externally through the rewards and punishments of the repressive apparatuses of the state (the police, courts, military, prison system, etc.), social control can also be exercised internally, "by molding personal convictions into a replica of prevailing norms" (Femia, 1981, 24). This consensual aspect of political control is hegemony, objectified in and achieved through civil society, that is, those institutions which create and diffuse cognitive and affective structure through which we perceive and interpret social reality: family, school, church, political parties, trade unions and, of course, mass media. Thus one concept of reality, one way of

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life and thought, absorbing and pacifying the outlooks of subordinate groups, is diffused throughout society (Gramsci, 1971). Hegemony becomes what Raymond Williams (1977, 110) calls a "saturation of the whole process of living--to such a depth that the pressures and limits of what can ultimately be seen as a specific eco- nomic, political and cultural system seem to most of us the pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense."

Gramsci's writings on hegemony have laid the foundation for much of European critical media theory (Hall, et al., 1980; Williams, 1977) by stressing that the suppression of al- ternative meanings, once carried out exclusively through the coercive apparatuses of the state, is now achieved in part by the mass media in their ability to define the parameters of what is "legitimate, sane, reasonable, practical, good, true and beautiful" (Sallach, 1974, 166). With the successful naturalization and universa- lization of the world view of a particular so- cial group, critics can then be presented as naive, irresponsible, Utopian or even "ideologi- cal" (in the derogatory Napoleonic sense), since one of the most striking aspects of ideology is that it is "critical towards its adversary but.. uncritical towards itself" (Marx and Engels, 1975, 181). The role of media in bringing about a hegemonic social consensus needs no conspiracy theory to support it since these hegemonic ma- neuvers are learned through the experience of becoming a "professional" in a media organiza- tion (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978).

The key concept here is the power of the media to define, not merely reproduce reality, through their narrative devices which actively

make things mean.   Reality is no longer viewed as a given set of facts, to be reflected in televised news or fiction.   Instead, it is the result of a particular way of constructing, through preferred meanings, a "reality" which would have credibility, legitimacy and a taken-for-grantedness.   Alternative realities, occasionally seeping into the public consciousness through alternative media, would, of course, be marginalized, down-graded and delegitimized. Examples of ideological deconstruction in Britian within the last decade can be found in Hall et al., (1980), Millum (1975), Halloran et al., (1970), Gurevitch et al., (1982), Connell (1979), Curran et al., (1979), Garnham (1979), Hartman (1979), Morley (1980) Golding and Elliott (1979), and Golding and Murdock (1979). On-going concerns can be traced in the journals **Screen** and **Screen Education** (now amalgamated) and in **Media, Culture and Society**.

Though much of the seminal work on ideology as an epistemological problem has been accomplished in Europe, there are clear signs of an American rapprochement with critical media theory, particularly in the investigation of news. News, it is argued, is constructed by manageable deviations from a system of "order" which operates below the surface of the daily minor deviations which "make news" in the areas of violence, inequality, racism, sexism, etc. (Tuchman, 1978).   One of the mechanisms of this reproduction of an ideological "order" is the reliance of the institutions of journalism on bureaucratic sources of data, a reliance in which the pertinence and veracity of those data are assumed (Altheide, 1976; Fishman, 1978 and 1980; Gans, 1979; Molotch and Lester, 1974).

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The influence of Gramsci is clearly seen in Gitlin's (1980) study of the media's response to the various movements to end the Vietnam War, particularly the processes whereby mass communication produced a hegemonic common-sense which helped to forge and maintain political consensus. Nor has television drama escaped the charge that there are connections between its fictional portrayals and the maintenance of a dominant social order. Philip Wander (1979), for example, has explored what the soap operas omit form their worldview:

> The soaps rarely lead us into the more baffling social problems, the sort which cannot be corrected by a few hours' surgery, a visit to a psychiatrist or a lawyer, or a brilliant marriage. The poor are blacked out, the rich appear in soft lights. We see their personal problems but not the methods by which they maintain their position in society. Doctors are wealthy; health-care costs are not discussed; there is no unnecessary surgery. ....Most soap opera survival strategies belong almost exclusively to the members of the upper class....There are no diseases resulting from smog or bad working conditions, a sudden increase in work loads, unemployment or the insane pace of social change (p. 87).

Gandy (1982) has examined connections between television dramas, the cultivation of health anxiety and the reinforcement of the dominant U.S. medical ideology.

Like other manipulatory theories of media, ideological theory has an impoverished conceptualization of the construction of individual consciousness within the total ideological process. The psychological issue of how ideologies are subjectively internalised is far from fully resolved in modern critical theory. How does ideology enter into the formation of individual conscicusness among participants in a particular culture? Much critical media theory in the past has concentrated on what Fredric Jameson (1981, 287) calls a "negative hermeneutic" function, that is, demystifying the instrumental aspects of cultural texts in the reproduction of a particular social formation. He calls for the simultaneous exercise of a "positive hermeneutic," that is, an exploration of the mythic impulses released and managed by those same mass cultural texts within "a complex strategy of rhetorical persuasion in which substantial incentives are offered for ideological adherence." The implication is that ideology involves a process of "compensatory exchange" in which the media consumer is offered specific gratifications in return for consent to passive acceptance of a dominating world-view.

What is the nature of this exchange? Jameson speculates that if it is a process whereby "otherwise dangerous and protopolitical impulses" are "managed and defused, rechanneled and offered spurious objects," then it must be asked how "these same impulses--the raw material on which the process works--are initially awakened within the very text that seeks to still them" (p. 287). The outline of an answer to this question can be discerned within the theoretical framework of Freudian psychoanalysis, particularly as it has evolved in two different direc-

tions: the exploration of censoring mechanisms by Wilhelm Reich, and of the origins of language by Louis Althusser.

CONSCIOUSNESS AND CHARACTER STRUCTURE

Although the term ideology was not used by Freud, a psychological conception of ideology emerges from his suggestion that most human acts respond to basic impulses and instincts which the human mind tries to conceal by constructing a rational account of irrational behaviour. The psychological mechanism of transposition or projection, for example, which, Freud claimed, is very commonly employed in normal life as well as in paranoid states of mind (1958, 209), consists of an internal impulse which is concealed or distorted by its transposition within consciousness into the form of an external perception. Similarly, the mechanism of rationalization consists in the neurotic concealing of inner desires by putting forward the appearance of rationality for instinctive impulses which would not normally be socially tolerated (Freud 1958, 192). In both cases, an internal contradiction, in the form of a psychological conflict between impulses, prompts an attempt to find a logical, though distorted, solution by being transposed into the external world.

These mechanisms match, in an inverted way, the mechanisms of ideology by which an external contradiction receives a distorted solution in the mind. Freud came close to a psychological theory of ideology near the end of his career in his analysis of the defense mechanism called "identification" and in his analysis of religion. A child, for instance, when overwhelmed by fear of an aggressor, may attempt to overcome

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the unbearable anguish by identifying with the personality of the aggressor. Freud saw this mechanism as one of the factors which could explain the attachment of oppressed people to the cultural ideals of their oppressors (Freud, 1928). In his analysis of religion, Freud followed Feuerbach in contending that human beings have always needed protection against the uncertainties of life and thus create gods with the traits of father figure. Religion is an illusion, "the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity" (Freud, 1928, 76) which crystallizes in gods those human wishes that derive from our helplessness.

The early work of Wilhelm Reich represents one of the first attempts to theorize the social determinants of human consciousness. Reich took the individual mechanisms of Freud a stage further by suggesting that they can have a collective impact in the form of an ideology. His analysis of German National Socialism, for example, suggests that extreme nationalism and racism politically activated a frustrated population at a time when a rigid patriarchy and an extreme repression of sexual impulses was molding character structure in a particular way. Thus, he expanded traditional materialist analysis by emphasizing that the structure of society alone is not sufficient to explain ideology. In his view, political psychology should try "to determine as completely as possible, the myriad intermediary links in the transforming of the material base into the ideological superstructure" (1976, XXVIII). His own work represents a systematic attempt to incorporate influences into psychoanalytic theory and to reveal the psychological processes which influence the social conditioning of consciousness.

Reich's conclusion was that the social structure is psychologically reproduced within the individual as a corresponding character structure and that this takes place primarily within the setting of the family, which provides the crucial mediation between ideology and the development of character. In addressing the question of why large numbers of people were mobilized by Fascism, Reich believed that the movement appealed to the authoritarian character structure of the German middle-class family, which could share, via identification, in the greatness of the Fuhrer and the nation (Reich, 1970, 75 - 79). Working-class families, not being as isolated from one another in working and living conditions, cultivated less rigid character structures, better able to resist the authority of exploiters, with the result that the largest core of followers of Fascism were rural, business and white-collar middle classes (Reich, 1970, 13).

In Reich's view, then, ideology is embedded in character structure, the basic traits of which are formed in early childhood during the development of the superego. The patriarchal family is not only an economic unit but a trans-mitter of ideologies and an agent in the devel-opment of a submissive character structure. The ideological function of the family is experi-enced by its members as feelings of family duty -- the wage-earner accepts unjust conditions of employment imposed by the employer and represses anger provoked by exploitation, while women continue to serve as domestic servants in the family in response to feelings of family duty. These feelings of duty breed conservatism and the repression of social criticism by blocking the articulation of anger and frustration felt

in the workplace, all in the interest of family responsibility. Ideologically reconciled to the existing social order, parents communicate their acceptance of social authority to their children.

In Reichian psychoanalysis, character structure is reinforced within the family through its lifelong repression of sexuality and the association of unconscious feelings of guilt with sexual desires. The same psychological disposition is the basis of mass acceptance of authority: by assimilating the external authority of sexual moralism, the individual is predisposed to internalize and submit to authority in social life (Reich, 1970, 30 - 31). In this way, the transmission of moralistic sexual attitudes within the family assumes political consequences, because the family "produces the authority-fearing, life-fearing vassal and thus constantly creates new possibilities whereby a handful of men in power can rule the masses" (Reich, 1975, 95).

Reich adds a psychological dimension to the theory of ideology by explaining how ideologies are reproduced within individuals through unconscious association with repressed impulses. The process is dialectical: the social conditions forcing people to repress basic needs and emotions produce a characterological submissiveness which readily accepts the relationships of authority that are taken for granted in dominant ideology (Cohen, 1982, 157). Thus Reich offers refinement to the traditional Marxist explanation of human nature as an embodiment of the history and structure of the social relationships within which it finds itself. It has been suggested that his analysis of the political

function of sexual repression may still be time-
ly, as the strength of the moralistic "New
Right" in the United States indicates (Cohen,
1982, 201). His work in the Sex-Pol movement in
Germany suggests ways in which other institu-
tions besides family --religion, schools, tele-
vision, for example -- must be examined to see
if they also foster feelings of dependency
through identification with symbols of author-
ity. George Gerbner (Van Poecke, 1980) has
already begun the systematic investigation of
how televised violence cultivates learned help-
lessness and acquiescence to power.

CONSCIOUSNESS AND LANGUAGE

While Reich's political psychology found its
roots in Freud's theory of censoring mechanisms,
contemporary French analyses of the psychology
of ideology find their roots in Freud's approach
to language. His theoretical model of the un-
conscious suggests that it is the site of mean-
ingful representations of experiences which can
be consciously apprehended through language.
Freud's method of analyzing the latent content
of dreams, for instance, is characterized by
unravelling the primary processes which govern
the links between the latent, repressed content
and the manifest content which the dreamer can
remember (Freud, 1958, 277).

Setting out to reinterpret Freud in the
light of Sausseurian linguistic theory, Jacques
Lacan (1977) emphasizes the mechanisms of con-
densation and displacement as the very mechan-
isms of language itself through which the social
construction of the individual subject takes
place. Through condensation, one idea comes to

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represent a number of chains of meaning in the unconscious. Through displacement, an originally important idea is invested with psychic energy which is actually rooted in another idea. Lacan links condensation to metaphoric relations in language whereby a conscious idea is linked to a number of unconscious chains of meaning. And he links displacement with metonymy, the linguistic ability to represent an idea by reference to only part of it. Much of this linguistic ability is initiated in a child's "mirror" phase of development, when the child, at about the age of six months, experiences itself as a fragmented mass of uncoordinated limbs and learns to identify with ("mis-recognize") a mirror image of a complete, unified body.

Much of Lacan's psychoanalytic model has been transported into the region of ideology, where the structure of mis-recognition has been taken up by Althusser (1965 and 1971), Laclau (1977) and others as one of the mechanisms at work in the epistemological processes of ideology. The unformed infant becomes a subject through entering into language, a network of signifiers organized around certain culturally privileged signifiers which act as nodal points structuring the network in a definite way. Ideology is said to operate in a similar manner, through the workings of the twin mechanisms of misrecognition and interpellation. Althusser poses the question how are individuals in society formed as subjects who "live" various kinds of oppression, in the sense of accepting them as "necessary" (Althusser, 1971, 123 - 173). He answers by drawing on Lacan's (1977) concept of the "mirror." Just as the infant is confronted by the prefabricated "self" it will become in its "mirror" phase, so an ideological subject

becomes a subject by recognizing an image of the "other" as its own image. The function of ideology in adapting individuals to the demands society makes on them is achieved by constituting individuals as subjects in the world--and not allowing them to see themselves as the object or effect of the world. They live within a social formation as if they were freely controlling their conditions of existence. This takes place through the crucial act of individuals "recognizing" the illusion that the world and history were created for them, with the assurance that if they conform with what is required of them by society, all will be well. Thus, Althusser retains the materialist notion of individuals being constituted as subjects by a pre-existing system of relations, but borrows the psychoanalytic notion of the "mirror" to explain how the roles of subject/object are reversed in peoples' imaginations as they live within ideology.

The second mechanism in Althusser's explanation of ideology is "interpellation." Ideology transforms individuals into subjects by "that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there'" (Althusser, 1971, 163). When individuals are interpellated as subjects, the ambiguity of the term "subject" emerges: "(1) a free subjectivity, a center of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions; (2) a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting submission" (1977, 169). Laclau (1977, 102 - 104), suggests that different types of interpellations (politi-

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cal, aesthetic, religious, familial, etc.) may coexist while being articulated within an unified ideological discourse. In periods of social stability, contradictions can be neutralized and absorbed by the dominant ideological discourse, as, for instance, between religious interpellations of an ascetic kind and an increasing enjoyment of worldly goods, without subjects "living" these as incompatible. In periods of crisis, however, when ideological contradictions in all their sharpness become translated into an "identity crisis," one sector may try to reconstitute a new ideological unity through a narrative version which denies all interpellations but one and transforms this into a critique of the existing system and a reconstruction of the entire ideological domain. The religious interpellation for instance, may come to be a chief reorganizer of all familial, political, aesthetic and economic aspects of culture. An example of this can be seen in the rise of the fundamentalist Islamic sect of Wahhabism in 18th century Arabia, on which the power of the modern House of Saud is built (Lacey, 1981). Contemporary examples can be found in the rise of the Religious New Right in America or Khomeinism in Iran.

The ambiguity of the term "subject" permeates the work of Michel Foucault also, especially his attempts to theorize the constitution of the subject within a historical framework, that is, as the result of the historical production of discursive formations (for example, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Age of Reason, the Modern Age, Post-Modernity etc.), shaped by particular sets of social conditions which constitute subjectivity in particular ways. The subject is that which denotes as well as that

which is denoted. It can both construct dis-
course and be constructed by it. Subjectivity
is both the embodiment of thought, which sus-
tains sense, and that which is brought under the
influence of something that has the capacity to
"subject." Foucault sees no contradiction in
the notion that the subject is the support on
which discourse is built, while at the same time
being an object produced by the discourse which
dominates it. "All these contents that [man's]
knowledge reveals to him as exterior to himself
and older than his own birth, anticipate him,
overhang him with all their solidity and traver-
se him as though he were merely an object of
nature, a face doomed to be erased in the course
of history" (Foucault, 1970, 313).

Our humanity is therefore not the image we
construe of ourselves, through conscience or
self-knowledge, but something over which we have
little control, since it is shaped by material,
historical forces. Thus, Foucault would analyze
a discursive formation such as the Reformation
as "a great crisis of the Western experience of
subjectivity and a revolt against the religious
and moral power which gave form, during the
Middle Ages, to this subjectivity" (1983, 213).
Viewed in this way, the Reformation was a strug-
gle for a new subjectivity. The subject in
today's world is, of course, also placed in
power relations which are very complex. The
modern state has integrated and reshaped an old
power technique which originated in Christian
institutions, what Foucault calls "pastoral
power." Spread and multiplied now far beyond
ecclesiastical settings, this is the power of
the state to individualize people in particular
ways. Thus, Foucault's call to emancipation
focuses on subjectivity: "We have to promote

new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries" (1983, 216).

Yet another decisive break with idealist conceptions of consciousness is found in the work of the journal **Tel Quel** in France and of Coward and Ellis (1977) in England, seeking to explore still further the juncture of Psychoanalysis and Marxism. Common to both approaches is the complete undermining of the notion of an unified and consistent subject. It is the working of ideology which produces the imaginary sense of continuity and coherence in the subject, while the subject in fact is traversed with contradictions which leave it decentered rather than homogeneous:

> The consistent subject is the place to which the representations of ideology are directed: Duty, Morality and Law all depend on this category of subject for their functioning, and all contribute as institutions to its production. The individual thus lives his subjection to social structures as a consistent subject-ivity, an imaginary wholeness. Ideologies set in place the individual as though he were this subject: the individual produces himself in this imaginary wholeness, this imaginary reflection of himself as the author of his actions (Coward and Ellis, 1977, 76).

Thus, the notion of ideology is expanded to include the processes whereby suitable subjects for certain meanings are constructed. Such subjects think and feel themselves to be the

free origin of their ideas and actions, even when there is evidence to the contrary. Once again, psychoanalysis is credited with the unique power to analyze the disunity of consciousness, in particular how the individual is socially formed as a specific subjectivity, how it is shaped to be the site where a specific meaning can be realized even as the subject feels it is itself the coherent source of the meaning. Ideology is therefore both a practice of representation and the construction of a subject for that representation. It is "the practice in which individuals are produced and produce their orientations to the social structures so that they can act within those structures in various ways" (Coward and Ellis, 1977, 72).

Common to much recent work which revisits psychoanalysis with a view to discovering the roots of power in modern societies, is a total rejection of idealist notions of a pure, unified consciousness which transcends the social system and is not constructed in it. In its place is posited the materialist notion that consciousness is constructed by the symbol (language, discourse) rather than being the point of origin of the symbol. As Coward and Ellis maintain, "the individual, even prior to his or her birth, is always already subject-ed to the structure into which he or she is born. The structure is what sets in place an experience for the subject which it includes.... [The subject] is decentered within this structure, constructed in a specific system of differences and their arrangements" (1977, 3 - 4). Because all power relations that make up a social formation take place in language, language since the time of Lacan has become the place in which to study the social construction of the individual. What

remains to be done now is to broaden the concept of discourse as a material force acting on consciousness so that it includes the imagery generated every day by the screen media.

CONCLUSIONS

In the on-going study of how the technology of communication structures change, there is a ground-swell of reaction away from the dominant American behaviorist research paradigm among European theorists. Underlying this paradigm-shift is a replacement of a transportation view of communication (focused on the extension of messages through space from sender to receiver, for purposes of attitude or behavior change) with what Carey (1975) calls a "ritualistic" view centered on the processes through which a shared culture is maintained in time through the celebration of shared beliefs. One implication of this move away from behaviorist psychology and closer to cultural anthropology is that the conventional research assumption that change is the strongest "effect" of mediated communication needs to be re-evaluated. Among United States scholars, Gerbner has already begun this re-evaluation: "Stability (or even resistance to change) may be the significant outcome. We can't look for change as the most significant accomplishment of the chief arm of established culture if its main social function is to maintain, reinforce and exploit rather than undermine or subvert prevalent conceptions, beliefs and behaviors" (Gerbner and Gross, 1980, 156).

Yet change does take place within the public meaning systems which are the core of any culture. The most salient of recent changes in United States culture is probably the ascendancy

of the New Right in national politics. Media scholars are challenged to understand the role of mass communication in this massive shift in political priorities, to examine, for instance, Gandy's (1982) assertion that there was no "conservative mandate" in 1980 in any objective sense, as witnessed by CBS and New York Times polls. Gandy maintains that the notion of a growing conservative national mood entered the consciousness of liberal publications through the 1970's and with Reagan's election, snowballed through all the media as journalists increasingly sought out conservatives as knowledgeable sources about the new political trend. The end result of this process was the change effected in the consciousness of the Democratic Party, which then fell in line with many Republican proposals in the belief that the conservative President had the whole nation on his side. A similar media phenomenon can perhaps be seen in Britian as political opposition to Margaret Thatcher wilted in the face of what seemed like a national mandate for going to war with Argentina over the Falkland Islands (Hall, 1982).

The problem remains, how does mass communication structure change (or stability)? The question is all the more relevant in the context of the rapid emergence of new forms of technology. It has been suggested, for example, that video games, by actively engaging participants in violent acts such as firing guns, launching missiles or driving tanks,

> embed their assumptions concerning our culture -- the implicit evilness of the enemy, the need to destroy our foes completely without attempting diplomacy or other alternate conflict resolution

procedures, the xenophobia concerning representatives of alien cultures, the need to destroy an anonymous entity through technologically-mediated paths without having to take personal responsibility or even know the reasons for one's own actions -- ever more deeply into our consciousness (Toles, in press).

It has been suggested in this article that the progress towards fuller understanding of the mass media/audience interaction has been retarded by scholarly blindness to the notion of consciousness. Conventional psychology, even when it does take individual consciousness as the focus of its attention, does so by abstracting from the total environment of meanings, the mass consciousness, within which individual consciousness is shaped. European critical media theory has kept mass consciousness in focus, not simply as a shibboleth for an academic discipline but as its direct object of study, by examining how cultural change or stability takes place "in ideology", that is, by being "naturalized" and "universalized" through the mass media, especially the screen media because of their iconic characteristics. Newer developments have deviated from traditional critical media theory (for example, the Frankfurt school of social criticism) by recognizing that ideology has its own conditions of existence that cannot simply be inferred from the economic position of the individual. These developments have moved towards a re-examination of what insights psychoanalysis, rather than behaviorism, can offer. Even if these efforts are finally to be rejected as untenable, they have at least opened up a theoretical space in which a

crucial set of problems concerning the effects of mediated communication on consciousness, both individual and social, can be debated.

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